



Training for Transformation

VOICES OF PRACTICE 2017



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EMPOWERING THE YOUTH

By Prisca Nyasha Dhlandhlara, Zimbabwe

I am Prisca Nyasha Dhlandhlara, a 30 year old Zimbabwean woman. I am passionate about working with young men and women in both rural and urban areas in all aspects of development, from personal to community and national development. In 2013 I established a youth-oriented organisation called Youth Initiative for Community Empowerment Trust. My drive for starting this initiative was to change the status quo and ensure that young and female voices are not left out of the development discourse.



Although I had started putting the idea into motion, it lacked the coherence and “fine-tuning” that I felt it needed. As an answer to my prayers, I got into contact with Training for Transformation which helped me to first look deep within myself and envision how I wanted to impact the communities that I was going to work with. TFT helped create new horizons for me in the work that I do and has ignited new passion. I am currently working in a remote area of Zimbabwe, and the major focus of my work here is Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health. I work with approximately 4 500 young people, both in and out of school, between the ages of 10-24 years. My work also involves working with traditional leaders, school authorities, elected leaders and the adolescents themselves. The topic of adolescent sexual and reproductive health is generally frowned upon, especially considering the age of the beneficiaries as well as traditionally upheld community norms and values. My experience with TFT has helped make challenges that used to seem insurmountable become almost a ‘walk in the park’. For instance, it was extremely difficult to talk to community leaders, parents and guardians about issues concerning the realities of teenage pregnancies, child marriages, STIs and HIV. The barriers that were put up were made of steel and it almost seemed impossible to cross or break them. Equipped with skills and tools from TFT I have worked tirelessly with the community, in an area where mining is a major source of income, I have held hands with parents and guardians and have made strides in promoting behavior change. The knowledge I got from my engagement with TFT helped me to package the content of my work and to ensure that I do not engage the community to present a problem to them, but rather that the community members identify problems and come up with solutions.

Promoting behavior change has never been easy and I have learnt that each interaction with any individual or experience is a huge learning opportunity. I have continued to seize such opportunities to find out as much as possible about individuals and communities. This has made it easier to engage with them. With practical help from TFT I have learnt, I have ‘lived and let live’ and I have grown. The adolescents I have worked with have continued to adopt some of the approaches we have used in our health talks and have in their own spaces (and mainly through song), claimed and packaged the information they obtained.

My experience with TFT has helped me not only professionally, but also in many aspects of my personal life. TFT helped me to question all aspects of my life and most importantly taught me to when to walk away from situations that hurt and oppressed me. I spoke up and spoke out, I broke the silence and I took action in pursuing my own happiness. I have the strong conviction now more than ever that keeping quiet and suffering inside takes away from the individual much more than it does from the perpetrator. I have come to appreciate that perhaps the butterfly is proof that you can go through a great deal of darkness yet become something beautiful. Thanks to TFT, I am no longer afraid to confront my past and make positive strides in moving on from it and not letting my past define me. Having always been a ‘borderline radical’, TFT has also taught me the importance of reflection and seeking to break barriers and go against the grain.

Looking at the work that I do and the impact that it has on the people that I continue to interact with, it is my hope that the TFT way of life becomes the norm and not the exception. [Critical consciousness is essential in all development initiatives and is critical in bringing forth the communities that we dream of and envision.](#)

One thing I know for sure is that despite the challenges and lessons learnt is that I am not alone in the journey towards transformation. The networks that surround me will continue to energize me and revitalize the movement and the work that I do. I have learnt that some people trust in words, while others trust in numbers and for others, they are guided by symbols. The journey I have taken this far has taught me to value my experiences and the experiences of those around me as they help me formulate new possibilities and new realities.

MY WORK WITH THE MASAAI COMMUNITY

By Joyce Saiiko, Kenya

Neighbours Initiative Alliance (NIA)

Established in 1996, Neighbours Initiative Alliance is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) working with the pastoralist communities in Kenya. NIA envisions “A just, liberated and Progressive Society” and seeks to address the needs of poor and vulnerable groups. NIA’s mission is to support the socio-economic well-being of marginalized and vulnerable pastoralist in Kenya. Our main mandate and core business is facilitating community empowerment, mainly through capacity strengthening/ knowledge transfer, influencing and brokering useful linkages. NIA also strives to contribute locally to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through eradication of extreme poverty and zero hunger as well as Good Health and well being and Clean Water and Sanitation. We organise vulnerable groups, empower them through trainings, creating comfortable spaces for groups to discuss their issues and linking them to policy and decision makers with an aim of increasing their involvement in the decisions that concern their well being.



Through NIA I have worked with the Maasai community for 14 years and I have seen women, men, boys and girls transit from one level of development to another. I completed the TFT Diploma (2007-2008) and the topic that changed my life was that of self- introspection. This topic helped me to understand and accept myself better. Coming from Maasai pastoral community where girls and women are regarded as less human or sometimes as assets/property, **I learnt that I am much more worthy and precious. My self-esteem was raised to the sky**; I became assertive and believed that I do not need to depend on someone to succeed. Because of this I am not oppressed in my marriage life like many of the women in this community. I have control of my finances, assets and decisions concerning the whole family. In my place of work, everybody knows that Joyce does not just accept to be put down or overlooked when major decisions are being made. I question the leadership when things are not right. At County level I am among the leaders organising other civil society groups and organisations for action and taking the lead in keeping the County government on its toes and accountable, for example, with one of its goals to promote citizen participation in all projects that are implemented.

As a civil society leader I have been involved in creating awareness at the community level that their voice counts and their decisions are valid. The major challenge we are facing as we champion for change is that men are not yet accepting that women can make viable decisions or govern any group of people. The Maasai Community is highly patriarchal, women and children follow what men plan and are not required to question it. Due to this, women sit back and not participate in decision making hence cannot speak against injustices against them.

Myself I suffered from this when I was a child, I could not question when my father refused to take me to school, even when I knew it was my right. I went through a rough childhood due to retrogressive cultural practices which I as a child or my mother as a woman could not correct then due to the low level of empowerment we had. However, today there are signs of hope, illustrated in the story of Susan.

Susan's Story

In 2011, during a severe drought that hit the region of Kajiado South sub-County, NIA conducted onsite training in nutrition education for three months. The women who attended had children who had been affected by malnutrition due to food limitations and lack of a balanced diet. In this group, there was a young woman called Susan Sunte from Rombo ward of Kajiado South sub-County and a member of Merian Women group. Susan's story stood out from the rest and with her permission, I would like to share it.



Susan third from left participating in ranking community needs.

Susan, like any other Maasai girl, grew up in the Maasai cultural setup and went through harmful traditional cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation and early marriage. I met Susan during this training and learnt a lot from her and became her mentor. After the death of her father, Susan's relatives married her off early, to a disabled man twice her age. When she arrived at her matrimonial home she was settled away from other family members and was left without support to look for money to buy food, purchase clothes and meet other family needs on behalf of her crippled husband. Susan immediately started to give birth and by the time she came for training, she had five children (3 girls and 2 boys). One of the boys was severely malnourished.

During the initial stages of training, she sat behind other women as she felt ashamed of her child's condition. However, she took the training seriously and did not miss any sessions. She was able to ask questions on how to become self reliant, liberated and how to access justice when oppressed. After the training, her group did not disintegrate, but formed a self-help group that could assist members in improving income at household level. She organised her group members and started contributing Kshs. 50 - which is far less than a dollar - and gave one member per time ('go-around' system).

