

Women empowerment: a case study of a refugee women's group at the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

Appendix E ¹

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Introduction

This report evaluates the Centre for Study Violence and Reconciliation (CSV), Trauma and Transition Programme's (TTP) work with a group of refugee women². Over a period of six years, facilitators from TTP met with a group of refugee women with the overall aims of facilitating the economic and social empowerment of these women, and setting in motion increased integration into mainstream South African society. Language barriers, lack of documentation, police harassment, xenophobia and no access to the justice system render migrants particularly vulnerable in South Africa. Nevertheless, TTP's intervention with this group of women broke the stereotypes that cast refugee women as helpless victims who are in need of 'hand-outs', by galvanising their self reliance and agency to form an organisation that will advocate for refugee rights and establish income generating projects.

As part of the evaluation, individual interviews with eight women, and one focus group with twelve women were conducted. In addition, interviews were conducted with the two facilitators of the group. The report is divided into six sections. Following this brief introduction, the second section of the report discusses the context of the project. This includes a discussion of the context of refugee women in South Africa, the context of the CSV clinic out of which the project grew, and how the group was started. The third section of the report, entitled the 'target group' provides a description of the members of the group. The fourth section outlines the theory that informed the intervention and the objectives of the project. The intervention was based on the theory of empowerment, but also incorporated the Freirian notion of conscientisation. In section five, the challenges that were encountered during the implementation are discussed. Finally, section six speaks to resources that are necessary for empowering refugee women and makes recommendations.

Context of the intervention

South Africa has become a primary destination for people seeking refuge and asylum from civil wars dictatorship, political oppression, economic instability and poverty (Landau, Ramjathan & Singh, 2005). A large number of refugees and asylum seekers come from the Great Lakes region (Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda), Horn of Africa (Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia), and Angola (Landau, et al., 2005). Although there are no current reliable official statistics there is evidence to show that refugees and asylum seekers are a growing population in South Africa. In 2005, the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) estimated

¹ This paper also serves as an appendix to an unpublished *internal* CSV paper called "Finding our way: developing a community work model for addressing torture. Version 1, 2011". In 2012, a condensed version of the paper which incorporated the appendices was made available with the same title on the CSV and Dignity websites (by Bantjes, M, Langa, M & Jensen, S).

² The term refugee is used loosely in the report to refer to all refugee women despite their refugee status (e.g. asylum seeker or official refugee). The term migrant is also used interchangeably with the term refugee women.

that there are 27 683 refugees and 115 224 asylum seekers living in South Africa (Landau, et al., 2005). It is likely that these figures have increased since 2005. Another limitation of these statistics is that they are based on numbers of refugees and asylum seekers that have visited the DHA, or reported upon their arrival at the border posts. In fact the majority of refugees and asylum seekers cross South African borders illegally and usually do not visit Home Affairs offices. Moreover, the number of refugees and asylum seekers moving in out and out is constantly changing making them a very hard population to quantify (Landau, et al., 2005).

The trauma of refugee women is well documented. According to Human Rights Watch (1999, in Palmary, 2005) sexual violence used as a weapon of war is commonly perpetrated against girls and women during armed conflict. A recent Human Rights Watch (2010) report estimates that 1 in 4 women are likely to be victims of sexual violence in the Great Lakes, which includes the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. It is argued that in these countries, it is more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier. Frequently women are kidnapped by rebel groups to work as sex slaves. Some who are able to flee become refugees in countries such as South Africa. This means that large numbers of the refugee women living in South Africa are likely to have experienced sexual violence in their home countries or on their journey to South Africa. Of course given the high levels of violence against women in South Africa it is not unlikely for them to be violated here (Fuller, 2008).

Already vulnerable, refugees in South Africa live in precarious circumstances. Without identity documents it is difficult for refugees to take up job opportunities. For refugee women, unemployment makes it difficult to support their children. In response to these circumstances some migrant women set up informal businesses in suburban areas or in the inner city. However, they find it difficult to sustain viable income generation as a result of crime, harassment and confiscation of their goods by metro police officers. Some refugee women take on work as domestic workers but for many this is not possible due to language barriers. For those who do manage to get employment, the working conditions are bad. They are paid poor salaries even though they work long hours. It is well known that there are employers who threaten refugees with deportation if they complain about their working conditions (Landau, et al., 2005). Landau et al. (2005) reveal that it is common for employers to violate the labour rights of refugees because the latter live in fear of being deported.

