

Integration of mental health and psychosocial support approaches in accountability mechanisms for atrocity crimes

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WANATAFUTISHWA KWA KUWA WANAHUSIKA NA GENOCIDE YA RWANDA

WANTED FOR RWANDAN GENOCIDE
RECHERCHÉS POUR CRIMES DE GÉNOCIDE RWANDAIS



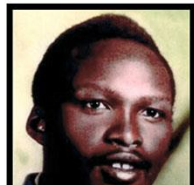
Protais MPIRANYA
CONFIRMED DEAD: 12 MAY 2022



Fulgence KAYISHEMA
ARRESTED: 24/05/2023

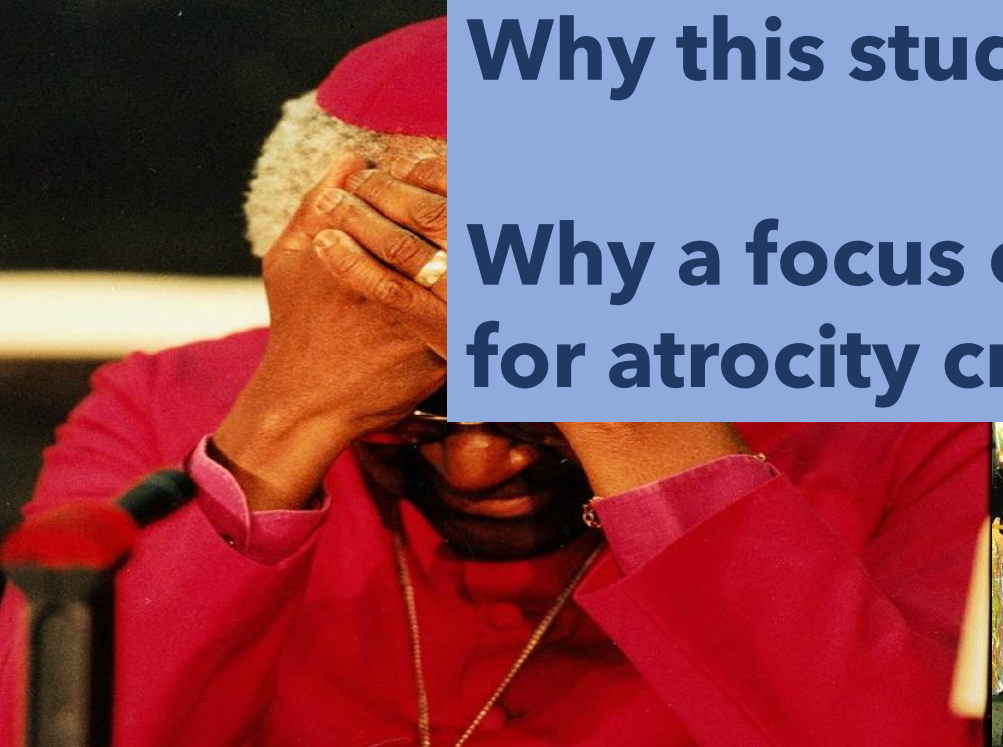


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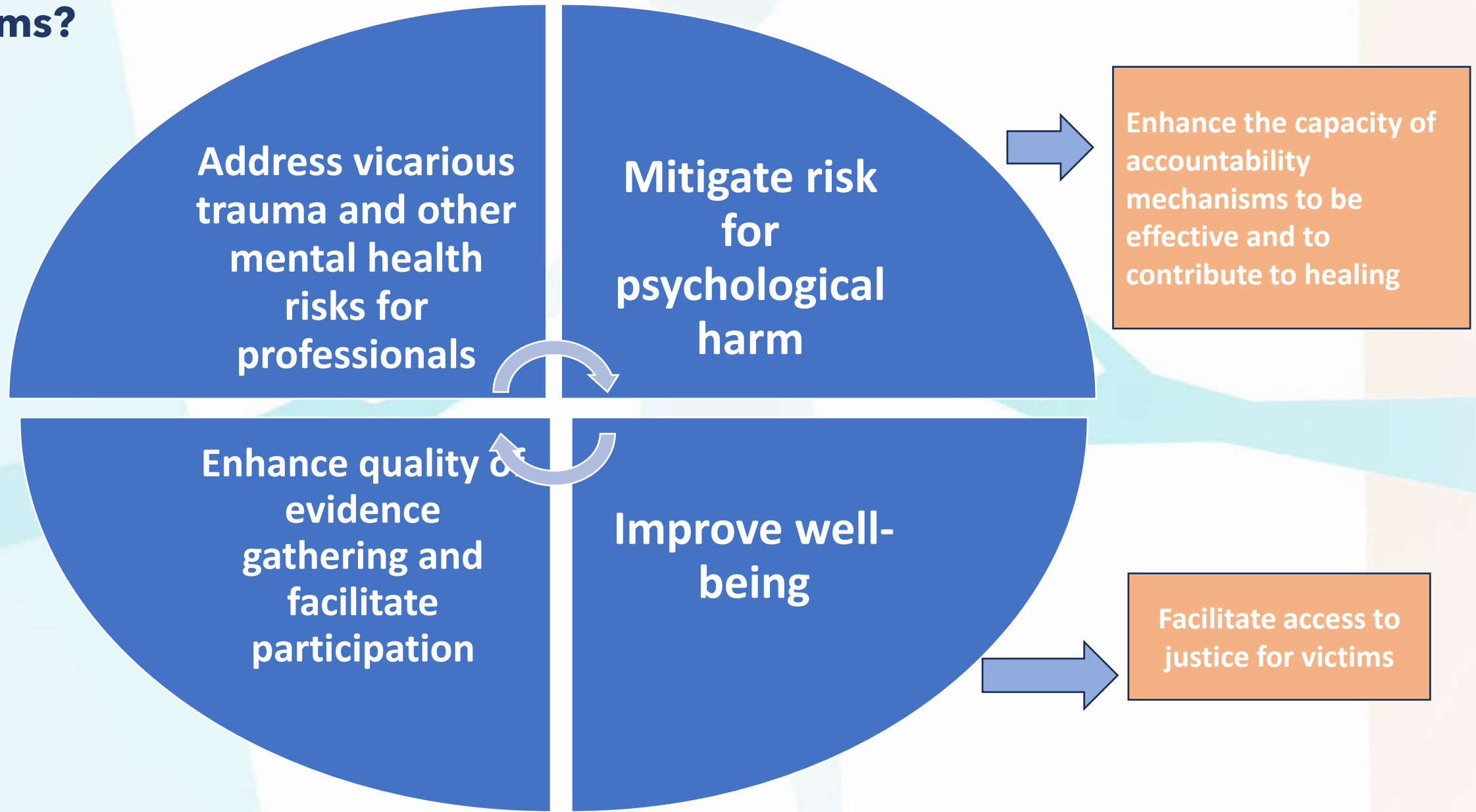


Why this study ?

Why a focus on accountability mechanisms
for atrocity crimes?



How can the integration of MHPSS approaches improve accountability mechanisms and strengthen access to justice for victims?



The integration of MHPSS approaches can protect witnesses and victims against risk for psychological harm

