

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES of PROFESSIONAL HELPING



HAK

THE HEART OF JUSTICE: SOCIAL WORK INNOVATION IN AFRICA

Volume 17, Number 1

Winter 2011

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

Rebecca A. López, Acting Director

CSULB SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, REFLECTIONS EDITORS

Editor, Eileen Mayers Pasztor
Associate Editor, Marilyn Potts
Assistant Editor, Wendi McLendon-Covey
Copy Editor, Georgette Bradley

CSULB SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, EXECUTIVE BOARD

Sonia Leib Abels, Founding Editor
Paul Abels
Catherine Goodman
Maria Gurrola
Lisa Jennings
Brian Lam
Cheryl Lee
Julie O'Donnell
Philip Tan

EDITORIAL BOARD

Richard Douglass, Eastern Michigan University, Health Administration
Charles Garvin, University of Michigan, School of Social Work
Sheldon R. Gelman, Yeshiva University, Wurzweiler School of Social Work
Leon Ginsberg, University of South Carolina, College of Social Work
Alex Gitterman, Connecticut University, School of Social Work
E. Michael Gorman, San Jose State University, School of Social Work
Jane Gorman, New Mexico Highlands University, Department of Social Work
Nina Heller, University of Connecticut, School of Social Work
Golie Jansen, Eastern Washington University, School of Social Work and Human Services
John A. Kayser, University of Denver, School of Social Work
Martin Kohn, Northeastern Ohio University, College of Medicine
Brenda McGadney, Siena Heights University, Social Work Program
William Meezan, Director of Policy and Research, Children's Rights
Donna D. Petras, Jane Addams, College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago; Child Welfare League of America
David Prichard, University of New England, School of Social Work
Elizabeth Reichert, Southern Illinois University, School of Social Work
Benjamin Shepard, CUNY/NYC, College of Technology

Cover Illustration: Robin Richesson, MFA, Professor of Art, California State University, Long Beach
Graphic Specialist: John Feijoo, California State University Print Shop

REFLECTIONS: NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING (ISSN 1080-0220)

is a refereed journal published quarterly by the CSULB School of Social Work

California State University, Long Beach; 1250 Bellflower Blvd., SSPA 161; Long Beach, CA 90840-4602

Periodicals postage—paid at Long Beach, CA

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping; School of Social Work;
California State University, Long Beach; 1250 Bellflower Blvd., SSPA 161; Long Beach, CA 90840-4602.

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

Volume 17

Winter 2011

Number 1

Special Issue

The Heart of Justice: Social Work Innovations in Africa

Guest Editors: James J Kelly and Theresa Kaijage

- 2 **Letter from the Editor**
Eileen Mayers Pasztor

- 3 **Introduction from the Guest Editors**
Theresa Kaijage and James Kelly

INTERVENTIONS

- 6 **Social Work Practice in Rwanda: Drumming and Weaving for Healing**
Hadidja Nyiransekuye

- 17 **Supporting Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Northern Uganda: Muse and Reflections from the Activities of Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO), 1994-2010**
Eric Awich Ochen and Robert Okeny

- 28 **Perspectives on Assisting African Refugees in Israel**
Itzhak Lander

- 40 **Teaching Nonviolent Conflict Resolution: A Form of Ubuntu**
Susan Rice

HEALTH

- 44 **Prolonging Despair: Antiretrovirals Without Social Support in HIV-Positive Youth**
Stephanie Pulliam

- 54 **Integrating Culture, Gender, and Human Rights: Supporting Community-Level Strategies to Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Africa**
Julie Drolet

EDUCATION

- 65 **The Challenges of Re-establishing Social Work Education at Addis Ababa University: A Personal Reflection**
Wassie Kebede

- 68 **Despite a Flawed System, Northern Ugandans Seek Hope through Education**
Sarah Klingler

- 76 **Traversing the Bumpy Road of Learning: Exploring Faculty and Student Experiences in an International Service-Learning Program in Tanzania**
Nancy R. Williams and Sharon Nickols

- 96 **Scholarly Writing as a Tool for Empowering Change Agents in Ethiopia**
Margaret E. Adamek

BOOK REVIEW

- 102 ***The Price of Stones: Building a School for My Village***
By Twesigye Jackson Kaguri with Susan Urbanek Linville
Reviewed by Dianne Rush Woods

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Eileen Mayers Pasztor, D.S.W., California State University, Long Beach

Welcome to Volume 17, Issue No. 1, of *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*. Our journal has two types of issues: a "general issue" that features manuscripts on multiple topics that are peer-reviewed by our board, and a "special issue," which has a specific theme, and is reviewed by a guest editor or editors. The theme of this particular issue is "*The Heart of Justice: Social Work Innovations in Africa*." It is truly a special issue in many ways.

