Issue 1 JUNE 2011

BVV News

Beyond Victims and Villains

Message from the Editorial Team...

Welcome to the first issue of BVV News, an occasional newsletter about the BVV programme taking place in communities across Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland. In this newsletter we will be sharing stories about experiences with the BVV programme in different communities. In particular, we will share stories about what has worked well, about new approaches that have been tried out for sharing BVV, and about how the BVV programme has affected people and communities.

What is BVV?

BVV stands for *Beyond Victims and Villains*. It's an audio-drama in eight episodes, covering important but often sensitive topics like violence against women, sexual violence, abuse of children, transactional sex, trans-generational sex, and how all this increases the risk of HIV infection. It also covers why some people are unable to make choices to protect themselves against HIV infection.

The audio-drama is based on evidence CIET collected from school children in South Africa in 2004, from people in households in ten Southern African countries in 2007, and from young people in Botswana, Namibia, and Swaziland in 2009. It's available in Setswana for Botswana, in SiSwati for Swaziland, and in English, Afrikaans, Ojtiherero, Oshiwambo, Rukwangali, Damaranama, and Silozi for Namibia.

What is CIET?

CIET stands for Community Information for Empowerment and Transparency. CIET works in many countries worldwide and has been working in Southern Africa since 1996. CIET aims to collect evidence from households and communities about important problems and then, based on this evidence, to work with communities to find solutions and take actions to tackle the problems.

How does the BVV programme work?

In each community receiving the BVV programme, CIET workers train community members about how to use the BVV audio-drama materials. Usually the people who get this training are already active in their communities, especially around the problem of HIV. These trained people go through the audio-drama with groups in their own communities. These might be sports groups, church groups, women's groups, or other groups of young women, older women, young men, and older men. In each session, the group listens to an episode of the audio-drama and then discusses the issues that it covers, how these happen in their own community, and how they might take action to tackle the problems. Each group gradually works through all the episodes over a number of weeks.

In this issue:

We feature the experience of three communities – one each in Botswana, Namibia and Swaziland - with the BVV programme. We hope you will find their stories interesting and even inspiring.

Calling people working in the BVV programme!

For future issues, we would like to hear from YOU about your experience with the BVV programme. In particular, we would like to hear about any changes in the community that have happened because of the BVV programme. Just get in touch with the CIET team working in your community so that they can pass on your story to the newsletter editor.

Editorial team

Spreading the word in Ekupheleni

Ekupheleni is a rural community in the Mhohho region of Swaziland, just 20 minutes by road from the capital, Mbabane. Unlike the green Mbabane, Ekupheleni is dusty. Sisi Zanele of CIET describes it as "Extra dusty! There is dust all over the place." She goes on to explain Ekupheleni's beauty, "Even though it is a rural community, the structures are pretty and well organised. It has a lodge, shops and a lot of houses".

The CIET team trained six BVV community facilitators in Ekupheleni: two men and four women. Two of the women are teachers at a local high school. These facilitators have been working to share and discuss the BVV episodes within their community. It has not always been smooth sailing. Sisi Zanele explains: "At the beginning, some participants in the groups thought the BVV episodes were too long and they lost patience and concentration halfway through the episodes". However, the facilitators found ways to make the sessions interesting and enjoyable and people are now becoming much more involved and active in the discussions.

However, the facilitators faced one special problem: electricity supply! Although Ekupheleni is close to Mbabane, not everyone has access to electricity and in some ways it's a luxury. CIET has supplied portable DVD players and rechargeable batteries for playing the BVV episodes, but it can be a challenge to recharge the batteries. According to Sisi Zanele "People refuse to charge the batteries for the facilitators - they complain that it's expensive." Fortunately, facilitators who live close to the inkundla (the community public meeting place) have been able to re-charge the batteries in the inkundla without problems, and other have developed innovative means of holding discussion despite battery failure. One facilitator is a member of a local women's group. They enjoyed listening and discussing BVV episodes in their meeting, until the batteries ran out, and charging them became a challenge. Undaunted, the facilitator managed to continue with the remaining episodes, with members of the group reading the different parts in the audio-drama. The group found they really enjoyed playing the parts themselves.

Pupils listening to a BVV Session

Another exciting development in Ekupheleni is taking the BVV programme to children in school. "I have tapped into the school system and I am currently having BVV sessions with all the Form 2 students once every two weeks", says Sisi Zanele. Indeed, the youth in this community are very excited with the BVV initiative. After listening to and discussing the episodes, and some have now become facilitators themselves; using their youthful energy to spread the word among their friends.

In Ekupheleni, the BVV programme is slowly spreading throughout the community, thanks to the efforts of the community facilitators. Their energy and resilience are a great example.