In terms of the South African Bill of Rights, everyone has the right to health care, including refugees. In a survey conducted by Higson-Smith, Mulder and Masitha (2006), refugees noted that they encounter several obstacles in accessing health care services. Amongst these obstacles is the negative attitude of hospital and clinic staff, who accuse refugees of abusing state resources, and as a result, deny them medication. There are hospital staff members who request refugees to pay exorbitant fees before they provide assistance.

The trauma of refugee women is compounded by continuous threats of xenophobic violence in South Africa. Xenophobia is accompanied by police harassment and hostility from the general public. By and large refugee women live in fear, and feel dislocated, and displaced. A high incidence of major depression, anxiety disorders and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) amongst the refugee population has been documented (Friedman, 2003; Higson-Smith, Bandeira & Bantjes, 2010).

There are criticisms of the PTSD model amongst scholars who argue that the model ignores the cultural and political contexts of trauma. This means that the history and culture of refugee women and the conditions

under which they live in South Africa tend to be overlooked. Lykes (2002) and Eagle (2002) argue that PTSD is based on western notions of 'individuality' rather than African philosophies which give privilege to the collective over the individual.

With this knowledge in mind, TTP's self-help group with refugee women was conducted. These were refugee women attending trauma counselling at CSVR's Trauma Clinic. However, their economic and social needs were not being addressed. In his book, *Transforming Societies after Political Violence*, Hamber (2009) noted the failure to address the economic needs of survivors of apartheid violence as one of Truth and Reconciliation Commission's limitations. In their newly published text, *Traumatic Stress in South Africa*, Kaminer and Eagle (2010) agree with Hamber that the PTSD model is a western construct which places more emphasis on medication and individual psychotherapy and neglects social, economic, cultural and political factors. In her ground breaking work with survivors in Guatemala, Brinton-Lykes (2002) insists that community-based healing initiatives should go beyond the psyche of the individual to address both economic and psychosocial needs of marginalised groups. Such interventions should incorporate issues of social justice, conscientisation, empowerment, lobbying, advocacy, and self-determination to help refugee women achieve independence rather than create a syndrome of dependence on psychosocial services.

CSVr clinic setting

The Trauma Clinic has been offering a free trauma counselling services³ since the early 1990s. It was set up to offer counselling to victims of apartheid related political violence. Post the transition to democracy in 1994, the Trauma Clinic began offering counselling to refugees. The team that offers counselling includes psychologists, social workers, social work and community psychology interns and interpreters. As noted above refugees come from conflict-ridden countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia and more recently from Zimbabwe as a result of increasing political instability and violence in that country. Clients who come to the Trauma Clinic are referred by civil society organisations, churches and NGOs that work in the human rights field. Some are referred by former clients, while others come on their own to the clinic (see the volumes of Traumatic Stress Update on CSVr website www.csvr.org.za for detailed information about the profile of clients in terms of age, race, gender and presenting problems). The motivation to do group work with refugee women was based on an understanding of their social contexts which are characterised by urgent social and economic needs.

How did the women's group start?

In 2005, TTP was commissioned to do research on the health needs of exiled torture survivors in South Africa. Prior to the launch of the report, *Human dignity has no nationality*, the researchers met with the research participants who were male and female refugees, to give them feedback on their preliminary findings. While the arrangement were being made for this meeting, refugee women requested to be met separately from men because they wanted to talk to the researchers about the findings, without any interference from men. It is reported that many of the women who attended found the research meeting useful for talking about their difficulties in accessing health care services in South Africa. They found it so useful that they voluntarily requested that these meetings should be held on a regular basis. Thereafter meetings were held once a

³These services are currently financially supported by Rehabilitation and Research for Centre of Torture Victims (RCT) and United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFT).

month in which the women generally talked about problems they encounter in South Africa. These problems included lack of job opportunities, xenophobia, harassment by the metro police and general public hostility towards them. Initially, the participants saw these meetings as a form of debriefing.

However, the facilitators asserted that they did not want these meetings to be “just whinging” sessions. They started to encourage the participants to think about possible solutions and how these solutions could be implemented. One facilitator explained, “We wanted these women to be masters of their own destiny. We wanted them to be their own agents of change. We wanted them to go out and advocate for their rights and needs. We did not want to talk on behalf of them”. The idea that the women could set up their own Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) came up in 2008. Participants enthusiastically asserted that they wanted such an organisation to advocate for their rights and needs as refugee women living in South Africa. Since then, the focus of the group has been on establishing and launching this organisation and on starting income-generating projects.

