



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
POTCHEFSTROOM CAMPUS

The G.I.R.R.L Project

Final Report 2010

This report is submitted as final requirement for the commitment of funding for the implementation of The G.I.R.R.L. Project (Girls in Risk Reduction Leadership). This report accounts for the period ending November, 2009 and the subsequent following April, 2010.

This serves as the final report for the implementation of the project detailing all activities held and conducted up to the completion of the community event in the Tshing Community of Ventersdorp, North West Province.



African Centre for
Disaster Studies

African Centre for Disaster Studies (ACDS)
Research Focus Area: Social Transformation
North West University PUK Campus
Private Bag x 6001
Potchefstroom
Tel: +27 (0) 18 299 1634
Fax: +27(0) 18 293 5266
Email: kylah.forbes_biggs@nwu.ac.za

This final report represents the findings and accomplishments of the G.I.R.R.L. Project hosted in the Tshing community until the end period November 2009. This will document the completion of the project in terms of the achievements of the milestone goals identified.

CURRENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To the report date the project has successfully completed the final component of the project implementation phase. This phase is the follow up to the session implementation documented in the mid-term report submitted at the mid stages of work. Within this section a number of core activities demarcated as the 'project milestones' were identified and finalized.

Based on the original plans which were anticipated, the stakeholder meeting would be conducted as defined by the lessons learned and critical observations made in the Maquassi Hills Project. This initial decision would serve as a means to host a collaborative and proactive workshop rather than a briefing meeting. This again was designed to maximize the contributions of the stakeholder body while minimizing the time demands on them to attend meetings regarding matters on which they have already been introduced to in details at the commencement of the project.

However, due to the immense timeline constraints and with the project finishing so late in the year just before the Christmas holiday period, it was deemed to be ineffectual to host a final stakeholder session for feedback when such low stakeholder turnout would be guaranteed by the timing. Instead the situation was analyzed and at that point a decision was made to avoid the stakeholder meeting in lieu of the progress being made to adopt the project into the scope of local interest. What was openly communicated and observed was the inherent and unprompted actions of local stakeholder bodies to join with the participants and create opportunities for collaboration or support. Even the participants themselves made the decision to expand the ideals of project within their school in order to involve other female students in G.I.R.R.L. Project classes as a means of spreading the benefits to others.

In attempt to observe if this approach is sustainable, the project management has been following the progress of the girls and the stakeholders to ensure that the expectations of project continuity were being maintained. The close proximity to Potchefstroom (the project management centre) allows to for easier communication with stakeholders and participants in order to monitor the situation despite the closure of the formalized project.

STAKEHOLDERS

Despite initial decisions to host the stakeholder meeting at the beginning of December 2009 in line with similar experiences in Phase 1 of the project hosted in Maquassi Hills (Wolmaransstad), observed changes in the flow of the project created an opportunity to observe the natural interest created within the community. Instead of being prompting to participate in formalized meetings, many of the stakeholders took pro-active positions following the community event to involve the participants in local projects or contact with them.

Ordinarily the purpose of the stakeholder workshop serve to create an opportunity to brainstorm ideas for the community to conceptualize possible roles for participants to become involved in the initiatives of local departments, NGOs or within the school itself. It is ultimately a sounding board where discussions are held and suggestions are made for community representatives to promote their institution and visuals places for trained participants to give back to the community through service and support.

Stakeholders Identified and Involved

:

Mr. Victor Mogonediwa - Thuto Boswa High School (Principal)
 Ms. Elona Masote - Thuto Boswa High School (Life Skills Teacher)
 Cllr. Mojahi- Mayor's Office Ventersdorp (Local Gender Department)
 Mr. Tseko Marake - Youth Center Ventersdorp (Manager)
 Ms. Puleng Motaung - Department of Health (Reproductive Health & HIV)
 Ms. Belinda Madikizela - Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality Disaster Center
 Mr. T.J Swarts - Fire Department Ventersdorp
 Mr. Solomon Mere - Love Life Ventersdorp
 Ms. Nthabiseng Mataboge - Department of Social Development Ventersdorp (Social Worker)
 Ms. Gwiji - Mayor's Office Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality

In particular, Tseko Marake and Solomon Mere have been particularly active in recruiting participants to become involved in youth based activities in Ventersdorp. Mr. Mogonediwa and Ms. Masote's support of the participants in their desire to form a "G.I.R.R.L" Club wherein information was passed to other students with the project girls taking on their roles as leaders to others in their school. Ms. Madikizela also invited the participants to partake in a youth paraffin safety training session held in April 2010 for addition specialized training to help them spread knowledge and build more resilient communities. Ms. Nthabiseng Matoboge has taken on a significant role not only as a local supporter of the girls in terms of follow-up care and advice but has also been a role model for many who identified aspirations of pursuing careers in social work.

FACILITATORS

Thirty (30) facilitators from various sectors took part in presenting the various sessions across the span of the project. The advantage of having more time to plan and the closer proximity to the base of our operations, compared to the previous Maquassi Hills' Project, helped to encourage repeated support from facilitators to investigate local persons and facilitators from previous projects.

FACILITATORS	ORGANIZATION/ DEPARTMENT/AGENCY	SESSION TOPIC
Rene Phethlu	NWU Department of Nursing	Mental Health and Coping Strategies
Cpt. Adele Myburg	South African Police Services (Potchefstroom)	Personal Safety and Self Defence
Elize Harris	NWU Department of Education	Environmental Awareness
Toto Tshona	Student NWU Dept of Education	Environmental Awareness
Prof van Rensburg	NWU Dept of Environmental Sciences	Environmental Excursion
James Mothosola	NWU HIV/ AIDS Programme	Peer Education (Sexual Health)
Nkele Mothosola	Counselor	
Puseletso Lebitso	NWU HIV/ AIDS Programme	
Tiro Swarts (Fire Chief)	Fire Department Ventersdorp	Disaster Planning and Community Mapping
John Tsagae		Fire Safety
Frederick Kruger		
Nzingo Bantsejang		
Samuel Mathope		
Mariette Swanepoel	NWU Department of Biokinetics	Physical Health*
Tseko Marake	Ventersdorp Youth Center	Community Involvement*

Nthabiseng Mataboge	Dept of Social Development	
Solomon Mere	Love Life	
Puleng Motaung	Department of Health	
Instructor	Global Learning Services	Buddy Aid
Catrien Louw	NWU Communication Department	Effective Communication
Marike Williams		
Yolanda Maartens		
Kristel Fourie	African Centre for Disaster Studies (ACDS)	Disaster Planning and Community Mapping
Kylah Forbes-Biggs	African Centre for Disaster Studies (ACDS)	
Marliaan Erasmus	NWU Career Centre	Positive thinking, personal evaluation and after school skills
Elizabeth Mokotsane	Dept of Health	Family planning
Helena Hoogstad	NWU Dept of Social Sciences	Personal philosophy
Candice Kastopolous		

*Joint session

TRAINING SESSIONS

The primary responsibilities involved identifying service providers for transportation and food arrangements for the project. As such the North-West University Transportation Department was utilized based on its easy accessibility and discounted rates for university personnel for hiring vehicles for our travel needs regarding the project. Once again the logistical planning for the project was organized and confirmed prior to the sessions. Catering requirements were identified and arrangements were made with Foodways Catering to provide suitable snack packs for our participants and facilitators that could be handed out at the end of the sessions.

This method was selected rather than formal hot food based on the realization that it would be unfair to ask participants to stay for an extended period after the sessions in order to sit and eat a meal. This was primarily to the already high demands on the time for homework and extra-curricular activities as well as for safety reasons (walking home after dark). A final menu was prepared with a selection of light and healthy foods, which also served to reinforce the benefits of eating a balanced diet.