Involve
psychologists

Staff support
and training

culturally
appropriate
psychosocial
support

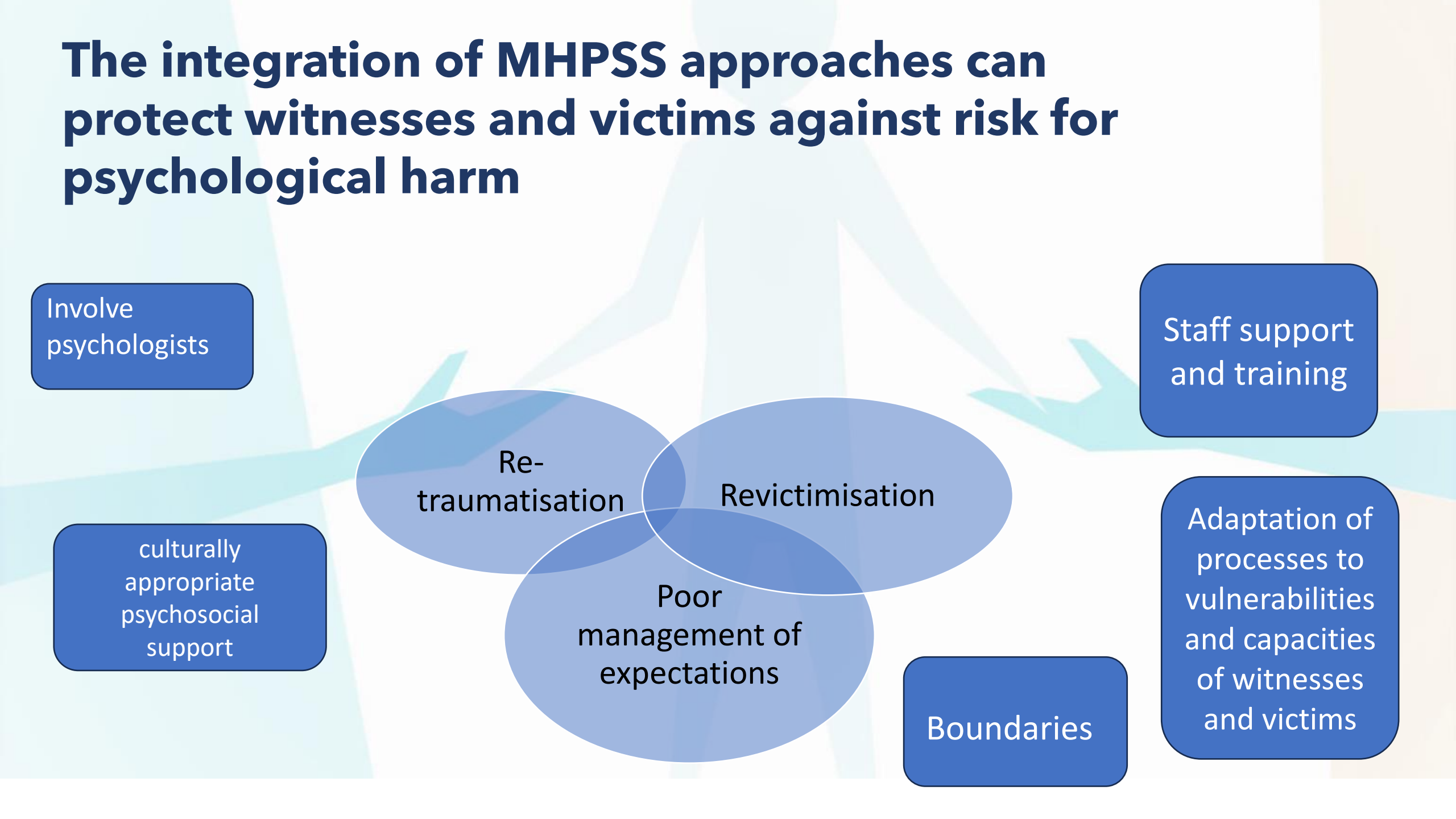
Re-
traumatisation

Revictimisation

Poor
management of
expectations

Boundaries

Adaptation of
processes to
vulnerabilities
and capacities
of witnesses
and victims



The integration of MHPSS approaches can improve well-being and contribute to healing

“Just revealing is not just healing” (Hayes, G.)

Sense of control and agency bring therapeutic effect - not the mere expression of emotions (Lens, K. et al.)

Well-being relates to **‘sense of coherence’** (Antonovsky, A.), capacity to make sense of the world, find meaning, experience predictability, sense of belonging, agency

How?

- Physical and psychological safety
- Sense of agency (information)
- Dignity and psychosocial support
- Managing expectations (and meeting expectations)

The integration of MHPSS approaches can enhance quality of evidence gathering

Trauma-informed interview model

involvement of psychologists to advise on process, train interviewers and support victims and witnesses during interview

- Building rapport and creating safety reduces anxiety
- Use of 'therapeutic interventions': supportive attitude (recognise emotional state of witness and respond to needs) creates an alliance with interviewee
- Free narrative phase gives control to interviewee
- Open questions help to scan 'fragile' memories