The target group

The table below gives a description of the profile of refugee women who participated in the TTP’s group intervention. It must be noted this profile is based on the women who were able to attend individual interviews (8 women) and focus group discussion (12 women). Some women were excluded because they were not able to come to CSVR for interviews. The group has eighteen members.

Race	Age	Nationality	Marital status	Employment status
Black	53	DRC	Married	Interpreter
Black	57	Zimbabwean	Divorced	Unemployed
Black	37	DRC	Married	Small business
Black	22	Zimbabwean	Single	Unemployed
Black	44	Burundian	Married	Interpreter/
Black	26	Zimbabwean	Single	Unemployed
Black	50	Burundian	Widow	Unemployed
Black	34	DRC	Widow	Small business
Black	51	Rwandan	Married	Unemployed
Black	35	DRC	Married	Unemployed
Black	45	DRC	Married	Unemployed
Black	43	Zimbabwe	Married	Unemployed

From this table, it can be seen that the target group included women from different countries. A key principle in the group was that there should be unity and support amongst migrant women, irrespective of differences of language or country of origin.

As is indicated in the table, nine of the women were unemployed. Two of the women who were self-employed selling goods, such as sweets and clothes in markets had not done well due to constant harassment by metro police officials. Furthermore, without access to loans from banks, opportunities to

sustain and expand their businesses have been negatively affected. In terms of their marital status, seven of the women were married, two single, one divorced and two widowed. The women are between the ages of 26 and 50 years old. They all have children many of whom are still in primary school. The issue of supporting their families was one of their principal concerns.

Theory⁴

The theory that informed the intervention

In their interviews, facilitators pointed out that the group intervention and all their activities with refugee women were rooted in empowerment theory (Rappaport, 1981). In addition the interventions had as a key strategy and principle conscientisation as developed in Paulo Freire's work. Empowerment theory and conscientisation emerged out of Community Psychology and Critical Social Work to address psychosocial issues that affect marginalised groups (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001; Nelson & Prillentensky, 2005). Community Psychology and Critical Social Work developed as new fields in the 1960s and 70s against the backdrop of emerging social movements, including those involved in civil rights, feminism, the environment and the gay/lesbian liberation movements (Harper & Schneider, 2003), and are grounded on the notion that 'giving voice' to marginalised groups is the first step to empowering them (Rappaport, 1981). When CSVR started working with this group of women, the notion of 'giving voice' was an underlying assumption. There was a commitment to giving refugee women a space to express their 'voices', set the agenda regarding the issues that affect them on a daily basis, and identify possible strategies for dealing with these problems.

Empowerment can be defined as a process by means of which people and communities gain control over their lives through exercising their right to participate in the social, political and economic processes that structure their lives (Rappaport, 1981). According to Rappaport (1981), ideally empowerment should constitute one of the key pillars on which interventions aimed at enhancing communities' well-being should be built, because, without empowerment the effects of community interventions cannot but be less effective and less lasting. It is important to understand, as Dalton, Elias and Wandersman (2007, p. 404) emphasise, that "empowerment ... is accomplished with others, not alone". In other words empowerment is a relational process which involves collaboration and information sharing.

Consistent with this theory which advocates that marginalised groups should take the lead in dealing with their problems, the facilitators explained that the refugee women in their group agreed to take charge of achieving the following objectives:

- Unite and bring refugee women together;
- Establish an independent organisation to advocate for the needs and rights of refugee women;
- Start income-generating projects;
- Educate and raise awareness about rights of refugees.

⁴ This theoretical section of the report is based on Langa 's (2007)chapter entitled, Vulnerable Communities: Former combatants in South Africa. In N. Duncan, B. Bowman. A Naidoo. J Pillay. & V Roos (Eds). *Community psychology: Analysis, context and action*. (262-280). Pretoria: Juta publishers.

Objectives of the intervention

Uniting refugee women

As described above, a group of refugee women requested to meet at CSVR after their participation in a research project. During their follow-up group meetings, the participants agreed that it was important for refugee women to come together and form an organisation that would deal with the problems refugee women in South Africa face. Following this, meetings were held monthly over a period six to eight months to discuss the formation of this organisation and its structure. Finally, in 2009 the group decided to name the organisation “Migrant Women United Association”. Later the name was changed to “Women on the Journey”, as there was another organisation using the name Migrant Women United Association. The facilitators noted that one of the key objectives of the group was to bring refugee women together under the same organisation. In the interviews conducted with participants for this report, they confirmed that this objective has been achieved. In the quotes below, the participants talk about the benefits of attending support group meetings:

“Group meetings have been so useful for us. We are no longer feeling isolated. We are connected like sisters”.