The training was launched on 22nd July 2009 at the Thuto Boswa High School in Ventersdorp with twice weekly sessions held for a combined time of five (5) hours per week.

Session 1: Introduction and Team Building

The session was lead by the project team and provided an overview of the project, a reinforcement of the core values (including) and established the foundations for effective decision-making. Ice-breakers were used to help the participants and the project team to gain mutual trust. The girls were asked to define their own project rules which included no tolerance for late comers, cell phone use, disrespect of others and violence.

The schedule was presented in order to help the participants become familiar with the upcoming session topics to also help ensure that they felt at ease with the schedule. Each participant was given a pen and notebook for note-taking.

The team-building component consisted of various activities with post-activity debriefing as a means of conveying the important lessons concerning teamwork and group dynamics. All twenty girls were in attendance for the first session. All twenty (20) participants attended the first session.

Session 2: Team-Building, Decision-Making

The project team continued this session concluding the team-building component and following on with effective decision-making. The decision-making component was introduced with activities selected that encouraged lateral thinking and was reinforced with group discussions. All twenty (20) girls attended this session.

Session 3: Physical Health

Mariette Swanepoel, a biokineticist at the NWU Potchefstroom campus returned to host the Physical Health session. She provided instruction to the girls of a series of exercises (circuit training) that could be done at home specifically in the small spaces commonly available in township housing. Each girl also received an exercise elastic as part of the programme that they could use to assist in their strength training.

Ms. Swanepoel then addressed the issue of nutrition with participants to help build understanding while presenting the importance of nutrition and exercise in supporting good physical and mental health. This was particularly important based on the incidence of HIV infections among this group of participants. Many of these participants repeatedly miss school due to related illnesses and subsequent treatment. The need to maintain healthy eating and lifestyles was emphasized as a critical way to help defend against the onset of opportunistic infections and to improve T-cell counts. All twenty (20) girls completed the physical health session.

Session 4: Mental Health and Coping Strategies

Ms. Rene Phethlu from the Nursing School at North-West University (NWU) Potchefstroom campus was invited back to conduct this session. Group discussions were the primary forum of learning wherein various topics concerning mental health were introduced. The term *Africanism* was defined and discussions evolved regarding determination, confidence and life expectations. Based on experiences from the previous site a strong emphasis was placed on rape as a critical issue needing more attention within communities. In the weeks following this session one of the participants approached the Project Coordinator regarding a friend who had recently been raped.

Although the facilitator's discussion was enjoyed the project team gathered that there was not as much focus on coping strategies for example - how to handle death of a family member or how to recognize depression or similar affective illnesses. The session was presented more as a motivational session despite our original requests for the aforementioned content. It has been decided that further assistance will be sought from a community social worker that can provide more practical tools for these girls to stay mentally healthy in the circumstances that they face. Nineteen (19) girls attended the session on mental health and coping strategies.

Session 5: Personal Safety and Self Defence

The fifth component was hosted by Capt. Adele Myburg from the South African Police Services (SAPS) Potchefstroom. Capt. Myburg has a background and personal interest in working with community awareness programmes and in particular she teaches children and women how to be safe by using basic self-defense techniques. Her attitude and ease with the girls in the Maquassi Hills Project reaffirmed that she was an obvious choice for Ventersdorp. She provided information on various approaches that could be used to defend oneself and how to use ingenuity in times of threat to overwhelm an attacker. Capt. Myburg also demonstrated and contextualized escape techniques. Most significantly, issues surrounding rape were discussed including places of safety, what to do in the event of rape, preserving evidence and procedures for conducting a rape kit by local law enforcement. Once again this session and its pertinence to rape was quite significant based on the threats posed to girls in this community. Nineteen (19) girls were in attendance for this session.

Session 6: Personal Philosophy and evaluation

Helena Hoogstad and Candice Kastopolous from the NWU Dept of Social Sciences presented a session on self-evaluation and philosophy of life. Each girl had to draw the important things in her life and explained the elements that appeared to the rest of the group. The session was presented in a relaxed manner and the girls found it exciting to discover something new about herself. They learnt about their worldview and the way things impact their lives. It was a creative session focusing on the use of symbols and sounds as a means of expression. Nineteen (19) girls attended the session.

