

EXCERPT FROM NGO MATRICES

3.4 FAMILY LITERACY PROJECT

Goal

To make literacy a shared pleasure and a valuable skill for families, so that families can help prepare children to read and develop a love of books that will lay the foundations for future learning, relaxation, and enjoyment.

Objectives

- To provide adult literacy;
- To provide early childhood development learning.

3.4.1 Development of best practice models

Grant summary:

- Category: Assisting Vulnerable Children
- Type: Health Support Project¹: To develop a model of psychosocial support for older siblings, grandparents, and extended family members who care for young children and struggle to cope with HIV/AIDS in their families.
- Rationale: Encourages the development of an innovative model of care for orphans and vulnerable children and improves the quality of basic education in South Africa by assisting non-profit organizations with basic education projects to integrate a concern for HIV/AIDS within their work. This grant will become part of a cluster of involvements with organizations in the field of basic education (such as TREE, Ikamva Labantu, and the Media in Education Trust) that are responding more holistically to the needs of an increasingly vulnerable population of young children in South Africa as a result of HIV/AIDS. FLP has close links with the Media in Education Trust and will strive to disseminate the model developed from the project to a larger audience through the Media in Education Trust's work with schools in several provinces.

Work undertaken:

- FLP's main focus was to provide early childhood literacy by training adults within families. However, once it was recognized that "you cannot read to a child who is not well," a general health aspect was introduced as part of the literacy project. As a result, the health support project was launched and has subsequently been established in seven FLP groups. The aim was to take health preventative messages to homes, and to educate caregivers in health issues. It is believed that this empowers them and the whole family to deal effectively with ill family members.
- The organization provided training for women, produced booklets, and developed games to teach health messages. To avoid the stigma around HIV/AIDS, these groups formed 'health groups' and focused in part on issues relating to HIV/AIDS.
- Some members in other health support groups requested a voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) Unit so that they could be tested in their communities. FLP arranged with another NGO, which had accredited counselors and testers, to travel to various

¹ GRANT NO.:04-246

sites and to test FLP members and families there. People felt that, although testing was available in their clinics, the clinics were far away, taxi fares too high, and many did not trust that their results would be treated confidentially.

Organization's contribution/achievements:

- Trained FLP women transferred their knowledge to their neighbors. According to FLP, the project increased literacy in general and literacy around health specifically. Moreover, parents who came to groups to learn about their children's health also learnt about their own.
- FLP was invited to the White House, Washington D.C as one of the nine organizations in the world that deal effectively with illiteracy.

Challenges:

- The stigma attached to HIV/AIDS made it difficult to state openly that the Health Support Group was primarily for those affected or infected by HIV/AIDS.
- All the health literacy groups were attended by women only, although men were invited. Enquiry into the reasons for which men did not attend revealed that they were unhappy about participating in women's groups and having young female facilitators.
- Traveling the long distances between the groups' meeting venues and the facilitators' offices was a challenge because of unreliable public transport.
- The rainy weather turned roads to mud and presented a further transport challenge.
- Rural women were often unavailable to attend because of the many domestic demands on their time. The FLP women often had to perform duties such as cutting grass for thatching, ploughing and harvesting.
- FLP tried to spread its model to other NGOs by providing the same training, content and materials. The results were, however, poor, due to a lack of commitment from management of the other NGOs.
- Bad weather regularly affected pension pay-out days, with the result that those who collect pensions, welfare, child support and disability grants were often prevented from attending sessions when these coincided with the times they hoped to collect their pensions or grants.

Lessons learnt:

- Notices were placed in local stores to recruit members for the health support group. This proved ineffective, as people in need of support were not reached. FLP therefore decided to recruit members through home visits.
- Regular meetings and frequent training are important for FLP facilitators to broaden their knowledge as, unlike community health workers, they do not have a health background.
- While uncomfortable attending women's groups, men were happy to allow women to attend their groups. An FLP male started a group for men called *Farm Literacy Project*.
- FLP developed an *Introduction to Family Literacy* course and made it available to any interested NGO. The intention was to avoid 'imposing' literacy on other NGOs, who were invited instead to approach FLP for teaching materials, should they have an interest in presenting the course in their organizations.

3.4.2 Advocacy and Policy Influence

- FLP did not include policy and advocacy as part of its deliverable objectives.
- They have, however, participated in local and international workshops and conferences on family literacy.

Challenges:

- Although FLP has two government officials on its board of executives, working with government officials has proven to be difficult because of their limited time and many other responsibilities.

3.4.3 Institutional Development

Grant summary:

- Category: Assisting Vulnerable Children
- Type: Health Support Project: To provide external training support.

Capacity strengthening:

Acquiring new skills or training attended

- During the first year, the Director of FLP facilitated training alone and as the year progressed, more staff members were added. The majority of women employed had only a matriculation certificate. All now have a Higher Diploma in Adult Education, and one has Honors in Bachelor of Education degree. An independent consultant, Chris Gibson, provided support to the program by running workshops for FLP facilitators. One of trainings included the use of the Family Booklet, an integral part of the Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) program that FLP uses in the health support groups.
- Facilitators and the Director meet monthly for reporting and four times a year for training.

Accountability

- The finances of FLP are managed by an external accounting firm. The FLP director is accountable to board members who meet four times a year and get monthly e-mailed updates.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E):

- FLP uses external consultants for its monitoring and evaluation. They use different evaluators each year and prefer M&E that involves the participation of every member of the organization.
- The recommendations guide the planning of the following year's work.
- The only challenge to M&E was logistical. Some evaluations, for example, were delayed because stormy weather prevented travel on the dangerously muddy roads.

Organizational development (OD) support

- FLP did not make use of Rockefeller Brothers Foundation's (RBF) OD Consultants. The former director could not remember the reasons for this. FLP felt that organizations should not feel compelled to use the support offered by donors, simply because it is made available to them.

Lessons learnt:

- As a small organization, FLP managed its capacity and addressed the growing need by empowering other NGOs to use the same FLP model, rather than growing itself. This was achieved by actively sharing information.
- FLP recognized that it could not address every need that exists but should cap its activities and stick to its core business: "You cannot be everyone's savior."
- FLP learnt not to succumb to donors' expectations regarding the need for an exit strategy, since the services rendered by FLP cannot be brought to an end.
- It is important that organizations be acknowledged for the work that they do.