Spreading the word about BVV in Tutume

Tutume is a rural village 130km away from Francistown, the second largest city in Botswana. Mr. Boikhutso "Tuka" Maswabi of CIET tells of his experience working with BVV in Tutume.

Some while back, Tuka successfully recruited and trained six community members to act as volunteer facilitators for BVV sessions within the community. However, these facilitators experienced some problems which raised Tuka's concern. He explains, "The facilitators were slow in forming the groups and getting them active." It turned out that transport for participants to attend session was a major stumbling block. Many people had to walk long distances to get to the meeting places for the BVV sessions, and they found it discouraging and tiring. There was a particular problem in forming and sustaining groups of men. Two men's groups dissolved because the participants found temporary employment with the drought relief programme. While this was good news for these men, it meant they were no longer free to attend daytime sessions.

Nonetheless, believing in the importance of the BVV programme, Tuka has maintained steady encouragement and the community BVV facilitators have quietly persisted in their task. There is now slow but steady progress. Two of the three existing groups in the community have already listened to and discussed half of the series of eight BVV episodes.

Tuka has recently had a stroke of luck in his search for other people committed to their community, who would be willing and able to take on the role of BVV facilitators. He explains: "I recently met two mature ladies. They are already active in the community and they are keen to be trained and to work as voluntary community BVV facilitators. I believe they will be very proactive in this work and they will have great influence on other facilitators, encouraging them to be resilient."

These ladies are well recognised and respected in the community, and this has helped them to mobilise community members into BVV groups. They are currently recruiting more groups to participate in BVV sessions, drawing on existing community based organisations and non governmental organisations in Tutume. Their passion and persistence is inspiring, and we look forward to many lively BVV discussion groups in Tutume!

Photo Clips....

BVV facilitators in Ozondati, Namibia

Mount Ozondati, Namibia

"BVV continues to empower and inform..."

BVV teachers training in Swaziland

BVV pupils Training in Swaziland

The Kangongo BVV Experience

Situated 160 km east of Rundu town, on the banks of the Kavango River that is Namibia's pride and heritage is Kangongo, a small, conservative rural community. Mr. Joseph ("Neto") Likoro of CIET says that in Kangongo "there is little electricity in homesteads, and the one supermarket has many empty shelves due to limited demand for most of the 'luxury' items popular in urban centres".

Many people in Kangongo have not had the benefit of education; they work hard to earn a living, particularly in agricultural activities. They rely mainly on cultivation and cutting of thatch grass as their source of income. Mr. Neto explains just how committed and busy the people of Kangongo are when he says "at times one finds it hard to believe that this community will find time within their routine to enjoy BVV". However, the BVV programme is important for this community, as for others, because it allows people to think about issues related to HIV infection and how they as a community might take action to reduce the risks of catching HIV infection, particularly among young people in the community.

Mr. Neto trained four BVV community facilitators in Kangongo. These facilitators have each worked through the BVV episodes with different groups in the community. They hope this will be the start of a ripple effect, as more people want to get involved in passing on the BVV materials to others. They have worked hard to ensure that their groups find time to listen to and discuss the eight episodes of BVV. Mr. Neto explains how the head man has been an important support: "The full involvement of the head man has been encouraging. He uses his position to invite community members to attend the BVV discussion sessions."

The BVV programme in Kangongo paused during the season for harvesting, because everyone was very busy in the fields at this time. Mr. Neto explains: "The National Youth Council Irrigation Project recruited people to harvest maize. Then it was the season of cultivation and grass selling." Many of the BVV groups, especially those with many youthful members, have had to pause for a few weeks to allow their members to work in the fields. Meanwhile, Mr Neto has shared the concept and spirit of BVV with a local organisation that move from house to house, talking about HIV/AIDS and distributing condoms. This way, BVV continues to empower and inform households in Kangongo in-spite of hectic schedules, because it is truly a matter of life and death!

Community Information for Empowerment and Transparency

Editor: Grace W. Waichigo

www.ciet.org

CIET South Africa
71 Oxford Road, Johannesburg, 2196
Tele: +27 (11) 6465645
Fax: +27 (11) 6465651

CIET Botswna
Plot 4702, Ext II, Gaborone
Tele: +267 391 1069

CIET Swaziland
Tele: +268 76363099

Botswana Team:
Boikhutso Maswabi "Tuka"
Leagajang Kgakole
Ditiro Laetsang

Namibia Team:
Jeany Elise Auala
Joseph Likoro "Neto"
Matthew Haufiku

South Africa/Swaziland Team:
Zanele Thabede
Thamie Mokoena
Ayanda Sigudla
Nobantu Marokoane