Session 7: Career guidance

Marliaan Erasmus tackled the daunting task of enlightening the girls to a world of opportunity merely by believing in themselves and working hard at school. They evaluated their personality types and matched it with some basic careers for going forward. The girls realized that they could be anything they want to be, no matter their circumstances, if they work hard they will succeed. Ms. Erasmus has a true passion for assisting the youth and patiently explained the various career paths that the girls could follow. Even though they may not be in the matriculation year, it is vital to instill a sense of self-belief from an early age. Eighteen (18) girls attended the session.

Session 8 and 9: Peer education and Sexual health

The session was presented by James Mothosola (HIV/AIDS Programme at the NWU Potchefstroom campus) with assistance from his wife Nkele Mothosola (a counselor) and Puseletso Lebitso (peer educator from the NWU HIV/AIDS programme). The importance of the G.I.R.R.L Project was discussed within the context of peer support and community responsibility. A group discussion commenced regarding risky behavior and the issue of HIV/AIDS was introduced using various decision-making activities based on the "Scrutinize" campaign whereby the participants were motivated to "Flip HIV to HIVictory". Due to the reality of HIV within the group, additional attention was given to the role of judgment, prejudice and stereotypes in shading the decision-making process. The characteristics of a peer educator were discussed as well as the role of peer educators in schools and communities. Nineteen (19) girls attended this session.

Session 10: Family planning

The unique composition of the group of participants called for individual attention to specific areas of their lives. The fact that nine (9) of the girls are heads of household, was a huge concern to the project team and professional advice was called in. Elizabeth Mokotsane a community health nurse from the Department of Health has a lot of personal and professional experience regarding the matter. She has been involved with the GIRRL project for over a year now in the Ikageng site and in supporting Maquassi Hills despite her other work commitments. One of the most significant contributions was her ability to step in and explain the importance of 'responsibility' to the girls. The fact that most of them are still very young and are now faced with adult situations and decision making positions, meant that they needed the correct advice from someone who has experience and insight. Needless to say the girls enjoyed the maternal nature of Ms. Mokatsane and she was able to establish the level of comfort needed to allow them open up about the issues in their lives and the struggles they are faced with on a daily basis. Nineteen (19) girls attended the session.

Session 11: Community Involvement

Seeing as the G.I.R.R.L. Project is a community-based, working within a specific community, it is vital to get the various role-players at local level involved with the girls and plays a large role in the sustainability of the project. The aim is that each of the various representatives at this session would be able to utilize the girls in future and make use of their fantastic new skills and capacities. Each facilitator explained to the girls how they could get involved with their various institutions and emphasized the fact that volunteering at local level could open up many doors in future. Nineteen (19) girls participated in this session.

Session 12: Social and personal issues

Due to the delicate issue of suicide that was raised by a few of the girls and the unfortunate experience of one of the participants who discovered her deceased brother in the family during the course of the project this topic was included and emphasized in the discussions. This emphasized the need to address this issue and other aspects in the girls' lives that could make them feel depressed, alone and desperate. Nthabiseng Mataboge from the Department of Social Development was sought as one of the dynamic social workers from the Ventersdorp area as a local facilitator. In her experience she has become familiar with many of the stressors and strains that challenge the participants on a daily basis. By making use of a group discussion setting, the girls analysed the various scenarios leading to suicide and Ms. Mataboge assisted them in identifying coping mechanisms when they are faced with a social or personal issue or problem. Fifteen (15) participants attended the session.

Session 13: Disaster Management

This session was presented by Mr. Tiro Swarts from the Ventersdorp Fire Department and the PIER Project. The objectives of the session were to introduce basic concepts within disaster studies to the participants in a manner, which reflected their level education, social context and degree of understanding. The session focused around a group discussion designed to explain disasters, hazards, vulnerability and risk within the context of the lives of the girl participants within their community. Eighteen (18) girls attended this session.

