



Thogomelo Project

Building South Africa's capacity to care for its community caregivers and protect vulnerable children

Statement of need

An estimated two million South African children have lost one or both parents to AIDS. They face challenges that tower above their years: an absence of parental protection, the burden of loss and grief, and, increasingly, a heightened vulnerability to child abuse, neglect and exploitation. In response, thousands of people have stepped up to volunteer in their communities. However, community members who assume the role of caring, supporting and protecting orphans and other vulnerable children often lack the skills and capacity to respond effectively. They face high stress levels and the potential for burnout.

Project aim

The Thogomelo project aims to care for and protect vulnerable children by increasing the knowledge, abilities and wellbeing of those who are responsible for them. With a dual focus on community caregiver support and child protection, the project incorporates the best and most promising practices from Africa. It is designed to become an enduring part of South Africa's child protection efforts. The project is now in the fourth year of its five-year pilot phase (October 2008 – September 2013).

Capacity development

Thogomelo is committed to holistic capacity development of which community caregiver training is only one part. The project aims to develop the content, facilitation and accreditation capacity of training service providers (TSPs) sub-contracted to the project, as well as to increase the pool of training service providers qualified to offer training in psychosocial support and child protection. Thogomelo also aims to strengthen the organisations hosting community caregivers by creating supportive work environments. Currently there are eight TSPs offering PSS and three offering Child Protection Skills Development Programmes – with a total of eleven assessors and nine moderators between them.

Going forward

Over the remaining 18 months of its current contract, Thogomelo will focus on ensuring sustainability of the skills development programmes. The project is currently preparing to implement a Quality Management Framework for provincial Department of Social Development (DSD) officials and TSPs. It will empower them with the programme management and quality assurance tools to implement and scale up the programme after the pilot phase.

Furthermore, Thogomelo is working to develop an evidence base to demonstrate impact. This will build on the outcomes of the mid-term evaluation in 2011 which provided emerging evidence that psychosocial wellbeing is enhanced through training and that caregivers demonstrate increased knowledge and improved practice in child protection.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Three accredited curricula registered with the Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority
- Three best practice case studies on the development of accredited curricula, capacity development for training service providers and incorporating gender in capacity development for community caregivers
- 1582 learners trained (years 1–3)
- Materials packages developed in support of the three curricula:
 - Learner manuals and facilitator guides
 - Assessment materials – learner workbooks, practical workbooks, summative assessments
 - A Psychosocial Wellbeing guide for Community Caregivers
 - A Community Caregiver Diary
 - A Child Protection Resource Guide
 - Child Protection CD-ROM
 - Various posters to be used as learning aids in the classroom
 - A community caregiver toolkit of resources contained in a Shweshwe bag with toolkit (candle, umbrella, stress ball and additional reading materials)

*“Thogomelo”
means “caring” or
“taking care” in Venda,
one of South Africa’s
11 national languages.*

Overview of programmes

Psychosocial Support Skills Development Programme for Community Caregivers

The Psychosocial Support (PSS) programme assists community caregivers to identify the causes and signs of psychosocial stress and develop coping strategies – to take care of their own psychosocial wellbeing. The nine modules cover: the role and responsibilities of a community caregiver; understanding psychosocial wellbeing; dealing with stress, death, bereavement and frightening experiences; creating a caring organisation, and basic child protection knowledge and skills to enable community caregivers to respond to vulnerable, abused, neglected or exploited children.

Child Protection Skills Development Programme for Supervisors of Community Caregivers

The Child Protection programme is intended for supervisors of community caregivers. The curriculum focuses on the community caregivers' role in caring for and protecting children in the context of South African law – to ensure the child's best interests are upheld. The Child Protection skills development programme comprises eight modules, including: understanding children; vulnerability, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children; responding to children; and building child champions in community caregiving organisations.

Supportive Supervision Skills Development Programme for Supervisors of Community Caregivers

The Supportive Supervision programme was developed to compliment the PSS programme for community caregivers. The focus is on encouraging supervisors to play a more supportive role in assisting community caregivers to take care of their own psychosocial wellbeing. The skills development programme comprises of three modules: psychosocial wellbeing and self care; supportive supervision; and creating a caring organisation.

The Thogomelo project aims to care for and protect vulnerable children by increasing the knowledge, abilities and wellbeing of those who are responsible for them.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Caregivers from Limpopo and North West give their thoughts on the value of psychosocial support and the importance of training

“I value the wealth of information I got from Thogomelo. I wish that other caregivers from other drop-in centres can receive trainings, so that they can further train their colleagues. This will help caregivers to know what to do and how to work with each other.”

– THOGOMELO LEARNER, LIMPOPO

“...before we started we were like empty tins but now they are full...”

– THOGOMELO LEARNER, LIMPOPO

“In my organisation we didn't know anything and when I come after the training ... then I told them that we must have caregiver support groups for debriefing and talking about the problems we have in the field. After that they enjoyed to come to work because they know how to deal with the problem.”

– THOGOMELO LEARNER, NORTH WEST

ABOUT THE TEAM

The Thogomelo Project is a collaboration between South Africa's Department of Social Development and the US Agency for International Development's AIDSTAR programme. The project is implemented by consortium partners PATH, which provides managerial oversight as the prime contractor; Health and Development Africa, which takes day-to-day leadership for project implementation and child protection; and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance which provides expertise in the area of caregiver support.

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