Susan received her share of Kshs. 1,500 (equivalent to 15 dollars) and this became her turning point. As I journeyed with her through sharing stories of other successful people, Susan opened up and started seeing life positively and developed a positive attitude towards development. She took the money she received from her group and bought maize flour from a nearby town and started hawking in smaller quantities from home to other homes in her neighbourhood. She made a profit, increased her purchase and reached more homes with the flour. Susan continued with this business for a while then added cooking oil and vegetables to her sales which expanded her income as well as increased her business skills.

After expanding her business Susan was able to feed her family well, take her children to school, and build a modern house for her family. She continued organising more women's groups for development. Five other groups (of 28-30 members each) were formed in Rombo and the six groups then formed an umbrella group of which Susan is the chairperson. The umbrella group gave them a strong voice when lobbying for change within their ward. These women were able to influence policy makers and project implementers at the County level and managed to build additional classrooms in rural schools and a market in Rombo town. Importantly, they also championed the nomination of women in County Government departments.

Susan and a few other women in Rombo are liberated financially and are not entirely dependent on their husbands for financial help. This gave them a voice both at household and community level. In 2016, Susan and her group members were able to hire 6 acres of land and cultivated tomatoes and onions with an irrigation system. These products are for commercial purposes and have tremendously raised the women's financial base.

Neighbours Initiative Alliance (NIA) continues to support these groups by linking them to financial institutions for loans, Agri-business companies for seeds and other farming techniques, Government departments for grants and technical backstopping and other civil societies for training.

Early in 2016, another vibrant member of the Merian women’s group – Sein, from Rombo – made this statement in a meeting: “*Siku moja nitakuwa mheshimiwa*”, meaning: “One day, I will be called ‘Honorable’”. During the 2017 election Sein stood for the County Assemble seat, but did not make it. Apart from Sein, many women have been elected as members of Parliament (10), Senators (3) and Governors (3) in the just-ended election. This is due to major campaigns done both in rural and urban setups by civil societies and women groups themselves. This is a positive sign that **rural women also have the capacity to lead if they are given the chance.**

Lessons

I have learned that strengthening the inner voice helps in rebuilding people’s dignity and respect. Women need to claim their space because men who are decision makers may control that space forever. Local problems have local solutions. The community is able to solve their own problems as long as they understand the root causes of the problems.

Conclusion

The most important thing for me as a development worker is to strengthen that faint or weak voice of a vulnerable person. This, for me, means that this person will be able to talk for her/himself. Once a person has a voice she/he can question oppression around her/him. A person with a voice has control over his/her thoughts meaning she/he is able to make decisions concerning her/his individual life. People who are able to control their decision-making processes have the capacity to acquire productive assets hence pulling themselves out of poverty. Once they acquire assets they are also able to sustain their income and can influence their followers towards economic prosperity. I envision a transformed Maasai community where women and childrens’ decisions are valued and their voices heard.



Merian women group meeting.

I envision a Maasai household where a woman’s decision is valued and her contribution taken into account in the development of that household. Every member of the household has his/her capacity in a specific field and needs to be given an opportunity to exercise what she/he knows. By mentoring women, girls and boys towards self realization and by linking these groups to possibilities of financial sustainability, I am working towards my vision.

MY TFT EXPERIENCE THUS FAR...

By Ramesh Tadvi , India

I am Ramesh Tadvi, the Director of Legal Aid and Human Rights Centre of SHAKTI, working among the indigenous people of South Gujarat in India. Being from the Indigenous community (“Adivasi” in Indian languages), I was very interested in working for the empowerment and development of our community. I have been involved in this work for over 8 years. Though we were working very hard with the Adivasi community, we were not getting the desired effect. We found it difficult to motivate the people and to get them interested in their transformation. Their apathy was a very big problem and we found it difficult to deal with.



It was in 2016 that I got a chance to attend the TFT course at The Grail Centre in Kleinmond, South Africa.

Since Fr. Xavier Manjooran, the managing trustee of SHAKTI Trust had been to this course and was using it effectively in his work, I was encouraged to attend this programme. When I attended the TFT Dipoma course I realized that up until then my methodology was more like a banking system, filling people with lots of information and doing things for them. In TFT I learned, through the principles of Paulo Freire, that the subject of transformation has to be obtained from the community and we need to help them to see the problem clearly and find the root causes of and the solutions for their problems. I learned in TFT a good method to remove the apathy of the people and to motivate them to work for their own transformation.

More than 6 other people from Gujarat have already done the TFT course. Now we have a good team to start TFT programmes here and to open it to those interested in community development and peoples' organisation. My colleagues (Fr. Xavier, Sr. Marykutty and Fr. Stany Pinto) have been conducting basic TFT programmes very effectively with Christian brothers and the Adivasi community, in Gujarat and in other parts of India. More and more people are showing interest in going through this programme. This year, through and in collaboration with SHAKTI, we have started basic TFT programmes for 4 different groups – for women, for youth, for village leaders and also for the staff of SHAKTI. These programmes are for a period of 6 months, with the participants coming to the centre for a period of 3 days every month for intense training and input. Then they go back to their places to put the training into practice and return the next month for another 3 day programme. Besides the principles of Paulo Freire and the steps to implement them, we have included cultural awareness, self knowledge and personality development, basic legal education, etc. in this basic module. These trainings have been found very effective and they motivate the people to positive action. We can see tangible results in the places these trainees work, in the participants themselves and, through them, in the community. Here are some examples:

The Christian brothers were getting ready to start their new way of community involvement. They were confused as how to go about it and how to engage themselves in the community. They were very pessimistic about the new direction they were taking in their congregation. After the training they were very enthusiastic and felt confident to go ahead and enter into the villages as animators.

In their evaluation they said that TFT was perhaps the best and most practical training module they had engaged with up until then. During the social analysis they were of the opinion that the set-up of society as represented in the Gramsci model (the Dynamic model) was impossible to be changed, but once they familiarised themselves with the principles and steps of Paulo Freire they said “yes, another way is possible”. What struck them most was the need to respect, to be sensitive and understand the culture of the people as well as the care we need to listen to the “cry” of the people and motivate them to find the root causes of the problems and find apt solutions.



The youth who are going through our training have become very enthusiastic and active in their villages and have influenced the community very much and more people are asking to come for the TFT training. They have started taking leadership in their villages and areas. A very remarkable influence was what happened in a village called Nibhora in Kukarmunda block of Tapi district in South Gujarat, called a fifth schedule area in the constitution of India (a place where more than 50% of the inhabitants are indigenous people, with constitutionally awarded special powers and rights). Every village council in these areas is given special powers to deal with the natural resources and to manage the governance of the area (self determination). This was already in the constitution from 1950 and a special law affirming the rights of the people and confirming further powers to the village council, known as Panchayat Extension to the scheduled areas (PESA), was passed in 1996. In reality, these rights and powers were not given to the indigenous people all these years. In the TFT workshop when this law was explained and people became aware of their rights and the injustice of depriving them of their fundamental rights, the youth were angry and wanted to do something. One of the things they realized was that in their area the village council was not called according to the PESA act which allowed each hamlet to have its own village council.

Nibhora village had its own problems and difficult situations for the Adivasi community. Though the Adivasis here were in the majority and the area was specially designated as fifth schedule with all the powers as mentioned above, they had lost their land to a powerful community called Gurjar Patels. Most of the Adivasis were landless and were labourers in the Patels' fields. The village president was an Adivasi. Yet she always sided with the Patels and was under the control of the Patel community. Most of the decisions in the village panchayat were influenced by the Patels and no one would speak against the Patel's opinion.

After some youth came for the TFT programme and they realized their constitutional rights of having the village council according to the PESA act, they decided to call a meeting of the village council according to this law. They approached the president and the secretary of the village panchayat and called the meeting of the village council. However, both the President and the secretary remained absent. So the villagers approached the higher authorities and the Block development officer ordered the village council to be called within eight days.