Session 14: Fire Safety

The session was presented by Mr. John Tsagae, a fire fighter at the Ventersdorp Fire Department with support from Mr. Dikane from the Potchefstroom Fire Department. The fire fighters at the station also assisted in the presentation detailing the handling of the equipment, and displaying the uniform worn by fire fighters for use during house and veldt fires. Mr. Dikane presented information regarding fire and paraffin safety and how participants can volunteer for public awareness initiatives. The session was held onsite at the Ventersdorp fire station. All twenty (20) girls attended this session.

Session 15: Environmental Awareness

This session was presented by Ms. Elize Harris who is a lecturer at the Education Faculty, in the area of Environmental Awareness. The objectives for the session were again; to create awareness on local environmental issues, to stimulate dialog and co-operation among the girls in order to create a new lifestyle which is based on meeting everyone's needs, explaining and discussing *Recycle, Re-use and Reduce* principles and exploring entrepreneurial opportunities regarding the use of waste materials. The objectives were successfully met by having discussions on the various subjects. The girls then made photo frames from recycled waste materials. At the community event, each girl will receive a picture taken during the project in her frame. A student teacher, Toto Tshona also attended the session and helped to motivate the participants as young women to be strong and make positive choices in their future. Nineteen (19) girls attended this session.

Session 16: Environmental Excursion

Prof Leon van Rensburg arranged an excursion where the girls were taken to Rustenburg. Here they visited the Impala Platinum mine and met the inspirational group of ladies of Mononsa Fertilizer. Their passion for the environment was infectious and they really showed the girls a lot about making compost and explained how easy it was to start this initiative at home. The day was such a success that they did not want to leave. Prof van Rensburg showed the girls horrific images and shared scary statistics relating to pollution and waste in South Africa and explained the effect this has on our society. The day was a huge success, thanks to Prof van Rensburg and the team at Mononsa Fertilizer. All twenty (20) girls went on the excursion to Rustenburg.

Session 17: First Aid Training

An instructor from Global Learning Services in Klerksdorp trained the participants in Buddy Aid. The participants gained certification in Buddy Aid and are recognized with this designated for a period of three (3) years. This session was presented over two (2) days and nineteen (19) and eighteen (18) participants attended these two days respectively.

Session 18: Disaster Planning and Community Mapping

Kylah Forbes-Biggs in her presentation introduced central concepts to disaster risk reduction including 'disasters', 'vulnerability', 'hazards' and 'risk'. These terms were explained within the context of Ventersdorp and particularly with significance to the target audience of the participants. Community risk assessment activities were conducted including hazard ranking exercises, problem trees, community mapping, community timelines which helped to contextualize the relevance within the community. The problem tree activity ensured the understanding of the root causes and implications of the hazards identified by the ranking activities. The hazards that the participants' identified as critical threats to their welfare were crime, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. Secondary issues that the girls identified related to alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancy. Community map drawing was central to establishing an appreciation of how the participants view their community and recognize the resources, threats and assets available in the area. Community timelines

were conducted to help understand how the community developed within across the lifespan of the participants. All twenty (20) participants attended this session.

Session 19: Effective Communication: Audience and Listening skills

Catrien Louw and Marike Williams presented the audience analysis session. The participants learnt what different audiences exist, how to adapt a message for a specific audience and discussed what audience they will potentially target when it comes to their community event. The listening skills section was presented by Kristel Fourie who emphasized the importance of good listening skills, as most communication problems relate to poor listening which leads to misunderstandings. All twenty (20) participants attended this session.

Session 20: Effective Communication: Professionalism, Leadership and G.I.R.R.L. power

Yolanda Maartens presented the professionalism, leadership and the G.I.R.R.L. 'power' component, which helped the girls to realize that they are both ladies and leaders within their community. Their role as role models was emphasized and they learnt all about good leadership and what makes a leader. The ability to draw on inner strength and build team spirit through the G.I.R.R.L. 'power' session which was also presented in this session. All twenty (20) participants attended this session.