“It does not matter if you are Congolese or Zimbabwean, but we are all women. Group meetings have helped us understand this that we are all women and must support each other irrespective of our nationality”.

“We are one. We are one big family”.

“We are all sisters no matter where you come from”.

The group meetings gave them a sense of unity and a spirit of sisterhood. They said that before the meetings, they felt isolated, lost and displaced, but meeting as a group gave them a sense of belonging. One participant said,

“Meeting with other women and talking about our difficulties made us realise that we are not alone in this world. There are other women who are also experiencing similar problems as you”.

The facilitators did not want to limit the meetings to talking about problems. Consistent with empowerment theory, they wanted the group members to realise their agency and thereby explore strategies for addressing their problems.

Refugee women given the space to set their own agenda

Van Vlaederen and Neves, (2004) argue that “for empowerment to take place, two interrelated changes are required. First, people, individually or in groups, must develop a greater sense of self-worth, self-confidence, self-reliance and recognition of their own skills and resources. This implies less dependence on external inputs and greater pride in the significance and validity of personal and collective experience. Secondly, there must be a change in people’s perceptions of their relations with others, and with the institutions that define their world in order to influence their own environment” (p. 6).

These points are well illustrated by the process the women engaged in when they decided to write their constitution. Over a period of ten months, the participants reflected, discussed and deliberated on the constitution (see appendix to this paper for the constitution). The women who were interviewed said that the process of drafting the constitution was very empowering and stimulated them at an intellectual level as they vigorously debated clauses of the constitution. At times the process became conflictual, particularly around who would occupy positions of leadership. However, with the mediation of the facilitators the group survived this conflict. Interviewees noted that they felt triumphant about managing these tensions without breaking up the group, which they attributed to their ability to treat one another with respect and dignity, irrespective of their differences of language and nationality.

Striving for independence through forming a Non-Profit Organisation

At one of the meetings, it was agreed that the organisation, “Women on the Journey”, should register as a Non-Profit Organisation with the Department of Social Development according to Act 77 of 1997, and thereby become independent from CSVR. The role of CSVR would be to provide support until the organisation was fully independent. The logic behind this was that once the organisation is registered, refugee women could be assisted to write funding proposals in order to raise money to support their income-generating activities. A working committee was established to undertake the registration process. At the time of writing this report registration had not been achieved due to challenges which are discussed below. Despite the delay in registering their organisation, the process shows that the women were feeling empowered to think about and explore independent ways of dealing with their problems. However, Rappaport (1981) argues that without economic empowerment subjective empowerment is limited. As part of becoming economically empowered it became important for refugee women to more carefully explore income-generating projects.

Establishing income-generating projects as a form of economic empowerment

In their monthly meetings, refugee women had continuously discussed the importance of achieving economic empowerment and of exploring opportunities in this regard, as they did not want to rely on ‘hand-outs’ for the rest of their lives.

In 2009, the group negotiated with the City of Johannesburg to acquire a piece of land in the suburb of Observatory in order to start a gardening project. Group members took the lead in the negotiations and in organising to make the financial contribution to pay for the costs of water for their gardening project. According to Dalton, Elias and Wandersman (2007), encouraging the participation of marginalised groups in initiatives aimed at dealing with their problems can also be very empowering in the enhancement of leadership skills within that community. More specifically, the participation of marginalised groups in initiatives aimed at addressing their needs has also been shown to enhance the general effectiveness of these initiatives (Dalton, Elias & Wandersman, 2007).

The women who were interviewed described the gardening project as one of their most successful projects:

“The garden is our own achievement. I don’t buy vegetables anymore. I get vegetables from the garden”.

“We are now having our own veggies”.

“I don’t buy veggies. I eat my own veggies”.

In addition to the gardening project, the women considered sewing and painting projects as a way of generating income. Challenges which did not allow these to materialise are discussed below.

The importance of encouraging economically and politically marginalised to assume power in addressing their economic problems can be seen from this brief discussion of the process the group engaged in (Kelly & van der Riet, 2001). Arnstein (1969, in Swanepoel & de Beer, 2006, p. 29) notes that community participation without power “is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless” because, without power, the needs of the group will almost inevitably come second to the needs of those with power. For the refugee women’s group knowledge about their human and legal rights would be another source of power.

