

Organizational Capacity Building in an HIV/AIDS-Affected Community

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Cape Town, South Africa

South Africa is home to 53 million people of various cultures, languages, and religions. Starting in 1948, legally institutionalized segregation, known as apartheid, established a racial classification system that marginalized black and coloured South Africans. In 1994, Nelson Mandela was the first democratically elected president of South Africa; his administration established a liberal constitution and eradicated apartheid.

South Africa still faces severe social issues post apartheid. 50% of South Africans live below the poverty line. The unemployment rate is 24.9% due, in part, to a lack of equal education and technical training. 5.6 million South Africans live with HIV/AIDS, making it the country with the highest prevalence in the entire world. Life expectancy at birth is only 49.4 years old.



Etafeni Day Care Centre Trust

Etafeni coordinates a spectrum of services to address problems faced by community members of Nyanga, a sub-economic township of Cape Town established during apartheid to house black South Africans. Many programs are devoted to the care of children affected by HIV/AIDS, including a preschool, an after-school program, and psychosocial support groups for caregivers. Etafeni also provides programming for adults which focus on learning and practicing skills that will lead to gainful employment.

Placement Information

My supervisor at Etafeni was Barbara Miller, Development Manager. I was tasked to work on projects that built capacity within individual programs of Etafeni and the organization as a whole.

Outcomes

My major accomplishments include:

- Drafted six project proposals to secure funding for individual programs of Etafeni
- Developed a holiday break curriculum for the orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) program
- Conducted a needs assessment of the income generation program and began initial research on forming a co-operative for graduates
- Created an assessment tool for the nutrition program and utilized the tool during distribution site visits
- Co-coordinated Mandela Day volunteer activities

Skills Developed

From my 12-week global field experience, I increased my ability to:

- Engage appropriately with community members of different backgrounds.
- Remain flexible in the field and adapt to unforeseen circumstances.
- Remain humble in regards to my work, my abilities, and my identities.



Lessons Learned

Before coming to Cape Town, I did not understand how I could practice global social work if I was only ever working with one community. After drawing parallels between Nyanga and Detroit daily, I began to see how global social work extends beyond location. We are all members of a global community, thus everyone's welfare is intrinsically linked. If I purposefully practice social work—regardless of my location—with global welfare in mind, then I am practicing global social work.

Connections

To the classroom:

- SW 560: Intro to Macro Practice
This class provided me with a foundation for writing grants and project proposals.
- SW 651: Planning for Community Change
This class prepared me well for respectfully engaging with community members and involving community members in the change process.

To my career:

The skills I have learned through my placement at Etafeni will be invaluable in my future career. Grant writing, curricula building, and conducting assessments are useful tools for any social worker. Culturally humble engagement is also important in working with individuals or communities.

Advice

Before your trip, talk with previous Cape Town interns to hear the strengths and challenges associated with Cross Cultural Solutions (CCS).

Reflection and debriefing are not a part of the CCS experience. Keep a journal while in field and schedule peer supervision with the other MSW interns.

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