

**REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON PSYCHSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR YOUTH AND
OVC CHILDREN.**

A REPORT

Held at Birchwood Hotel, Johannesburg. South Africa

17th – 21st May 2010.

By Faith Macheng

1. INTRODUCTION

The workshop was organized by SAT for its partner organizations in the region hence I participated at the workshop as a partner representing Botswana Association of the Blind and partially Sighted (BABPS).

The workshop ran from the 17th to 21st May 2010 in South Africa at Birchwood Hotel in Johannesburg. Participants arrived on the 16th May 2010 in readiness for the week ahead. Countries that were represented were Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It was a vibrant team that made the whole week enjoyable and productive.

2. OBJECTIVES

They were many but I chose to pick the following for the purpose of this report

- 2.1 sharing an understanding of psychosocial support, activities, programming, challenges and gaps in knowledge skills
- 2.2 sharing case studies of PSS work for adolescents and OVC in different countries
- 2.3 culture and traditional practices/relationships in the community, family that could support PSS work and psychosocial well being
- 2.4 Challenges of PSS work from experience and possible solutions.

3. EXPECTATIONS

The following were my expectations from the workshop:

- 3.1 to come out of the workshop with a clear understanding of what Psychosocial support is
- 3.2 to learn what other organizations in other countries are doing regarding the provision of psychosocial support work
- 3.3 to learn how to write case studies detailing psychosocial support
- 3.4 to participate fully and share with other participants experiences from Botswana.

4. FACILITATORS

There were four facilitators but there was one key facilitator Ms Ncazelo Ncube who facilitated on PSS work. I pick her out because she made the workshop a busy and productive one through the presentations, group work and plenary sessions.

5. METHODOLOGY

The workshop was an interactive one. Presentations were followed by group work, group presentations and discussions.

Participants were divided into 6 groups. The five countries Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe formed country groups and the remaining 3, Botswana, South Africa and Swaziland which had one representative each formed one group famously known as BOSASWA.

Each day there was group work and the discussions that followed after group presentations revealed a wealth of experience which could be adapted by other countries and organizations as a way of strengthening the PSS work in the region.

6. WORKSHOP CONTENT

The content was well planned and as a first time attendee of the PSS workshop I observed that it was flowing showing careful planning by the facilitators. The knowledge gap I had before attending the workshop was to some extent addressed. With that I am now able to:

- Explain to others what psychosocial support is and what activities and programmes could be carried out
- The role of the family and the community in providing PSS work
- PSS work does not necessarily need finance or sponsors
- Explain that youth is defined differently in the countries that participated at the workshop. There is no uniform age limit.
- People with disabilities did not feature much in PSS work carried out by different organizations/countries, hence the need to advocate for their inclusion in PSS work that is being done.
- Explain the importance of VIPP cards and how they should be made to ensure they serve the right purpose.
- Justify for the importance of using Case studies of life stories that could easily support the PSS work in any organization, as well as the need to make regular follow-ups on the cases attended to.

7. LESSONS LEARNT

As a first time attendee of the PSS workshop I would like to make the following observations as lessons learnt:

- From the experiences shared by other participants it is clear that in our organization or in Botswana generally PSS work is not visible and it calls for an intensive programme to cascade the PSS work concept and its implementation.
- Networking with other organizations that have long started the PSS work to learn more from them and adopt as well as adapt some of their programmes since the areas addressed by PSS work are common in the region
- That there is need to involve the families and communities in addressing both the psychological problems as well as the social problems of children, adolescents, youth, all

those affected or infected by HIV/AIDS with a view of improving their psychosocial well being .

- Though some organizations are doing PSS work it is not structured such that it is clear to everyone hence there is need to structure the PSS work so that there could be clear monitoring and evaluation programmes.
- Been exposed to more regional issues pertaining to the ills in society that eventually calls for psychosocial support to individuals. This on its own prompts one to think beyond the the limits of the local programmes
- That you are never alone in the provision of PSS work since there are mentors within the region who could be approached to guide or to form networks with.

8. ACHIEVEMENT

It is worth reporting that Botswana managed to come up with a case study that has the potential of being published in the share series document on PSS for youth and OVC. If this is done it will put put BABPS at a better to continue preparing and publishing case studies as evidence of the work they are doing for the youth and children.

9. RECOOMENDATIONS

I would like to make the following recommendations to our partner DHAT for consideration:

- 9.1 The workshop has been an eye opener hence I recommend that DHAT should consider to intensify strengthening the capacity of its partner organizations such that they are well empowered to put in place effective programmes, especially in the area of PSS work.
- 9.2 It has been observed that people with disabilities are left behind in most countries shown even by the participants list, therefore, DHAT should consider to hold both regional and local workshop for DPO's with a view to empower them on the PSS work.
- 9.3 Specifically for Botswana, I recommend that in the very near future a local PSS workshop for DPO's be organized and Ms Ncube be engaged to facilitate that workshop.
- 9.4 For people who have had the opportunity to attend the PSS workshop more than once they confirmed that it is beneficial to attend refresher workshops since PSS work is not static it changes with time hence it is important to be in constant touch with the new trends. Therefore DHAT should consider sending its delegates more than once to PSS workshops.
- 9.5 DHAT as the mother body should consider having a consolidated plan of programs undertaken in all its country organizations with a view of putting in place a monitoring and evaluation too to be adopted by all.

10. CONCLUSION

I would like to express my gratitude to DHAT management who without any hesitation sent me to represent Botswana at the PSS workshop. It is through DHAT that I am now more enlightened on the PSS work subject/concept and wish to have another opportunity to expand this knowledge.

I would like to urge my association to consider making a mark in the share series document by always preparing case studies for publication. This would make the region know what the association is doing.

Lastly, the road is still long for DPO's in Botswana. It is through working closely with DHAT that their capacity in a number of areas could be strengthened so that they are able to put in place productive and effective programmes for their membership.