Knowledge as power

It was pointed out above a core principle of this intervention was Freire’s concept of ‘conscientisation’, defined as a process of “dialogue which enables the individual to transform him or herself in relation to others and critically reflect on him- or herself in society” (Freire, in van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004, p. 454). In other words, conscientisation aims at increasing people’s critical awareness of the social conditions that adversely affect them. By making people aware of the social, economic and political causes of their daily life struggles, conscientisation can play a critical role in engendering change. As part of the strategy of conscientisation, various workshops and public events were organised for participants to explore socio-political issues and provide information on rights. The topics of these workshops included gender based violence, xenophobia, HIV/AIDS and the legal rights of refugees. The quotes below capture participants’ views of the benefits of attending these workshops.

“I know my rights. I know I have a right to go to the hospital and seek help”.

“I teach others about their rights. I tell them that you are not lost. You are not alone”.

“I was coming here to be educated. I now know about gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS. We went to workshop with Gaudence and Marivic about HIV and AIDS”.

“I learned so many things about my rights as a refugee in the workshops”.

Group members also attended public events to mark Women ‘s day and International Women’s Day, which were organised by the Department of Home Affairs, in order to broaden their awareness about the difficulties that women face in South Africa. Reflecting on these interviews, they found the events to be educative and empowering.

One participant said,

“I agree knowledge is power. I’m now feeling very powerful that I know my rights that police cannot just come and harass me. I know I can report them to the Lawyers for Human Rights or come here at CSV. It really helps to attend all these workshops because you gain so much knowledge”.

Another participant said,

“You see I attend all these workshops. I learn all this information and go back to my community and share this information with other people in my community”.

A new objective has emerged for the group to raise awareness about the rights of migrants, such as the right to health, education, and access to relevant Home Affairs documents within their respective communities. This has not happened in a formal way yet, but group members are informally sharing their knowledge with others. Feeling empowered by their knowledge about their legal rights, some feel confident about having the skills to share their knowledge with their fellow refugees who are not part of the women's group. It seems then that a transfer of knowledge is happening and members are beginning to become activists and agents of change in their respective communities.

Challenges

Despite these important successes, there were significant challenges in this group work with refugee women.

Lack of funding

Participants emphasised lack of funding as a major obstacle to carrying out planned economic activities, for example the sewing project and the painting project for which they needed capital to buy equipment in order to start up these projects. As a result, these two projects did not materialise. Participants were disappointed at this failure since many are experienced tailors. Lack of funds prevented them from opening up a bank account for their newly formed organisation. Slow progress in this regard has been a source of de-motivation for some group members. Some members left the group due to this lack of progress in registering their organisation and getting funds, so that they could start their own income-generating initiatives. One participant said, "We are tired of begging people for money. We want to be financially independent, so we need all your support to help us register our organisation". It should be mentioned that CSVR has been helping the participants with transport money to attend their group meetings and to travel to the offices of Department of Social Development in Pretoria where they have to register their organisation.

Lack of resources

Apart from lack of money, lack of other resources, such computer, internet, or telephone have also been a major challenges for the group in establishing independence. Participants did mention that CSVR has been providing an enormous support in this regard, for example, they used CSVR computers to type their constitution and other letters for their organisation.

One woman said,

"Our work would not have been possible without the support of Marivic and Gaudence. We see both Marivic and Gaudence as our mothers. They encourage us. They tell us that we must persevere and things will be fine. We are hopeful that things will be fine one day. We are not giving up".

Group attendance

There were women who were unable to attend group meetings regularly because they had no-one to look after their children, or because they were working on their businesses, selling goods at the market. This has had delayed registration of the organisation as some members have not signed the necessary documents. Just recently the group set a final deadline for all group members to sign the relevant forms and has agreed that those who fail to sign will be excluded from the organisation.

Member turnover

Refugee populations are inherently unstable and fluid which can affect the stability of group interventions. Some members of the group dropped out because they have taken up employment or have moved to other parts of the country in search of opportunities and better living conditions. Some members dropped out because they felt the group was failing to achieve its objectives. The failure of the group to empower its members economically was cited by all the interviewees as one the main reasons why some women left.

One participant said,

“Yes it is good to come and meet with other women and talk and talk, but at the end of the day you need something to eat. We need to be realistic that talking alone does not bring food. Yes, we need to be honest that some of us stayed in this group because we had hopes that maybe this group will help create jobs for ourselves and support our families. We have families to support”.

Despite these challenges, many of the participants were still motivated to continue with their group work. Interestingly, they asserted that change takes time, and that they need to persevere before reaping the rewards of their hard work. Many acknowledged that the group process has not yet produced concrete results, but subjectively and emotionally they feel more empowered. This is in line with Rappaport (1981) and van Vlaenderen and Neves’s (2004) argument that subjective empowerment should be considered part of empowerment. The tendency has been to see economic empowerment as a ‘real’ empowerment. However subjective and economic empowerment complement each other.