Session 21: Community Event Planning

The community event is held in order to share what the participants have learnt and plays a vital role in information dissemination to both stakeholders and community members. The participants had to identify their audience based on who they thought would benefit the most from what they have learnt throughout the project. The girls based their ideas on the hazards that they had identified and ranked within their community, as was done during the community-based disaster planning session with Kyla Forbes-Biggs. In the end it was decided that the participants would have the event in Extension 2 within the Tshing Community Hall. This was an accessible location for stakeholders, participants and community members alike. Sixteen (16) participants attended this session.

Community Event Practice Session 1

The final ideas were shared regarding the community event and the following activities were jointly decided on: a drama dealing with alcohol and drug abuse, touching on violence and crime. Three poems would also be presented by three of the participants focusing on unplanned pregnancy, violence and crime and drug abuse respectively. The participants clearly knew what they wanted to do and worked on their very own G.I.R.R.L. project song. Nineteen (19) participants attended the practice session. This was one of two practice

sessions where the G.I.R.R.L. project team was present, the rest of the time the girls practiced independently.

Community Event Practice Session 2

The second practice session was held at the venue (Extension 2, Community Hall) so that the participants could practice on stage, see how they would enter the stage and arrange the logistics of the actual performance. Fifteen (15) participants attended this practice session.

Community Event Dress Rehearsal

A dress rehearsal was held at the community hall. This was a very successful session as the participants were well rehearsed. Final touches were made to the poems and the participants presented their project theme song with pride. All twenty (20) participants attended the dress rehearsal.

COMMUNITY EVENT: 28 November 2009

The community event was held on the 28th of November 2009 and can be considered a huge success. This could not have been achieved without the help of the Disaster Centre and the Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality. The girls decided on the content of the community event. Crime, drug abuse, violence, alcohol abuse, HIV/Aids and unplanned pregnancy were the main themes identified.

These themes were presented in a number of ways. Participants devised a drama, which was used to touch on the issues of crime, drug and alcohol abuse and HIV/AIDS. Three poems, authored by the participants were also presented focusing on the issues of unplanned pregnancy, violence and crime and drug abuse.

Overview of the Community Event

The Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality was responsible for inviting the VIPs from government and arranged the catering in a tent outside the hall. This worked very well. The attendance was excellent and each participant invited fifteen (15) friends and family members. All the stakeholders of the project and facilitators were invited. The attendance was approximated at close to three hundred persons.

Yolanda Maartens, project manager for the Thuto Boswa project and Councilor Dlamini (MMC of Disaster Risk Management) presented the welcome address. Speeches were provided by a representative of the Mayor of the Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, Prof. Dewald van Niekerk of the African Centre for Disaster Studies and Mrs Elona Masote from Thuto Boswa secondary school. Pastor Mosenogi opened the ceremony with a prayer.

The participants entered onto the stage singing their chosen theme song: "Lean on me" and were followed by Sky Boyz who entertained the audience with dancing. The participants presented a drama, which was followed by the Baitswingwao Cultural Group. The following participants then presented their poems to the audience: Kefilwe Morake, Flora Leeto and Emily Kgarudi. The participants ended their event by singing their very own G.I.R.R.L. power song. This was followed by the prize giving and award ceremony.

PARTICIPANTS

During the selection process, the life skills teacher Mrs. Masote, was of immense value as she showed true insight and understanding of the social issues faced by the girls. In the end the decision was taken to work with a group of girls, irrespective of their age, between the grades 8 and 11. Thus although some of the girls may already be twenty and twenty one years of age, none were in their matriculating year as it was found in previous projects that the participants battle to attend each session as they have exams and additional preparations. A prevalent issue in this area was the age diversity of students wherein many students were much older than standard age guidelines would expect. Ordinarily girls of this age range would have completed school and likely be in a position to seek employment.