The trainees and the village leaders asked us to guide them and called for a meeting of the villagers on the day before the Village council. We could see the village leaders were very cooperative with the trainees and they discussed the procedure and the issue they wanted to raise. The next day was the historical day of the village calling for the village council according to the PESA act and they presented their agenda, with all points accepted by the council. The secretary and the president who had refused to come in the earlier meeting were all present and realized that the peoples demand was legal and according to their rights. The Gurjar Patels, who otherwise used to control the council meeting, realized that the Adivasis have their rights and now the youth and the leaders are aware of the act and the situation they will have to abide by the decisions of the Adivasis.

This was the first time such a meeting of the village council was called as per the PESA act which was not done since 1996, the passing of the act. It has encouraged other villages and hamlets to call for such meetings and demand their rights. This experience has given great confidence to our trainees and other groups too have realized the effect of TFT training.

BEYOND BORDERS: BRINGING THE GLOBAL METHODOLOGY OF TFT PRACTICE CLOSER TO HOME

By Sylvia Kyomuhendo , Uganda

TFT and me

My name is Sylvia Kyomuhendo and I work with the Initiative for the Transformation of Rural women and Girls (ITRUW) in Uganda. ITRUW works towards changing the life conditions of women and girls living at the margins of society, both in remote rural areas and low-resourced urban contexts in Uganda. Key programmes involve; livelihood and economic initiatives for young mothers and out-of-school girls, rehabilitation and inspiration of young adolescent girls, both in and out of school, most at risk young women with high exposure to abuse, exploitation and HIV/AIDS like (those working in bars, disco halls and in commercial sex work). Our focus is on ending teenage pregnancies and early marriages, gender-based violence prevention, and building and strengthening solidarity among women.



As a beneficiary of the world-famous Training for Transformation programme, I am happy to share with you my experience in practice, being an alumni and practitioner of the Training for Transformation methodology since 2011. The TFT training was a wonderful, profoundly enriching and life changing experience. [It affirmed my vision and was a turning point in my life in my way of seeing, believing, being and doing.](#) It has also had a roll-on and multiplying impact on my family, my neighbours, my community, my organisation and my society. I have witnessed knowledge and skills growth in my understanding, analysis and articulation in writing and speech. These have further consolidated my ability to confidently deliver training, public presentations and communication to any size audience. TFT training helped me to grow my passion and dream which eventually turned into a vision that defined the purpose of the initiative I am currently working with.

Successes

After TFT I made a voluntary effort to mobilize, organise and engage local women and out-of-school young mothers in my community where 3 solidarity groups have been formed made up of 10-15 members and a larger group with 45 members. As a method of nurturing a culture of saving money, women pool money on a cash go-around to enable them to raise capital to initiate and improve on their income-generating projects and giving of soft loans. Other programs that have also been integrated into these group's activities include; promoting awareness and education on reproductive health issues and gender-based violence prevention as well as other cross-cutting issues of HIV/AIDS. Women group member's economic dependency on their husbands has greatly reduced. [Women-headed families are able to buy food and pay school fees without waiting for their husbands and can make decisions in their families.](#) Through engagement in caucus discussions and solidarity clubs women and girls are now able to speak out.

Issues I have worked on successfully include mobilizing and working with the parents in my community to influence the regulation of the unofficially long school operating hours of most primary and secondary schools. This was one of the many issues that continued to predispose girls to abuse. Through parent meetings, discussions and partnering with the school administration, and using TFT tools, I championed campaigns for the girl child. This has resulted in actions like; the regulation of school operating hours; the formation of committees on girls affairs that mobilize the wider community to promote the welfare of the girl child.

I also set up initiatives to end teenage pregnancies and early marriages through inspiring and supporting out-of-school girls to gain hope while motivating those in school to remain and complete school to meet their purpose in life. A community-based Training Centre for young women has been established, offering a unique multi-skilling vocational and life skills training to provide marketable skills for alternative and safer livelihood options to assist them to become self-reliant, groom them in leadership, voice and power.

Changes in how I engaged with communities

Previously, my experience of working with different organisations was informed by a culture of designing and imposing projects on communities without their involvement. These communities were characterized by the tendency to be apathetic, with feelings of powerlessness, silence and isolation. In addition, there was an inability to question and challenge their vulnerability. Now, day by day there is a transition from these negative tendencies and a new window of hope has been ignited in these communities with a lens of possibilities to cause and sustain change. I shifted to allowing communities to identify and prioritize their needs and appropriate responses to these needs. **I realized that communities have a rich knowledge of their situation and if mobilized and organised, are better positioned to come up with their own practical solutions.** The methodology has worked and is still applicable in our communities. The process of digging deeper to understand and respond to different community needs together with regular reflection and action has also enhanced sustainability of our projects in our target communities.

As a community development worker deeply rooted in Paulo Freire's methodology of adult learning and in TFT, I have spread this methodology in the organisations where I have left footprints. Most particularly, the footsteps of the practice of the TFT methodology can be traced in our ITRUW foundations, reflected in our theory of change, focus areas and interventional approaches to bringing about desired change in local communities. Our theory of change is that transformation starts with knowing the reality around ourselves and is characterized by critical consciousness – beginning to question the self and connecting with others at different levels to identify the undesirable situations surround us, how they affect us and how we can address them. The theory of change further suggests that whereas change starts with the self, effective and sustainable change happens when voices of solidarity are connected for a common cause.

ITRUW believes that grassroots women and girls living in under-resourced families disproportionately experience different forms of “cages” and are more prone to the effect of the different shocks in their lives. They see the world with ignorance, hopelessness and view themselves as powerless, yet many of them live and think in isolation. We use this wonderful and empowering methodology in our many interventions as we engage them in actions to bring about change. Using the Paulo Freire's methodology of critical consciousness raising as a practical approach to community work, we proactively engage them in different processes of “digging deeper”, to enable them understand, question, critically analyze and challenge the roots of their vulnerability as they discover and tap into their inner power to bring change and lead their journeys to self-determination.

TFT connections locally and globally

From global connection, to regional, to national and eventually to our very local communities and families, we are indeed increasing numbers and building a critical mass of community practitioners and change makers! The TFT international “think well” which I actively took part in was held in Tanzania in September 2017 and was yet another unique moment of engagement and re-commitment in our work as TFT practitioners at different levels. In this space we reconnected our energies through sharing and learning from individuals and organisations across the globe as we also consolidated the gains made through the practice of the methodology in our work. It was a space for celebration of our victories as well as one for diagnosing our challenges along the journey to transformation as we looked into the future with new ways of seeing, thinking, believing and doing. As a family of global practitioners of the TFT methodology we were able to galvanize more energy while building more momentum of commitment in strengthening the visibility of the practice beyond borders, spreading the methodology from international to our grassroots communities and in our own lives as individual change makers.

BRAVO TFT!

THE JOURNEY FOR CHANGE

By Constantine Sunday , Kenya

My name is Constantine Sunday and I am working with a church organisation known as Christian Brothers. The organisation is best known for reaching out to the poor, specifically women and children, in the areas of social ministry, education, environmental injustices and advocacy.



My journey began in 2012 when I was invited for the Training for Transformation course. I was not aware what it was all about until I started a few classes. Things changed for good as I took the personal journey that challenged my mind. I had to unlearn a lot of things when it came to responses to poverty and interaction with people. The journey for change was that of personal transformation from old practices into a new reality that values humanity. At the very core of development is the realization that people are subjects and not objects to be tossed around.