Resources required for empowerment of refugee women and recommendations

In conclusion, specific recommendations are made about how interventions such as this one can be improved in the future, and on the resources that may be required for an intervention of this nature to be successful. These recommendations are based on lessons learned from the group work over the last six years.

This report suggests that these recommendations be used to develop a model for working with refugee women living in South Africa.

Recruitment of potential participants

It is important that the selection of potential participants is not only limited to refugee women who use Trauma Clinic services. It is strongly recommended that attempts should be made to recruit a more diverse group of refugee women to join the income-generating projects. A diverse group could bring a diversity of skills that could be shared amongst group members, and thereby strengthen their projects. Furthermore, it is recommended that South African women be included in the group. The inclusion of South African women would help to address social alienation of refugee women and facilitate their integration into South African communities. Both refugee and South African women can share skills and learn from one another.

Needs assessment and skills audit amongst the participants

Once the participants are recruited, it is important that joint working and planning meetings are held to assess the participants' needs and expectations. Openly discussed goals and objectives of the project should be realistic to avoid overly high expectations.

A needs assessment is defined as a collection of techniques for gathering and analysing data in order to:

- a) estimate the magnitude of the need,
- b) identify the population and what parts of population have the greatest need,
- c) determine the current level of service, and
- d) measure the gap between available service and service needs (Innes & Heflinger, 1989).

A similar assessment could be used to do a skills audit amongst the participants. Doing a skills audit is aimed at measuring and recording the skills that members of the intervention group have. In planning or choosing their empowerment projects, it is important that the participants choose projects in which they already have skills. In this way, the participants could more easily realise their potential, which is in line with the theory of empowerment.

The role of facilitators

The success of an empowerment project with vulnerable women depends to a large extent on the availability of skilled facilitators to facilitate group discussions and who can address conflicts over power in the group. In line with empowerment theory and the principle of conscientisation, the process of facilitation must be collaborative with the ultimate aim of handing over the facilitation role to the participants. Through mentorship, supervision and coaching, the participants should receive the necessary guidance and support for becoming self-reliant and independent. Facilitators should always be available to provide necessary support even once the group has established an independent identity.

Training courses

Improving and expanding the existing skills of group members through training, particularly in regard to income generating projects is an ideal aspiration. The following kind of training would be useful:

Financial management skills

Once the participants register their organisation as an NPO, it is important that they get some formal training on financial management skills, such as planning, investment, saving, allocation of funds, bookkeeping and budgeting. This will contribute to sustaining the organisation financially.

Practical skills such as sewing

In the case of the group under review, the participants may need to get some formal training in sewing, although many asserted that they already have this skill.

Marketing skills

Furthermore, the participants may need some help on how they can sell their products in the market.

Gardening project

Although the participants described their gardening project as successful, they feel more needs to be done to access a bigger plot of land where they could grow enough vegetables to sell in the market, and in that way start financially support themselves and their families.

Access to financial assistance

It is important that the participants are assisted to access financial assistance in order to fund their income generating projects. Given its history as an NPO, CSVR could play a central role in training women on how to write funding proposals. For fundraising to become a reality the group needs to register so that it can fundraise as an independent organisation.

Documentation and continuous evaluation of the project

Ongoing documentation and evaluation of projects is important for learning lessons and developing models for replication in other contexts. It is suggested that the recommendations made above be implemented with the existing women's group. Providing the necessary technical and financial support to this group and monitoring and evaluating the outcomes will provide an opportunity to assess whether this model of facilitating subjective and economic empowerment amongst refugee women works.

Conclusion

The goal of the TTP intervention with refugee women was to facilitate a sense of empowerment and independence amongst the participants. The women were encouraged to set their own agenda and take a lead in finding solutions to the daily challenges they face. Establishing a Non-Profit Organisation that will advocate for their needs and interests will go a long way to consolidating their independence. Women refugees are particularly vulnerable and as this report shows it is important to provide them with social and economic support if they are to achieve integration into South African society. The challenges discussed in this report confirm the importance of providing support. More specifically facilitating access to funding and training will assist refugee women to achieve social and economic empowerment. Economic empowerment, through the establishment of viable income generating projects will ultimately help to break the cycle of dependence on humanitarian organisations.