Nine of the girls are heads of households, which meant that they are faced additional social pressures beyond that of the average high school girl. These additional pressures and responsibilities, though difficult to eradicate in such a project was discussed and addressed in the content of the sessions based on its overwhelming contribution to social vulnerability within South African society.

HIV/AIDS is a prevalent social issue within the community surrounding Thuto Boswa and the high prevalence of HIV infections re-emphasized the realization that many our girls may be faced directly with issues relating to HIV/AIDS (whether personal infection or infection within the family unit). Although attendance has been excellent, those girls who were absent at times cited illness and treatment as their reasons. It is clear that the girls in the community were not scared to speak freely regarding their treatment and felt comfortable with the facilitators and project manager to discuss personal matters.

The participants of the G.I.R.R.L. Project Thuto Boswa are extremely committed and attendance has been superb since the start of the project. Although they are not originally affiliated as friends, they managed to act amiably and deal with conflicting views rather well. Overall the participants have been eager to participate and learn, they are very independent and have the potential of becoming great leaders in their community.

SUMMARY

The project was completed in relatively good time based on the constraints of school and national holidays, exam periods and limited meeting times due to school hours. The primary alteration to the project implementation was regarding the stakeholder workshop

which was minimize in significance based on the students and stakeholders own interest and drive to investigate and create opportunities for collaboration and support within their various sectors. Contact will be kept with the various stakeholders.

We have had strong support from the school including the life skills teacher and the principal. Our participants have been eager to engage in discussions and were well-behaved in the sessions. Some of the HIV positive participants have been struggling to attend sessions because of their regimented medical treatment at the local hospital/clinic however despite their occasional absences they are quite active in the program.

All the sessions have been well received by the participants. Attendance was excellent throughout and the girls showed commitment to the end. The project was well received by the community and again the community event proved vital when it came to information dissemination and also to share the objectives of the project.

Most of what the project team has learnt has to do with preparation and participant sensitization and finally the involvement of stakeholders and building sessions to cater for the participants' specific needs. Again it is clear that without the support of the school principal and staff a project like this would be almost impossible. Overall the project was a success and the project follow up (see below) reflects this.

PROJECT FOLLOW-UP 2010

Through regular contact with participants, the principal, and the life-skills teacher, has enabled the project team to follow and measure the progress of the project post-implementation.

The participants have truly grown since the project and have take own initiative to continue the project and get more girls involved. The participants now have their own G.I.R.R.L. club after school. They have arranged their own classroom and meet 3 times a week after school. Here they revisit what they have learnt, recap some of the sessions and share ideas, talk about problems, sing songs and just have fun together. This activity is also important as it distracts them from negative behaviours and mischief which often cases girls to get in trouble and end up in even more vulnerable positions through pregnancy, rape and abuse. It stimulates them to learn and share their knowledge with others girls in similar situations within the community which serves as a means of driving social change and ideologies. Where girls see other girls leading by example and taking on leadership roles within the school and the broader community it creates better opportunities for others to also step forward and continue to make great strides.

The original participants have now recruited ten (10) new girls as four (4) of the original participants are no longer attending the school have apparently had to relocate out of the Ventersdorp area. Although it is sad to think that some of the original participants have moved, it is excellent to see the enthusiasm in the new members' faces. Perhaps it presents the opportunity for other small girl based leadership initiatives to be created in their new locations based on the experiences shared with G.I.R.R.L. These original participants have

clearly taken the objectives of the project to heart and are living proof of the success of the G.I.R.R.L. project.

Together with the Disaster Centre the participants attended a paraffin safety day in Klerksdorp and again got the opportunity to further their knowledge and improve their skills. It is vital that the project team is always informed of such excursions and opportunities, as this is how we measure the sustainability of the project and the contribution each stakeholder has made. We look forward to working with the Disaster Centre in the near future.

Yolanda Maartens
Project Manager

Kylah Forbes-Biggs
Project Coordinator