After finishing my Training for Transformation Diploma in 2012, I was tasked to work with women who were victims of post-election violence in Kenya. We were trying to see how best we could help them “be on their feet” again. Our work was made easier and more effective because **we didn’t just rush in as expected, but we took time to blend in and learn about the local culture and systems of governance.** We spent one year conducting a listening survey (going into a place and interacting with the people, getting to know the dynamics of that particular place in all facets). After that, we entered into dialogue with various groups of women and youth to discuss what projects we could initiate with them. After several meetings the groups started “table banking”. This was a platform where members could contribute money in daily, with this sum being given out as loans with a small interest. In addition, there was also a platform where members contributed some social welfare money; this was to assist any member in terms of crisis within the family. After a period of saving, members could share the interest equally. Through table banking the women started a chicken project that they could sell both chickens and eggs and the profit would be used to help the members in terms of soft loans.

The listening survey made us work in collaboration with the locals and made most of the projects work for their good. Furthermore, the reason why both table banking and the chicken projects worked was because of the steps of digging deeper. This is a process of going into depth to the root of issues in order to realize what the real causes are and where the problem has a social, political or economic cause. From the fruits of the first project the organisation posted me to one of our big schools. The school is a mixed secondary and primary day school with a population of about 1200 children. The reason for me being in the school project was to help it become a self sustainable school within the County of Kajiado. This particular project is more of a challenge because the previous administration was handled by a foreigner who gave the locals everything and made them so dependent on him. The local community was not involved at any level of the school’s life, including paying fees for the children. What I had learned at TFT about how our various responses to poverty are linked somehow to our levels of awareness, was brought to life in the context of that school. As we all know, changing a system of oppression is not always easy, and more so when the locals are made to believe that they can’t do anything to change their own destiny.

As part of the administration I introduced a Board of Management that was made up of locals. This was to help them realize that they *do* have a say in the affairs of the school. Slowly they have started seeing that leadership is shared and nobody has a monopoly on it. The learners from the local community were getting a full scholarship whether or not they performed academically in class. When the school board was established several things changed, one being the allocation of sponsorship on merit. More parents started encouraging their children to work hard. The point was to make them realize that they have some responsibility when it comes to the academic life of their children. However, the biggest challenge is to ensure how the school will reduce the donor funding syndrome with time, bearing in mind that the donors provide 98% of the funding to the school.

To regulate this donor funding issue I have introduced a strategic plan that has a clear vision and action plans for the school's financial sustainability and other projects that run in the school, like dairy farming and vegetable projects.

TFT has really changed me a lot. I have become more active on issues of advocacy and change. I have grown into an inclusive, collaborative leader that gives people power to transform their own lives. However, those in authority have always seen me as a threat for speaking out on issues and I have been described as being “counter-cultural”. There is a culture of dominance and control and nobody wants to change that because it gives those in authority false power and control. That is why it is difficult for the church organisation to shift from making charity the only way of helping people, to a deeper activism of liberation. All in all, the struggle is on and will continue until transformation becomes our song.

A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND MILES STARTS WITH ONE STEP

By Jane Rabera Nyamwamu, Kenya

Introduction

My name is Jane Rabera Nyamwamu. I work as a Human Resource and Administration Officer with Neighbours Initiative Alliance (NIA), a non-governmental organisation working with pastoralist communities in Kenya. I also double my responsibilities as a Lobbying and Advocacy Project Officer.

NIA was established in 1996 to address the needs of poor and vulnerable groups in pastoralist communities by supporting their social economic well-being through facilitating community empowerment. This is achieved mainly through capacity strengthening, knowledge transfer, influencing and brokering useful linkages and eventually envisioning a just, liberated and progressive society.



Before I joined TFT in 2016, I had agreed with society's view that those women who question issues are not “decent”. That is how I was socialized. My life and role as a married woman was to be a submissive wife, obeying my husband's and in-laws' commands. To relieve my stress from family pressure, most of the time I concentrated on carrying out my duties as per my organisation's requirement. My work entailed dealing with staff, office administrative issues, policy formulation and implementation. This requires understanding people with different characters, behaviors and attitudes and knowing how to deal with each case differently. I was also expected to come up with rules, regulations and policies that guide the organisation in human resource management. Sometimes it was very challenging because I was always at loggerheads with employees and I needed to have a lot of patience. I kept on asking myself whether I was on the right path in my life. Deep down in me I knew I had a passion to work with oppressed women and girls. They are the most affected and are custodians of traditions and beliefs. That is when TFT presented an opportunity to sharpen my skills and knowledge. After gaining these skills and knowledge from TFT and doing -introspection, I realized that culture made me feel a lesser person as a woman; and that I have power within me to make my own choices and decisions that will make a difference in my life. This also boosted my self esteem and confidence to start questioning issues and I said to myself: “This is the change I have been waiting for”. My husband and in-laws no longer try to boss and command me around; I say “no” to issues that do not conform to my will and wishes.

Discussions from the TFT module on Conflict Transformation also made me learn the virtues of patience, tolerance and humility that have assisted me to handle complex cases and solve staff conflicts amicably while I try to balance people's emotions and ensuring it does not negatively affect their performance. This has brought about harmony and a conducive environment at the work place.

The ways in which TFT helped me and my organisation to work differently

After TFT my organisation assigned me to implement two other projects so that I could utilize and practice the skills and knowledge gained. The projects are: Adolescents Empowerment Programme (AEP) and Lobbying and advocacy (under Water, Sanitation and Hygiene).

At first, I was hesitant because I was coming from an administration background, but it was an opportunity presenting itself to fulfill my passion. Currently I am working with adolescents aged between 10-19 years, empowering them with life skills that will enable them to venture into life's challenges with confidence. This is done through a participatory, reflection and dialogue approach where we explore and challenge social factors that negatively impact on their individual lives and wellbeing.

The goal is to create a more gender equitable and enabling environment for women and girls. I also bring on board adolescent boys to understand the effects of retrogressive cultural practices, so that they can shun them as they grow into men. These skills and knowledge gained by the adolescents will enable them to address the underlying causes of poverty and vulnerability that undermine their potential for long life learning and realization of their dreams. The adolescent's empowerment project will also improve the education of girls and boys to have expanded life choices through access to quality learning, so that all young people can successfully acquire and use knowledge becoming useful and engaged participants in their society.

The adolescents are now able to analyze their situations and have started questioning their parents and demanding opportunities for both boys and girls. During a session with adolescents from Noontoto Primary school, a standard six boy called Moses lamented: *"How I wish my parents could allow my sisters to go to school just like me, not to become wives at a tender age"*. This statement touched my heart, but gave me hope that sooner or later we will have an empowered young generation that does not adopt practices that are passed down to them generation after generation. Many girls used to drop out of school due to early pregnancies and marriages after undergoing female genital mutilation, but after I started engaging with them the cases have dropped and those who dropped out of school have started re-enrolling. They believe that they are the hope for the future generations despite all the major challenges experienced.

Another positive since TFT and my new responsibilities is that my writing skills and analysis of issues have been enhanced. Now I lobby and advocate for water user's associations (WRUAs) to be recognized and allocated more funds by the county government. This is to ensure that water sources are protected and citizens get clean and sufficient water. I have also managed to train the WRUAs in coming up with Memoranda of understanding that have been presented to the county government and SMART proposals that can be presented to potential donors for funding for local projects and sustainability.

The impact of my TFT knowledge and skills on my community

The skills and knowledge that I gained have enabled me to work with community groups to introduce new ideas to be able to reflect and explore their own attitudes around gender and social norms that are commonly held in society and how these are negatively impacting on their lives, especially for women and girls. [This critical reflection process is aimed at strengthening community's capacity to understand their own attitudes and values and the impact on their day-to-day lives.](#) I have also been able to plan and conduct critical reflective dialogues between parents and adolescents.

A practical example is when the adolescents were able to discuss issues on sexual reproductive health with their parents, a subject that was seen as a taboo in the Maa community.