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CONSTITUTION

1. Name of the organisation

The name of the organisation will be Women on the Journey

2. Area of Operation

The area of operation shall be situated in Gauteng

3. Body corporate

The organisation shall:

- Exist in its own right, separately from its members
- Continue to exist even when its membership changes and there are different office bearers.
- Be able to own property and other possessions.
- Be able to sue and be sued in its own name.

4. Objectives

Main Objectives

Fight all kind of abuse towards women and children and make our rights to be respected

To be a body representing refugees and migrants women in our community

Promote and improve our skills (short course, trainings, further studies...)

3.4 Shoulder to cry on and pillar of strength for refugees and migrants women suffering from HIV/AIDS (provide counseling and referral to proper services).

Sub Objectives

- Facilitate integration, instruct, educate with a view to advancing the opportunities and conditions of our members in the civil, social fields as well as in industry, commerce, agriculture profession and the community in general of refugees and migrants women into local society
- Networking with national and local organisations
- Adopt consultative, educative and informative roles in its interaction with various organisations and institutions
- Support , initiate ,inform and undertake research into issues relating to migrant and refugee women, thus contributing to their development and ideologies

5. Income and Property

5.1 The organisation will keep a record of everything it owns

5.2 The organisation may not give any of its money or property to its members or office bearers; it can do this only when it pays for work that they did for the organisation. The payment must be proportional to the work that has been done.

5.3 A member of the organisation can get money back from the organisation for expenses that she paid for on behalf of the organisation.

5.4 Members and office bearers of the organisation do not have power or right over things that belong to the organisation and misuse them for their own benefits.

6. Membership and general meetings

6.1 If a person wants to become a member of the organisation, she/he will have to ask the organisation management's committee. The management committee has the right to say no.

6.2 Members of the organisation must always attend its general and ordinary meetings. At the annual general meeting, members exercise their right to determine the policy of the organisation.

6.3 Office bearers will serve for two years, but they can stand for re-election for another term in office after that. Depending on what kind of services they give to the organisation, they can stand for re-election into office again and again. This is as long as their services are needed and they are ready to give such services.

6.4 If a member of the management committee does not attend three management committee meeting in a row without having applied for obtaining leave of absence from the management committee, then the management committee will find a new member to take that person's position.

6.5. The management committee will meet once a month and more than half of members need to be at the meeting to make decisions that are allowed to be carried forward. This constitutes a quorum.

6.6. Minutes will be taken every meeting to record the decisions of the committee.

The minutes shall be confirmed as true record of proceeding by the next meeting of the management committee and shall thereafter be signed by the chairperson.

6.7The organisation has the right to form sub-committees. The decisions that sub-committees take must be given to the management committee. They then must decide whether to agree to them or not at its next meeting. This meeting should take place as soon as after the sub-committee's meeting. By agreeing to decisions the committee ratifies them.

6.8 All members of the organisation have to abide by decisions that are taken by the management committee.

7. Management

Board

The control and direction of the general business of the organisation shall be vested in the board that shall have the power to:

7.1 Administer the funds of the organisation

7.2 Appoint auditors in the incumbent auditors resigning or being removed from office for any reason whatsoever during the term of office.

7.3The aforesaid auditors shall act until the next annual general meeting and the same conditions shall apply.

7.4 Suspend any member from membership for bringing the organisation into disrepute or any other good cause provided that within one month of suspension,

An extraordinary meeting of the board is held for the purpose of considering the suspension. The meeting may, after giving the member an opportunity of being heard, either personally, or through a representative, or in writing.

7.5 Confirm the suspension in whole or in part.

7.6 Uplift or extend the suspension on such terms or conditions, as it deems fit.

7.7 Take such action as it deems fit.

7.8 The power of the board is to frame, rescind, and alter rules of procedure, not in conflict with the constitution, as it may deem necessary.

7.9 Appoint standing or sub-committees and to delegate to them such powers of authority as may be desirable from time to time.

8. The Executive and Management committees

8.1 The Executive committee shall consist of the chairperson, the vice/deputy-chairperson, the treasurer, honorary secretary, deputy-secretary and the public relation officer elected by the new chairperson.

8.2 The chairperson will be elected by all the members on the annual general meeting and confirmed by the board.

8.3 The chairperson or in her absence the deputy or vice-chairperson shall preside over all board meetings.

8.4 The management committee shall consist of the manager appointed by the board with authority over the heads of departments comprising of teachers, social welfare, meals on wheels and centre co-ordinators

8.5 The management shall have power to manage the business and administer the funds of the organisation during the period between meetings of the board.

