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Young Women’s Voices

THEME: …hard work and good choices in life…

Issue 2

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Letter from CIET

Welcome to the second issue of the Young Women’s Voices bulletin. The bulletin tells the stories of young women in Southern Africa who have made a choice to pursue a safer, healthier lifestyle. It connects groups of young women across Botswana, Namibia, and Swaziland, providing a platform for their stories. Other people will also be interested to read these inspiring stories, but Young Women's Voices is mainly for You, young women working hard in your communities.

A year ago, we shared stories from Namibia, Botswana and Swaziland of women overcoming challenges to take control of their lives. This issue follows the achievements of some of these young women, and introduces other groups taking their first steps. Hard work and good choices in life is the theme of this issue. It celebrates your achievements in forming sustainable groups and undertaking entrepreneurial activities, and mentions some other young women taking their first steps by attending workshops and starting to work as a group. In this issue we congratulate you young women for choosing to live a safer, healthier life.

Making life changes is not easy; young women face many challenges, such as poverty, insecurity, lack of information, lack of positive role models and mentors, difficult access to capital, and many more. We applaud you for trying, celebrate your resilience, and cheer you to continue your efforts with determination.

Here, you will read the story of a group of young women in Namibia who have started the first bakery in their community; and of a group of women in the north of Namibia who invited their community to celebrate their achievements. You will learn about a group of young women in Swaziland meeting for the first time for a training workshop, and read their personal views about the workshop. From Botswana, you will be inspired by groups of young women working hard, and dreaming big. None of these young women have had it easy in their struggle to take control of their lives, but we celebrate their choice and determination to keep going despite the challenges they face and the mistakes they have made along the way.

We hope these stories will inspire you, motivate you and make you feel appreciated in your efforts.

Editorial team,

Young Women’s Voices
Taking the first steps: a workshop in Mantambe

A key objective of CIET's work with young women in Southern Africa is to help them to become choice-enabled instead of choice-disabled. The workshop in Mantambe, Swaziland, is the first step on this road for a group of young women.

The young women came forward to participate in a three day training to build some important personal skills and help them to become confident, independent, productive young women with an interest in entrepreneurship. On a cold Tuesday morning, the women trickled into the small hall that usually housed the community kindergarten school.

Sis Zanele, one of CIET's coordinators, welcomed the eager young women, thanking them for braving the cold and the drizzle. After the young women introduced themselves, Sis Sene, a CIET fieldworker, facilitated an introductory group exercise and handed out nametags. The young participants agreed the ground rules of the workshop.

The workshop did not take the typical “talking at you” approach. Instead, many “games” and other exercises helped the participants to come to grips with concepts like self-esteem, styles of communication, negotiating skills, leadership qualities, and group working.

Specific sessions covered issues about sexuality, gender violence and HIV risk. In one session, the young women shared their own personal life experiences, and their hopes and fears for the future, encouraging and learning from each other.

At the end of the second day, the facilitators asked the young women to go away and analyse the opportunities available in their community and come up with a business idea. The next morning each one of them shared their ideas, including sewing, starting a poultry farm, selling cosmetics, opening a catering business and many others. They also discussed possible ways they could raise capital to start their enterprise. The young women discussed what sort of enterprise they could undertake together. They identified their strengths and weaknesses as a group, and reached consensus about what business to start with.

These young women have taken an important first step by coming together as a group and agreeing on a business idea. They will have many challenges to overcome as they seek to work together in an enterprise and adopt a safer, healthier lifestyle. We commend them for taking the first steps and encourage them to be resilient.
Comments from young women in Mantambe after attending the workshop

I was happy with the workshop because there is a lot that I learnt and also got to know people from my community so that we can be able to come up with one agreed decision. (Nginjabulile ngaleworkshop ngoba kuningi engikufundile nokwazi abantu basendaweni ukuthi sizohlangana sense intoenyodwa sonke.)

