

Progress Report 31 May 2017

Introduction

April and May were very eventful months in our calendar. Our activities included mentor training, meetings with officials in the Department of Education and deployment of mentors in schools to support learning and teaching. We are excited about the acceptability of our programme in schools and communities concerned. The project identifies unemployed young people aged between 18 - 25 and gives them skills and mentoring to help them to secure employment or to start their own small businesses. This is directly counteracting redundancy, crime and immorality among young people while their contribution to teaching and learning in schools sets them up as community experts.

Mentor Training & Function

We devoted the previous two months to effectively launch the project in Soweto starting with training of 20 participants. We are giving unemployed young people a sure start in life through training them in Community Development practice. These are 12 young ladies and 8 young men of age ranging from 18 to 25. They grew up and were educated in Soweto. They all have very humble backgrounds having been brought up mostly in single parent families. The trainees have very deep understanding of life in the township and we are having wonderful mutual information exchanges with them.

The two-dimensional training capacitates mentors with personal development, and, mentoring and coaching skills for them to support learners. We believe that people give what they have. As such our training helps mentors to be the person they want to see in the schools. Social transformation begins with personal change. In this regard, our mentor training begins with self-awareness, values and boundary setting, leadership, professional conduct and purpose driven life. We also facilitate development of their group work skills, understanding challenges faced by learners (mentor perspective) and understanding school structure and functioning.

We are currently halfway through this first part of training yet we witness tremendous personal growth among trainees. Last week Zinhle, one of the trainees said, "I have become the person I should have met in my school days". Like many in the group, Zinhle demonstrates confidence in her capacity to personally make it in life and influence positive change among young people. While they volunteer on our programme as mentors, the young people gain practical career development necessary for their CVs. They are also helped with interview readiness and job placements. Seven trainees will soon start undergoing business development coaching as they intent to run their own enterprises.

Engagements with Department of Education and Mentor Deployment

The project is well received by all the structures of the Department of Education: provincial, district and the local school level. We have had all the necessary approvals and endorsements by the Provincial and District offices. The school governing boards have readily welcomed our mentors and all the schools approached are willing to host them. Mentors are excited to work in the schools alongside teachers, supporting their peers to transform the fortunes of other young people in their society.

The Department of Education is giving us data base of girls who dropped out of school mainly due to teen pregnancies. Our community-grounded mentors will follow them up with a view to support them to return and complete school. The mentors are deployed in the nearest schools to their homes. This makes them useful in their immediate community of origin. This is encouraging community cohesion as they support other younger people who are familiar to them. They have become a valuable link between educators and parents in improving the teaching and learning environment.

Project Support

This is a cost-effective project where unemployed youths who are undergoing training to take up employment or coaching for self-help projects use their time to improve their communities. Churches are supporting our model as part of their mission projects. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa has adopted this model for 'Moral Regeneration' mission in township communities.

The main items in our project budget are staff costs, the transport required to support trainee placements in over 40 schools, learning materials such as stationery and manuals, training equipment and dignity packs to facilitate regular school attendance by girls in these underprivileged communities.

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