→ Enhances capacity for recall and improves accuracy of witness statements

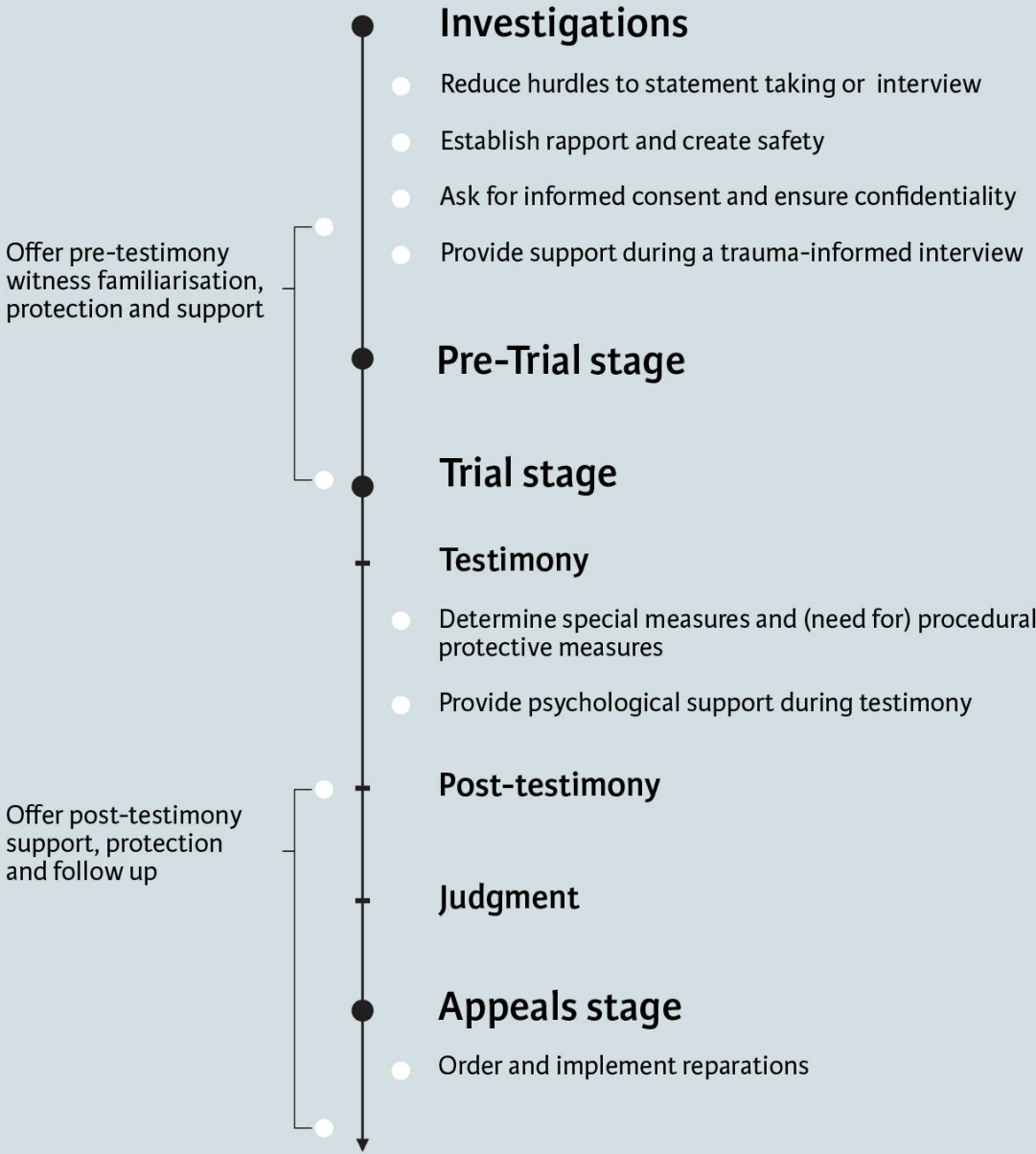
The integration of MHPSS approaches can address vicarious trauma and other mental health risks for professionals

Professionals who interact with witnesses and victims can only do so in a responsible way if:

- They respect their personal boundaries
- Can rely on solid processes
- Are aware of risks for vicarious trauma and other risks
- Have the tools to strengthen their coping skills
- Other work-related stressors are addressed

Integration of MHPSS approaches throughout the testimony timeline - Good Practices

Testimony timeline



Recommendations

Principal recommendations

- Structural integration of MHPSS approaches in accountability mechanisms for atrocity crimes
- Strengthen the role of psychosocial experts, include them in interdisciplinary leadership teams
- Address vicarious trauma, other mental health risks and the need for staff support

Recommendations for each of the phases of the testimony timeline

The way forward - 'Antigone project'

- Widely disseminate findings of this study
- Consolidate consensus results
- Further develop and refine methods that strengthen the use of good practices

- Build a Community of Practice
- Establish guidelines
- Work towards standards



Improve accountability processes and access to justice

- Encourage accountability mechanisms to prioritise the integration of MHPSS approaches
- Foresee funding to integrate MHPSS approaches in accountability mechanisms for atrocity crimes

THANK YOU!

An Michels, Pantea Javidan, Eveline
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2024

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