Dumsile

The workshop was good. (I workshop ngiyizwe imnandi)
- I got life skills. (Ngithole ulwazi kabanzi ngempilo)
- I learnt how when I am in a fix I must share with others that can help me. (Ngabona ukuthi uma ngisenkingeni, ngiyikhipele kwabanye ngizosizakala)
- The importance of respecting the next person. (Bumcoka bokuthi omunye umuntu umnike isigaba sakhe)
- I also got the skill of how to get along with other people. (Ngathola indlela yokuziphilisa nabanye abantu)

Hlengiwe Mamba

The workshop left me with knowledge about business skills as well as behaviour as a young person. (Leworkshop ingishiye nginolwazi mayelana nebinessa engingayisungula. Nokutu ngingumuntu omusha kumele ngiziphathe.)

Maphanga Sithuthukile

I was happy because I got skills on how to take care of myself. (Ngivengijabula kakhulu ngobe ngithole lwazi ngetiphatha)

Kwanere Ntuli

The workshop helped me a lot, I will now know how to talk to other people, and this is something I was not able to do. (I workshop ingijabulisile futhi ingisize ekutheni sengizokwazi ukukhulumisana nalabanye bantu kanti yinto bengingayikhoni.)

Lungile Nhleko

I learnt a lot of things. Including talking and treating the next person with respect. (Ngifundzetinftpelo letinyeti. Lokufaka ekezatsi kunkhulumisa umunfti kaayeneku tiphatsakahle)

Bavumile Mazibuka
Kangongo is a small rural town in Northern Namibia. Access to electricity is a luxury for many households, public transport is scarce and people often have to walk long distances. Nonetheless, the people of Kangongo are hard-working and enthusiastic.

The young women of Kangongo had been preparing for the feast for months. As we gathered in the small tent, hiding from the sun’s strong rays, but not escaping from its heat, we were all very aware of the excitement. The CIET team in Namibia had been working with these young women for more than a year and knew just how important this occasion was for them. The air was pregnant with heat, the smell of sweat, excitement and anticipation. But before we tell you the story of the feast, let us first tell you the inspiring story of this group of young women who opened the first butchery in Kangongo.

They first analysed the needs of the community, looking for an entrepreneurial activity to meet these needs. They realised that members of the community loved meat, but there was no butchery nearby, so people could not eat meat as often as they wanted to, and were sometimes forced to walk long distances just to buy a piece of meat.

They came up with the idea of starting a business to sell meat, then approached the village and negotiated for a piece of land to set up their business. They were given a small patch in a very strategic location. They then made personal contributions to raise capital. CIET gave them a loan to help them to buy their first cow and loaned them a freezer to store their meat.

One year down the line, their business, now registered as “Runanda Enterprises”, is moving from strength to strength.

They have even opened a bank account.

It has not been all smooth sailing for them. As any with other business, they have had to handle many different kinds of challenges, but they have focused on their goals and are determined to see their business and their lives a success.

As we gathered under the hot Kangongo sun to celebrate their achievement, we understood how hard these young women continue to work. Some 200 people attended and enjoyed the feast.
Continued...

The young women gave a presentation, describing how they started and asking for further support from the community. They also performed a short play about an ordinary day at work in Runanda enterprises, highlighting gender violence at home, and sexual harassment at the work place. During the feast, they took the opportunity to network with the councilors, elders and businessmen in the community. There is surely potential for Runanda enterprise to grow, and these young women are a role model for other young women in Kangongo, Namibia and indeed Southern Africa!
Working hard and dreaming big

Nata is an out-of-the-way place in Northern Botswana, with relatively few modern facilities. However, the village recently got a Senior Secondary School, taking students from a great radius. It can be expensive as tourists pass through on the way to the two main tourist towns in the country: Maun and Kasane.

The group of young women in Nata decided to start a vegetable garden, quite a challenging undertaking considering the hot weather conditions. These young women exhibit many attributes that can make them champions and winners. First, they were assertive enough to request the use of the garden that belongs to the Village Development Committee (VDC); and their request was successful. Second, they showed enough tenacity to dig the gardens themselves. They did not worry about getting dirty or breaking their nails. They did what had to be done. Third, they showed persistence in visiting the garden to water it, despite the challenges this posed. Nata is extremely hot in summer and the garden is several kilometres from their homes. Fourth, these young women are good negotiators.

They were able to convince the VDC that their contribution will be only to pay for water and they can use the land for free.