9. Composition of the board

9.1 The board shall consist of no less than 11 and not more than 16 elected office bearers who in turn will elect: A chairperson, vice/deputy-chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and the public relation officer also a minimum of 7 ordinary members

9.2 Co-opted members

The board may co-opt not more than six persons who, in their view and because of their particular knowledge or experience and expertise can serve the organisation and shall include a representative from the two vulnerable groups.

10. Powers of the organisation

10.1 The management committee has the power and authority to raise funds or to invite and receive contributions.

10.2 The management committee does, however have the power to buy, hire or exchange for any property that its needs to achieve its objectives.

10.3 The management committee has the right by law to make proper management, including procedure for application, approval and termination of membership.

10.4 The board will decide on the power and function of office bearers.

11. Meetings and procedures of the committee

11.1 The management committee must hold at least two ordinary meetings each year.

11.2 The chairperson or two members of the committee can call a special meeting if they want to. But they must let the other management committee members know the date of the proposed meeting not less than 21 days before it is due to take place. They must also tell the other members of the committee which issues will be discussed at the meeting. If however, one of the matters to be discussed is to appoint new management committee members, then those calling the meeting must give other committee members not less than 30 days notice.

11.3 The chairperson shall act as a chairperson of the management committee.

If the chairperson does not attend a meeting then members of the committee who will be present, choose which one will chair the meeting.

This must be done before the meeting starts.

11.4 There must be a quorum whenever such meeting is held.

11.5 When the management committee will vote on issues, if the votes are equal on an issue, then the chairperson has either a second or deciding decision vote.

11.6 Minutes of all meetings must be kept safely and always be on hand for members to consult.

11.7 If the management committee thinks it is necessary, then it can decide to set up one or more sub-committees. It may decide to do so to get some work done quickly. Or it may want a sub-committee to do an inquiry, for an example. There must be at least three people on a sub-committee.

The sub-committee must report back to the management committee on its activities and its should do this regularly.

12. Annual general meetings

12.1 The annual general meetings must be held once every year, towards the end of the organisation's financial year.

12.2 The organisation should deal with the following business, amongst others, its annual general meeting:

12.3 Agree to the items to be discussed on the agenda

12.4 Write down who is there and who has sent apologies because they cannot attend.

12.5 Read and confirm the previous meeting's minutes with matters arising.

12.6 Chairperson's report

12.7 Treasurer's report

12.8 Changes to the constitution that members may want to make

12.9 Elect new office bearers

12.10 General

12.11 Closure

13. Finance

13.1 An accounting officer shall be appointed at the annual general meeting. His or her duty is to audit and check the finances of the organisation.

13.2 The treasurer's job is to control and keep proper record of all finances of the organisation.

He/she shall arrange for all funds to be put into the bank account in the name of the organisation.

13.3 Whenever funds are taken out of the bank account, the chairperson and at least two other members of the committee must sign the withdrawal or cheque.

13.4 The financial year of the organisation ends on the 28 February

13.5 The organisation's accounting record and report must be ready and handed to the director of the non profit organisations within six months after the financial year ends.

13.6 If the organisation has funds that can be invested, the funds may only be invested with registered financial institutions. These institutions are listed in section 1 of the financial institutions (investments funds) Act, 1984, or the organisation can get securities that are listed on a stock exchange control act, 1985. The organisation can go to different banks to seek advice on the best way to look after its funds.

14. Changes to the constitution

14.1 The constitution can be changed by a resolution. The resolution has to be agreed upon and passed by not less than 2 third of the members who are at the annual general meeting or special meeting. Members must vote at this meeting to change the constitution.

14.2 Two thirds of the members shall be present at a meeting (quorum) before a decision can be made to change the constitution.

Any general meeting may vote upon such a notion, if the details of the changes are set out in the notice referred to.

14.3 A written notice must go out not less than fourteen (14) days before the meeting at which the constitution are going to be proposed. The notice must indicate the changes to the constitution that will be discussed at the meeting

14.4 No amendments may be made which would have the effect of making the organisation cease to exist.

15. Dissolution

15.1 The dissolution may close down if at least two third of the members present and voting at a meeting convened for the purpose of considering such matter, are in favour of closing down.

15.2 When the organisation closes down its members has to pay off all its debts. After doing this, if there is property or money left over, it should be given in some way to another non-profit organisation that has similar objectives. The organisation's general meeting can decide what organisation this should be.

16. Adoption of the constitution

This constitution was approved and accepted by members of

Women on the Journey

At its special meeting held on.....

Chairperson

Secretary