They have elected champions and role models amongst themselves to present their issues. These changes are self-led and initiated from within and by 2020, the majority of the adolescents from the rural settings of Kajiado should be empowered to fully exploit their potential, able to take advantage of opportunities and fulfill their aspirations.



[A session with adolescents discussing issues that hinder their academic performance.](#)

At my local church I mentor 50 young girls who have been rescued from early marriages and female genital mutilation. This is to ensure that the young girls to overcome stigma and stress that they undergo during the rescue process and feel that they have a meaningful life and bright future ahead; and as they grow into adulthood they can reject and shun retrogressive cultural practices that do not add value to human growth. The biggest challenge I face is dealing with the mindset of the community, especially some women who believe that their children should not be allowed to discuss sexual reproductive health issues while they are young. Secondly, even though there are protective laws existing, traditional beliefs and culture hinder girls from questioning why they should undergo FGM. Opinion-leaders like chiefs ignore the law and side with parents hindering the enforcement of the laws. Some of the girls end up traumatized for life and others die in the process due to excessive bleeding.

Conclusion

Training for Transformation has enabled me to realize that I'm not an empty vessel, but a person with potential and I can be the person I want to be.

I BECAME A VIBRANT WOMAN, WITH NEW LEADERSHIP SKILLS

By Niyonsenga Chrisserie, Rwanda

Introduction

I am Niyonsenga Chrisserie, a Rwandan woman and mother of this generation. I am an experienced professional with a background in education and adult training. I work for ADTS (Association pour le Développement et la Transformation Sociale – the Association for Development and Social Transformation) in Rwanda as programme officer for Community Sustainable Development. I am one of ADTS founder members and I am one of TFT Diploma Course graduates from 2005. After the TFT Diploma course, I really changed – in my personality, my behavior and my ways of working. I really understood myself differently.



I am now a vibrant trainer and mentor of TFT in my country and am open-minded and results-oriented, ready to learn from experiences. I enjoy overcoming challenges and I am an optimistic person who has developed a mature and strong approach to any situation that I am presented with. I enjoy team work for best performance and I have a good ability of creativity and to motivate others, coupled with communication and innovation skills. From TFT, I have become a skilled trainer/facilitator and mentor and I am excellent in working with others to achieve success at the right time. Moreover, I am a positive, hardworking and talented woman who loves making a difference and creating something new in the journey of my life.

The work of my organisation

The Association pour le Développement et la Transformation Sociale (ADTS) is public interest NGO that works at the grassroots level. Our vision is of 'a society where all members are active, cohesive and autonomous and actively participate in achieving a just and prosperous world'. It was established in Rwanda on 1 April 1998 and was legally recognized by the Rwandan Government in 2003. The work of my organisation includes the following:

- **Women economic empowerment:** The training on income-generating activities is organised for women in 3 Districts (Gakenke, Burera and Musanze) and 1042 vulnerable women groups are created for savings and loans. These savings are done weekly and regrouped – so that in 1042 groups there are around 26050 women. TFT training is crosscutting - in this domain of women empowerment, the TFT methods are everywhere - from the beginning to the end of our processes and projects. To empower women we start by using listening surveys to identify generative themes. All groups have to pass through a TFT introductory workshop. The trainers must pass through the four phases of training using TFT (three phases to understand the theory and TFT in general and one phase of training of trainers).

- **Building peaceful families among Rwandan communities:** These activities focus on capacity building of working groups, community awareness on ending domestic violence through the sensitization meetings and TFT introduction workshops. Around 6427 people have been trained and participated in different sensitization events.
- **Training for Transformation** organised and provided to different partners and beneficiaries inside and outside Burundi. TFT has helped participants to consider and assess the prevailing situation in their personal lives and communities as far as conflict transformation and the improvement of life conditions are concerned. TFT created more confidence among participants and gave room for active participation in the training and after training. With TFT everyone had his/her own contribution to give in their respective communities. Participants realized that TFT was more appropriate to talk about their realities and stories. In this regard, participants came up with strong commitment and the ways to change things for a better future.
- **Capacity building on adult learning participatory methodologies:** Field staff from local and international NGOs, volunteer committed citizens - from community members and local authorities - are trained in participatory approaches that can be used in adult learning. This capacity building supported professionals in their career as it boosted their self confidence, their leadership skills and their comfort in speaking about their work.

Challenges and Highlights from TFT

The limited funding concerning TFT training is still a challenge and the mind set change is a long process that demands self-determination and the efforts from different partners. Nevertheless, the TFT approach is hopeful to me and my organisation. Now my organisation is a champion in adult learning and trainings with different participative approach in my country. Based on the TFT approach, we developed different manuals and modules that can be used in different trainings and workshops.

For me personally, from TFT, I redefined my personal goals and my leadership skills as being proactive and taking initiative in the face of any challenge or any situation. TFT improved my inner-capacities and self esteem that I can use for the good. [After TFT, I became a vibrant woman in my society and I built a strong network with others.](#) In general TFT helped me to be transformed, changed, healed and to be a woman with a dream, vision and action.

LEARNING TO START WITH THE END IN MIND IN ANY PROJECT

By [Wamuwi Namatama, Zambia](#)

My name is Wamuwi Namatama and I am a deaconess in the United Church of Zambia (UCZ), a faith-based organisation which was established in 1965, with a holistic ministry of touching people's lives through word and social justice. I completed my senior education in 1988 and in 2002-2003 trained as a Deaconess at the United Church of Zambia University College. A deaconess is a change agent and social worker, working both in the church and community. I am a psychosocial counsellor, an advocate against stigma and discrimination for People Living With Aids & HIV, and a project coordinator for Francois Coillard Foundation. The organisation has schools and hospitals throughout the country where some of the Deaconesses are placed as chaplains, working hand-in-hand with the Government in improving people's lives.



Since finishing my TFT Diploma in Community Development Education (2010/2011), my life has changed in many different ways personally, professionally, and spiritually. I integrated the methodologies of Training for Transformation (TFT) in all the activities I was doing, such as awareness raising and sensitization workshops. Since then I have grown to be a more conscious person. [The training has made me to be aware of myself, to be able to listen more and then act accordingly.](#) It has also made the people I am leading become more aware of who they are and they can now ask questions.

I started the NGO, Francois Coillard Foundation in 2009, under the umbrella of the UCZ It has become more effective because of the knowledge and skills gained through TFT. The UCZ connects the NGO to funders and sometimes if there is an advert we do apply on our own. If the funding we have in the organisation is sourced by UCZ even our reports will be sent both to the funder and UCZ.

The organisation has the following activities

- Education support for OVCs (300 hundred beneficiaries)
- Health education on good nutrition especially for people living with HIV and AIDS and child headed households (250 households reached)
- Empowerment through life skills in order to help the people to be self-reliant (10 people have been empowered so far and 20 have registered to receive the training).
- Helping the aged (we have more than 100 beneficiaries).
- Food bank (members of the organisation donate food staffs especially non-perishable and when we have enough we identify the need and give the food staffs).
- Carpentry workshop (we have our youths working under this programme).

In one of the communities I managed to help a group of women to form a club called “Naniwena women’s club”, meaning “you and me women’s club”. This club has been registered and the Government of Zambia allow women to get empowerment but for them to access the funds they have to form clubs and get registered so I facilitated the formation of the club after sensitizing them on women empowerment so this time they work on the their own I just monitor their projects.