Ditiro Laetsang, the CIET coordinator, considers a venture to be successful even if there is just a single person in a group who defies all the odds and attempts a difficult process. Onneile Mmou is one such woman. Despite being made aware of the challenges involved, she has put together a proposal to The Department of Youth requesting funds to start up a gymnasium in Nata. She is currently waiting for their response. Putting in a proposal is a cumbersome and technical process that many people would not even attempt. We wish her success with her proposal. Even if this time she is not successful, she will have learned very valuable lessons in the process of developing and submitting the proposal. Her enthusiasm motivates others to aim high.
Baking bread the Oshipala way

A CIET team recently had the opportunity to visit a group of young women in Oshipala, Northern Namibia, who have started the first bakery business in their village. Oshipala is located in a bushy, sandy, remote area. Village residents have to walk several kilometres to buy a loaf of bread. The young women realised this offered an opportunity that could provide a sustainable source of income and profits for them. With support from CIET and the community, they built a traditional bread oven, the first of its kind in the village!

As we approached the village, we spotted the domed oven, perched on a dry piece of land. The white ash at the base and black marks on the walls of the oven were evidence of its being used to bake bread.

After the formalities of introductions, one of the young women wasted no time in lighting the fire in the oven with the ease and confidence that comes from experience.

The baking ingredients come from the nearest town, several kilometres away, so the group always buys the ingredients in bulk. A mature woman in the community acts as a mentor to the young women and provides storage space for the ingredients.

As the oven heated, the young women put on their white aprons and headscarves ready to make the dough. They cleaned the mixing bucket, before pouring in the flour and yeast mix, and the oil and mixing them to form a smooth dough. They then placed the mixed dough in the sun patiently waiting for it to rise.

After 45 minutes, the girls were ready to put the dough into the greased baking pans. They then carefully placed the pans into the now nicely heated oven and closed the oven with a sheet of metal held fast by two sticks. This they did with care and precision, since they do have mittens and fancy kitchen tools.

We talked in our group as we waited. One of the young women quietly left to check on the bread, and one by one we followed her; we were anxious to see the results, and eager to buy and eat some healthy brown bread. She quickly removed the iron sheet, revealing four loaves of hot brown bread. She was just in time, a few more minutes and the brown loaves of bread would have been black. There was excitement as we took photos and bought several loaves of bread. It was a good sale for these young women who are taking control of their business and their lives.

Since our visit, Jeany Auala, the CIET coordinator, has arranged further training for the young women to improve the quality of their bread even more. And they are thinking of branching out and baking other types of bread, for which there is a demand in the village.
“When at first you don’t succeed, try again”. Story from Sigangeni

Sigangeni is a small rural community in the Hhohho region of Swaziland, approximately 20 minutes drive from the capital city Mbabane. Being so close to the capital, many people migrate to the city for work and other opportunities. During 2010, CIET coordinators trained a group of twelve young women in Sigangeni, most of whom then moved into the city. The few that were left lost hope, but one young woman was determined to put into good use what she had learnt at the skills workshop and to make her life in Sigangeni a success.

After the group disbanded, Bethusile Rose Mambashe sought the position of Gogo Centre Clerk (a NERCHA initiative) in Sigangeni. Being in this position gave her more opportunities. With the help of a CIET coordinator, in 2011 she brought together the remaining four young women from the group and they succeeded in getting a piece of land from the Umphakatsi (Chief’s residence). Their vision was to start a vegetable garden. Unfortunately, two of the young women relocated to Mbabane.

Refusing to be discouraged, the remaining two women focused on making their vision a reality. They rounded up the few young women left in the community, for another workshop in November 2011. CIET coordinators in Swaziland led by Sisi Zanele and Sisi Thamie facilitated this workshop for 15 young women who were eager and willing to try again. The young women came to the workshop armed with a draft constitution for their group that described their vision and mission. During the workshop, the girls encouraged each other to turn their backs on sugar daddies and other transactional sex, and to start up youth projects as a step towards safer, healthier living. They plan to utilize a vacant old building, made for the youth in the community, as a crèche. They would also plan to use the piece of land given to them by the Chief and start their vegetable garden.