In the church I coordinate and help women, youth, orphans, vulnerable children and the aged. Using the TFT stages of “digging deeper”, I create awareness among women on issues such as Gender Based Violence, and health issues like cervical cancer. On issues of health I network with health institutions where I normally invite health personnel to come and shed more light on topics. I am stationed in the southern part of the country, working in Livingstone and Kazungula, border towns where there is a lot of migration. This migration has been linked to high levels of commercial sex work, drug abuse, HIV and AIDS. Therefore, using a systems approach with the help of a Holon, I do sensitization programmes with the youth. This process emphasised self-transformation and has made youth become more self-aware and more responsible. For orphans and vulnerable children we help through educational support and to the aged we supply food hampers.

The greatest challenge so far has been resource mobilization, wanting that the organisation to become self-sustainable rather than dependant on donor funding all the time. Ironically, it is the skill of lobbying for funds and resources tool which has really helped me to help the community. One of our main success stories has been to build a much-needed modern structure for the community. This has given me the fuel to move further, especially when I see the joy and smiles on people’s faces.

The knowledge and skills imparted in me by TFT have benefited my organisation through the quality of leadership I and we have exhibited, as well as the focus and commitment to my work.

Similarly, through all the programmes I have seen more people discovering who they are and beginning to question what development is brought in their communities and for whose benefit that development is. I have learnt to start with the end in mind in any project I want to initiate. [I find fulfilment when I help communities to achieve what they need and my heart is at peace when I see smiles on people’s faces.](#) TFT has helped me to build my self-esteem. I walk with my head up and I am confident in all my dealings because I have discovered my real self. I have decided to work while it is still day because night is coming when no one can manage to work – meaning, while I still have energy and opportunity I need to seize the day.

THE FULL REALISATION OF OUR RIGHTS ACROSS THE WORLD

By Dan Glass, United Kingdom

Who am I and what do I do?

I am a freelance civil rights activist, host, commentator, writer and facilitator in the United Kingdom. My work involves generating hope to transform injustice(s) – see www.theglassishalffull.co.uk. My latest programme is co-founding ‘Queer Tours of London – A Mince Through Time’. For this year’s 50th anniversary of partial decriminalisation of homosexuality we exist to bring forth the visibility of our incredible community at large and the journey to how we became who we are today. Against the backdrop of the mass closure of LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex+) cultural spaces and support services, ‘Queer Tours of London’ are being developed to support London’s current queer activism, culture and performance in all its glory. Find out more at www.queertoursoflondon.com



How has TFT influenced me, my organisation and community?

Through energetic, hopeful and vital collaborative explorations of our LGBTQI+ history we are digging where we stand, uncovering ourselves and transforming our rich, diverse and important community today. TFT has been hugely inspirational for the functioning of my creative community and transformative activism.

TFT has helped me start small and think big and thus (through the lens of the ‘holon’) we now have programme developments all over the world. The multi-faceted and spiritual humanising strength of TFT has also helped conjure up programmes that reach our deepest heart’s desire - next year we are taking LGBT+ former members of fascist groups on a tour of World War 2 LGBT+ resistance history sites. Furthermore, TFT has influenced the process as well as the content of my practice e.g. we are co-operating all the structures of my projects in the spirit of radical labour rights.

All of Freire’s teachings are highly influential in the character, resilience and dynamics of what we do. The processes of popular education have been at the heart of the levels of deep transformation and conscientisation that we maintain and hope to continue to deepen. Centuries of internalised stigma need to break through the ‘culture of silence’ to turn prejudice into transformation and demons into shamans. An incredible amount of progress has been made in the relatively short amount of time of 50 years. However this ‘progress’ is like two ships in the ocean sailing in opposite directions. One boat is sailing into the sunset carrying the section of our LGBTQIA+ community that legal (partial) decriminalisation of homosexuality was set up to benefit - predominantly white, gay, cis-gendered, middle class men. On the other boat you have the rest of the LGBTQIA+ community, whom without recognition continue to be invisibilised. The practical reality is the rise in LGBTQIA+ homelessness, not one permanent bar for lesbians in the whole of London, no fully accessible LGBTQIA+ spaces - and the list goes on. None of us are free until we all are free. This is a continuing challenge which TFT’s skills on praxis, dialogue, trauma, transforming suffering, organisational development and much more can hugely help overcome. Praxis –of action and reflection – have been incorporated into the pillars of our organisational approach. Through connecting with all generations of the community we help create this intergenerational wisdom. As reproductive rights activist Lisa Hallgarten said about our founding event ‘Look Back in Pride’ *“As we celebrate our successes, we also recognise how much more there is to do. It’s a great moment to think about what LGBT+ rights and women’s reproductive rights have in common and to build solidarity as we continue to fight for the full realisation of our rights here and across the world.”*

Highlights and Challenges

Highlights include connecting to our heritage (roots), transforming trauma into joy, actively intervening in the oppressor dynamics, building an organised community based on the principles of revolutionary love. A luta Continua!

Challenges include meeting our fundamental needs as facilitators - of money, housing etc. in such an expensive, brutally unequal country. Continuing to unearth the many hidden prejudices we face whilst trying to bridge the gulf in understanding and knowledge amongst our networks.

How has my community been impacted by your TFT knowledge, skills and experience?

TFT has influenced the way that we approach trauma from oppression which informs how we act, think, create, agitate, love and live with Pride. TFT influences us to not to dwell on our sorrows but to fight the epidemic of melancholy around us to enhance people's possibility of revival, collective joy and sheer ecstasy at being alive. We are absolutely inundated with requests for involvement, activists and new programmes and our numbers of guides and workers has dramatically increased through the clarity of our transformative approach and the creative responses from our own language. Looking towards the sunset we look to what is 'waiting to be born.' The capturing, archiving and crystallisation of our movements struggle to empower the next generation, the continued interventions into the status quo and the deepening of the roots and shoots to support our community are all strengthening the hearts within our hearts.

Have I changed personally as a result of the TFT process?

I like to think that I try to role-model the process of TFT through small and collective acts of revolutionary transformative love. Often it's the daily subtle acts of support, love and empowerment that people say rather than the big grand stand gestures. It's an act of providing belonging, affirmation, identity and the ability to genuinely love others and yourself in this world. Life's so short it's important you let people know when they are great as well as when they are shit. 'Transformative' activism is not something you 'do' as such (that is charity), it is a way of life. If we are to activate change in ourselves and our communities for the rest of our lives then we need to pace ourselves.

Without creative and sexual expression on your own terms you're more like a stone than a human. It makes me feel alive, full of hope and nourished with the conviction to carry on the struggle for full LGBTQIA+ equality. One thing I know now is that the creative potential of our souls is infinite.

Key lessons learnt

- Pace yourself through self-care and community mentoring so you can vision in the long-term.
- Explore and harness the creative tools you have to contribute to making a better world.
- Listen and create relationships with your community.
- Generate mentors and anchors in your life of those that inspire you. Meet them for a chat once in a while about how you can strengthen your purpose in life and role in activism. There is so much power in community.
- Don't expect people to come to your movements / meetings / protests etc - go to theirs.
- Meet people 'where they are at' and listen and build dialogue to see how all injustices are connected.
- Build unexpected alliances – not only is it important to join the dots between injustices, but it scares the authorities who simplify and like to pigeonhole us.
- Getting out of your comfort zone builds courage.
- Build genuine loving relationships rather than tokenistic tick-box relationships.

REALISING THAT "IT STARTS WITH ME"

By Gloria Kavishe, Tanzania

My name is Gloria Kavishe and I am a Development Management Professional from Tanzania. I attended the TFT course in 2002/2003 and received a Diploma in Development Education from Kimmage Development Studies Centre in Ireland. In 2005 I received a Post Graduate Certificate in Co-operative Management and Organisational Development – Credit Union, as well as a Master of Arts Degree in 2010 in Co-operative Management and Organisational Development, both from Leicester University, UK.

In my further quest for education, I completed various professional courses



in the Management of Small and Medium Enterprises, Development of SME , Project Planning and Management, Gender Equality Training, Disability Equality Training, Leadership Management Dynamics for individual and organisation and Strategic Life Management Course, among others. I have experience within the area of development projects/programme management and training, and work with development project of European Union and ILO and East African Community Secretariat. I am currently working with Tanzania Development Mates Trust (TANDEM Trust) as Executive Secretary. TANDEM Trust is a registered non-profit CSO (Civil Society Organization) fully autonomous under the Moral Patronage of the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam who for the past 11 years has rallied to empower communities, especially women, youth and men in Tanzania. TANDEM's goal is to pursue its programme implementation through community development, economic empowerment and human rights interventions. TANDEM adopted the Training for Transformation (TFT) approach in promoting community transformation, with a focus on creating critical consciousness amongst individuals, both women and men, and especially local women leaders. The aim is to contribute towards alleviating all forms of poverty through people's work. The specific focus of TANDEM is on personal growth, poverty eradication, women's rights and citizen's participation in good governance.

Realising that “It starts with me”

The TFT course gave me a chance to reflect on myself, have personal vision and set goals. The first 5 years after the course I focused on building my competencies and pursuing a professional career. Critical thinking and questioning helped me in my studies in various ways. First was the ability to analyze issues around me and link them to theory. Second, the skills of deeper analysis using the “triangle” of uncovering the social, political and economic root causes of problems. This helped me develop a deeper understanding and conceptual clarity in writing my assignments. While undertaking my studies, together with colleagues we established a civil society organisation to facilitate grassroots communities and TANDEM was registered in 2006. We employed people to work for TANDEM and I was employed on a contract basis with international organisations, working on their development project. I came to learn that for me, working for these international organisations was like being kept in a cage. I was not able to freely use the TFT tools, methodology and other innovation. Rather, regulations required me to use their manuals. In 2012 I made a decision not to renew my contract with ILO and to work full time with TANDEM. Currently, these international organisations are hiring me as a consultant to facilitate workshops for their development projects.

In collaboration with the Institute for Social Transformation (IST) Uganda, TANDEM has been implementing the TFT Introduction course, targeting potential and existing leaders from various non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, faith-based and selected communities. The outcomes of the TFT training carried out in Tanzania were encouraging, giving a new energy to continue using the TFT approach in order to bring about social change. Participants such as those with disabilities went on to train their colleagues on self-reliance and income-generating activities. About 135 people with disabilities came together to establish associations and most of them are doing business and are able to generate their own income and organise their lives. Before TFT, many people with disabilities used to beg on the streets and depend fully on relatives, friends and well-wishers support. There was a strong new feeling that those who are disadvantaged in some way, for example people with disabilities in some way still have a role and responsibility in society and that they have the capacity to bring about change and a more just society.

After the 2013 TFT introduction course, which 8 Village Development Bank (VICOBA) leaders attended, TANDEM agreed to work in partnership with VICOBA specifically to train VICOBA coordinators all over the country. To date, a total of 204 VICOBA coordinators have been trained in TFT, specifically on 1) Practically oriented facilitation skills, 2) Transformative Leadership and management and 3) Gender relations and mainstreaming. Before TFT session, VICOBA was struggling because some members joined the groups saved money for a short time, would get a loan and then run away. People did not want to pay back the loan, not because they were not able to, but because a sense of ownership was not there.

Members and some coordinators felt that they were manipulated. The perception was that some coordinators were not acting with integrity and therefore stained the VICOBA image. After leadership training, the community mobilization approach changed. The 204 trained coordinators became motivators, animators and not manipulators. A sense of moving together for mutual benefit was instilled within VICOBA leadership, management and clients. Thereafter they went to their communities and mobilized people to join VICOBA. Many rural and grassroots communities embrace VICOBA because it builds their capacity to raise the necessary investment capital, acquire entrepreneurial knowledge and skills and start IGAs without having to rely on external support. To date VICOBA has a registered membership growth of about 33.7%, with a total of 626,120 members currently throughout the country, 88% of which are women. All members are in groups with VICOBA having 75,133 groups with savings of 15.46 billion TZS. The groups keep their own money and lend to members on rotational basis. The loan reached to 45.52 billion TZS with repayment rate of 97.5%. The repayment rate increased by 29.2%. Before the TFT training the repayment rate was about 68%. Women in VICOBA are economically empowered, some were able to build houses, buy vehicles, take their children to school and have regular income through their business.

Challenges

Explaining TFT in Swahili language has been a challenge. It seems that only when a person undertakes one of our sessions then they get to understand. But through practice and practice and practice we (myself and Magreth Lazaro) were able to translate some of the materials into Swahili. We are still challenged with this because most of the materials are in English we need to look for support so that at least all TFT books to be translated in Swahili. It is good news to hear that the TFT Community Development manuals are currently being translated into Swahili.

Closing thoughts

In concluding I say that we must always strive to improve. Improvement requires making a conscious decision to grow. This means taking advantage of every opportunity available to learn more about ourselves and the changing world. Making such choices is a must for a leader, someone who is seen as role model, influencing others to be open to new directions and someone who wants to continue to be effective in influencing others.

“Kuwa pamoja ni mwanzo; kukuwa pamoja ni maendeleo; kufanya kazi pamoja ni mafanikio”.

CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH IGNITES ACTION

By Beji Benjamin Jibe , Nigeria

My name is Beji Benjamin Jibe, a proud graduate of the TFT Diploma programme. I work for Sharing Education and Learning Life (SELL) Programme. I started off as Administration/ Logistics officer and Trainer. Upon completion of the Diploma programme, I was appointed Programmes Coordinator and Team Leader. TFT prepared me for this huge responsibility. SELL programme is an initiative of St. Patrick’s Missionary Society in West Africa District, providing formative and transformative programmes for young people and vulnerable groups to become agents of change in society. The foundation has young and experienced resource persons and a pool of volunteers across North-East and Plateau States of Nigeria.



As a community-based programme, SELL presents constant challenges in terms of meeting the ever-changing needs of the community. Sticking to a manual becomes very difficult if we must meet the specific needs of the people as an organisation. My participation in TFT has helped me to champion the introduction of new strategies of meeting these needs. This is being done through conducting listening surveys before workshops. Another area that has been of immense help for me is the skill of writing good proposals with sound research. This skill has helped me to coordinate the writing of two successful project proposals with one in view. The thoroughness with which I was trained in TFT (having to submit weekly papers) and the feedback I received has enhanced my report writing skills in the performance of my present role.

My participation in the Diploma programme and the continuous mentorship from the team in South Africa has in no small measure enhanced not only my approach to community development work, but has redefined the organisation's approach. When a programme is reduced to strict adherence to a manual, with time it is likely to become monotonous and predictable to the benefiting group. Over the years, it has been very difficult to fashion out creative ways of running programmes outside the traditional programmes. My participation in TFT empowered me with capacity on conducting listening surveys and designing workshops to meet these needs. I am happy that myself and my colleague who are TFT graduates have championed the introduction of new units such as Ecology/ care for the environment, Gender Reconciliation, Lobbying and Advocacy, Trauma Healing Entrepreneurship and Child Safeguarding - all new units in the SELL programme.

The SELL programme is centered more on the practical trainings which are aimed at forming the beneficiaries to become peace agents and responsible young people. There has always been a clamour for the introduction of something that will give the beneficiaries practical income-generating activities that will empower them. In 2016, entrepreneurship was introduced as part of the training units; this was done in collaboration with a Government agency Industrial Training Fund (ITF). ITF came on board after several advocacy visits which led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SELL and ITF. Again, this is an offshoot of the expository modules on Lobbying and Advocacy in TFT. Beyond a robust lobbying and Advocacy plan we now have in SELL is the introduction of Lobbying and Advocacy as a unit in our training manual. Our volunteers like never before are using this skill to consolidate the programmes in their communities. This will go a long way to guarantee sustainability and community ownership of the programme.