We congratulate these young women for not giving up their dreams and we wish them success as they take control of their lives.
**A story of perseverance; young women of Maun**

Maun is in the North West of Botswana, about 1000 km away from the capital, Gaborone. Many tourists to the Okavango delta visit the town. Is is very hot in summer and even then mostly dry, except when Okavango floods, as happens most years. In 2011, the flooding was enough to wash away the bridge connecting the two sides of the town. Fishing is an important livelihood for many Maun residents, with a season from March to December.

The group of young women from Maun dreamed of someday owning a campsite. Their dream vanished when they realized the piece of land they had been promised actually had an owner. For a while after this the group lost heart and motivation. Ditiro Laetsang, a CIET coordinator explains “The group seemed demotivated and frustrated, just as we were as their facilitators”. Like many others, the Maun group has struggled with on-and-off members, as some moved to other places and others got employment that kept them away from the group.

The suddenly Ditiro got a ‘please call back’ message from a member of the group. This was a pleasant surprise in itself. When the CIET coordinators went to visit the group, they got an even better surprise. The young women trickled in slowly, most of them with their little children on their hip or on their back. The coordinators had missed the ‘FISH FOR SALE’ sign at the entrance of the yard where they were meeting. It turned out that the young women in the group had each contributed a bit of money to enable them to buy fish caught in the river, that they then sold.

They had support from the parents of one of the group, who allowed them to store fish in their refrigerator. The selling went so well that they ended up with a net profit of more than P1,000! They used some of the money to buy towels from a manufacturer some 500 km away; they are now selling these towels locally.

These young women have shown perseverance, determination and strength of will. Ditiro Laetsang is firmly convinced they can achieve anything they set their minds on.
Tips on Writing a Business Plan
Provided by IFC’s Gender Entrepreneurship Markets Program. (http://www.smetoolkit.org/smetoolkit/en/content/en/5297/Business-Plan-Melissa-s-Case-Sample)

1. PURPOSE OF BUSINESS

What does the business do?

2. BUSINESS GOALS

Where do you want it to be in 5 years? Discuss here things such as: the amount of sales you expect to have, the number of employees you will have, the products you plan to have, the number of units you want to sell, the location of your business, etc.

3. PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Describe your MAJOR products and/or services. What are the features of your services/products? What are the average prices of each product or service?

4. THE INDUSTRY

Describe the industry you are in (such as food, clothing, retail, production, etc.) Is your industry growing or declining? Explain. What are the major trends in the industry? i.e what is popular in the industry. For example do people prefer selling fish from sisal baskets or coolers, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of selling from sisal baskets and coolers.

5. MARKET

CUSTOMERS: Where are your customers located (your neighborhood, city/town, region, nationally, internationally)? If your customers are individuals (in contrast to businesses), describe them in terms of their age, male/female, income, ethnicity, etc. If they are businesses, describe the typical business customer (location, sales volume, industry, etc.) Who are your biggest customers? Is your business seasonal or cyclical?

6. COMPETITION & COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Who is serving your same type of customer with similar services or products? (List the names of your competitors and the products they offer.) How do you promote your business to customers in a way that shows your products and services are different or better than your competitors? How is your competition marketing their products or services? Are their prices the same, less or more? Does your competition offer benefits that you don’t? What are the advantages your business has over your competitors (personnel, marketing, financial strength)? What are the weaknesses of your business compared to your competitors?

NOTE: Please contact any of the CIET coordinators if you need further clarification on how to develop a good business plan.
Note about Young Women’s Voices

This bulletin is produced by CIET, and is intended for the groups of young women CIET is supporting in Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland.

We would like to hear from YOU! What have been your experiences in setting up an enterprise? What have been the challenges? How have you overcome them? What are you most proud of in what you have achieved? Do you have advice for other young women?

In order to get your story into a coming issue of Young Women’s Voices, please talk to a CIET coordinator, so that they can pass on your stories to the editorial team of Young Women’s Voices. We would particularly like to have stories with pictures of what you have been doing. You can give us your story in any form you want: tell a CIET coordinator what you would want to appear in the bulletin, or write a poem or a story, or draw or paint a picture.