The unique method of use in TFT, which is largely practical as against theories, has prepared me for the bulk of the challenges I have faced in my work. One of these challenges is working in a community where many of the participants have been victims of rape. Sharing such difficult stories can be traumatizing, not only for the victim, but the facilitator. Our practical facilitation sessions at TFT prepared us for some of these challenging real life problems and I feel better prepared to handle such social problems like sexual violence, particularly when the community blames the victim for her situation. One of the young men who participated in the workshop captured his point thus "girls in this community are to be blamed for all the rape cases in this community." His opinion received a thunderous applause from the most of the male participants. One could decipher immediately from the looks on faces on many of the participants how withdrawn they became as the applause continued.

Haven faced a similar situation during my facilitation skills practice at TFT, I was better equip to handle the situation. After the applause died off, I asked the fellow if he could say same thing if his mother, sister or wife happens to be the victim. A deathly silence enveloped the atmosphere and the next thing that came out of his was "I'll kill anyone who rapes my sister, mother or wife." The discussion that ensued looked at the long held belief in the community that victims of rape caused it to themselves and for the first time the young men looked at rape from a different point of view. Sadly after the session, more than half of the young women present at the workshop met me privately to narrate harrowing tale of how they were violently raped at some point in their lives, some by their Fathers. After the one week workshop, I am happy that collectively the youths in the community took up the challenge to organise awareness and enlightenment campaign in the community. Two years down the line, a lot has been achieved with this project particularly with the effective system that has been put in place by the Lagos State government on domestic violence and rape related cases. Today I look forward to returning to this community every year to work with this great youth who have weathered the storm against all odds and changing their community positively. Indeed an informed community is an empowered community and the story of this milestone could not have been without the unique approach to development by Training for Transformation "Working for the People with the People." I don't live in that community yet they are completely in charge of the change that they are experiencing.

The TFT story is that of critical consciousness which ignites action and no one who undergoes this life changing experience and remains the same.

Development work the world over needs a total overhaul if we must see the fruit of the work that is done in the communities the world over. The TFT methodology is a veritable tool to drive this process. Nothing resonates and connects with the people more than using local resources to solve problems. Like never before, I see lives changing daily because of these little efforts and that renews my energy daily.

Like Mother Theresa said “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” These words from Mother Theresa capture the TFT methodology.

DISCOVERING MY ESSENTIAL COURSE OF ACTION

By Magreth Mahenge, Tanzania

I first thought I was meant to be involved in the medical profession, thus I became a good nurse and midwife. After a few years I felt like working with communities, so I took a course on Community Health. After the TFT course that took place in 2004-2005, I was inspired to become a development practitioner. With my vision and goals from the TFT course, I managed to pursue a Masters degree in Community Economics and Development. At that time I was working with Pastoral Activities and Services for people with AIDS, Dar-es-salaam Archdiocese (PASADA) in the department of education. I am no longer working there since I discovered what I was meant to do in this world.



TFT as an approach has empowered me and I feel enabled to do things differently. I feel capable to use the TFT approach and its tools in every event, especially in facilitating. In 2012 I was given a chance to participate in establishing a Camillian Training Center Tanzania (CTCT); whereby I worked as an Academic Master. The center trains community health servants in a holistic approach in caring for chronically ill patients in the community. This is the place where I discovered my vocation! During the development of the training curriculum, I suggested including the module on Self Mastery and Personal Growth; it was accepted. I also confidently managed to introduce the TFT approach in doing research – using a ‘listening survey’ rather than the old methods in order to get to the real needs from the patients. We started implementation and everything worked very well.

During evaluation, all participants talked about self mastering as the most touching session. I was challenged and asked “*why do participants seem to be touched only by this session?*” I just told them “It’s the TFT approach and the sensitivity of the topic!”

I discovered that people are inspired to become themselves and to live to their fullest; they are longing to discover who they are. People are searching for peace and harmony more than wealth! I discovered that many people have past wounds which prevent them from becoming themselves and being open to their unfolding potentialities. They just need somebody to be there and help them in their self discovery for them to move forward.

I sense that I am one of those who were meant to do this activity of enabling people to discover their richness. Yes, this is the work I was meant to do since I was created. I feel determined to go ahead. From this activity, I feel that I am being myself with all my potentialities, I feel confident, I feel creative, I feel peace and I really taste the meaning of my life! I feel I am becoming more competent in facilitating and I can easily use different codes from the TFT books. To carry out this activity effectively, my colleague Gloria Kavishe and I have designed a two-day training programme on self mastery that we offer to different groups including youth, leaders, couples, religious, drug addicts, entrepreneurs and other individuals. The demand from the community is very high. Below are few of what people discover about them, insights and new learning:

“Amazing workshop; what astonished me is the type of workshop that I never experienced neither attended in my life. What touched me mostly are the techniques, explanations, real examples and teaching approach that used during the workshop; all these helped me to learn effectively and to know who I am; I have been able to know my richness as well as my weaknesses and I accept them, I am ready to change”

“I have understood the importance of sharing my problems and difficulties to others; the topic on self discovery helped me to discover that the problems of diabetic and high pressure I have are caused by not being open throughout my life; I have not been open at all. Thank you very much, I am going to work on this and educate others.”

“I real felt lacking peace throughout my life but I didn’t know the reason. The workshop has touched me greatly and enlightened me to know why I lacked peace. Now I feel my soul/heart is LIGHT compared to the beginning when it was very heavy, now I feel FREE like a person who has released from a heavy burden, I am very grateful for attending this workshop!”

“Indeed! The workshop has shocked me! The workshop is unique and is very important for us who are in formation so that we can become good sisters and priests that God intends us to become. In addition, our formators as well as priests and sisters need this kind of workshop as it helps people grow and improve relationships. Personally, I feel healed from my pain, from my blind and I have built a positive attitude about myself and others.”

“The big learning to me is on my behavior, I have discovered that I have been a hindrance in many spheres by not being open, being aggressive, looking only for good things, searching for people who can appreciate me and refusing the part of my weaknesses; now I have known who am I? I am going to change my life.”

“I feel being touched by the session; I have discovered that, I completely lost my values without knowing. Now I have understood which values can give me peace and enable me love other people and have good relationship with others. I have found energy within me and learnt how to love and what it mean to love and be loved.”

“I am real wondering that a person can learn how to know her/himself. I lived without knowing myself and never knew that a person can change the way of thinking, doing and living; I thought is impossible; I prove today that is POSSIBLE; I am going to start a new life!”

“Fear has been my big weakness in my life and just through this workshop I have managed to accept this weakness to be mine. I have discovered that, fear drawn away my energy and my confidence. From now, I will make sure that it gets rid of me by being the first person to share or contribute in meetings and in my daily activities for me to get development”.

These changes that emerge in people have influenced most of the stakeholders and partners to believe that TFT approach brings about change to people. Due to this, many Institutions and NGOs request us to offer this module on self-discovery before any other training. We now work with ILO, Catholic Women Association Tanzania, Village Community Bank and Seminaries schools, parishes and individuals. All these pay for the two day workshop offered to them.



Women Entrepreneurs.



Self mastery module.



Training for Transformation

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The Grail Centre, 15th Avenue,
PO Box 80, Kleinmond 7195, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0)28 271 4887 Fax + 27 (0)86 576 8865
Email: TFT@grailprogrammes.org.za
Website: www.trainingfortransformation.co.za
Facebook: www.facebook.com/TrainingforTransformation

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