First, the remarkable team of Dr. James (Jim) J. Kelly, Ph.D., and Dr. Theresa J. Kaijage, Ph.D. guest-edited this issue. Dr. Kelly is the president of Menlo College in Atherton, California, and president of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), representing 150,000 social workers across the United States. Those twin roles capture the scope of Dr. Kelly's broad professional reach. He is recognized worldwide as an expert in new program development, as well as educating social workers on several continents, a pioneer in developing distance education, and gerontology.

Dr. Kaijage is the founder and guiding force of WAMATA, a nongovernmental organization that provides social and economic support to individuals and families across Tanzania affected by HIV/AIDS. WAMATA is an acronym for the Swahili phrase "Walio Katika Mapambano Na AIDS Tanzania," which means, "those in the struggle against AIDS in Tanzania." Dr. Kaijage is known as a Tanzanian "Mama Teresa" because of her inspirational efforts in international social work and her pioneering work in AIDS activism. She has been known to say that, because she was loved, she sees "loving back" as a duty.

In addition, Dr. Kelly has a special relationship with the CSULB School of Social Work and *Reflections*. Seventeen years ago, as the Director of what was then a

Department of Social Work, he supported the vision of CSULB colleagues Dr. Paul Abels and Sonia Leib Abels to create *Reflections*. The focus was to describe and explain a broad array of social trends, results, conflicts, complicating actions, achievements, and how and why events took place—all from the perspective and in the voice of individual writers. Almost two decades later, Dr. Kelly connected with Dr. Kaijage to create this special issue. They knew that *Reflections* would be the best venue to share the stories of the authors published in this issue. The following introduction to this issue provides a powerful validation for that assessment.

Consider the special cover art for this issue. HAKI means "social justice" in Swahili. Our cover illustrator, Robin Richesson, Professor of Art at CSULB, explains that the pattern is abstracted from the flags of the countries in Africa that are specifically discussed in this issue.

Special thanks to Dr. Kelly and Dr. Kaijage and all their authors, and to the entire *Reflections* team that helped produce this issue.

A special request to our readers: Please look at the "Call for Papers" on page 103 in this issue. We are seeking guest editors and manuscripts for issues related to working with military troops and their families, bullying and violence in schools, social group work, kinship care, field education, social justice in other countries, and, of course, any other proposed topic that would be compelling and for which our *Reflections* venue would be an ideal fit.

Please remember to renew your subscription if you have not already done so. It is an excellent gift to give yourself, or to celebrate someone special. You can find a subscription form on the last page of this issue. We look forward to connecting with you.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

THE HEART OF JUSTICE:

SOCIAL WORK INNOVATIONS IN AFRICA

Theresa J. Kaijage, Ph.D., and James J. Kelly, Ph.D.

Professionalism and Social Work Values in Practice

This special issue has generated the interest of people from many parts of the world. Although only a few among the many who submitted abstracts and articles have made it to the publication stage, we are indebted to all those who showed interest in the special issue and hope they will maintain their interest in submitting abstracts and articles to the Journal.

As special-issue editors, we have tried to strike a balance between maintaining rigor and supporting the voices of professional practitioners as they reflect on the dilemmas encountered when trying to apply social work theories to practice. Like the social worker professionals, we also take note when they perceive that social work values and social justice are at risk of being compromised.

Through the eyes of contributors we see the continent of Africa for what it is: a continent full of contradictions, beauty, and glory, but also ugly wars, victimization, famine, and other man-made and natural disasters. However, we also see heroic acts of people who get up, search into their culture and their faith to pick up speed and march forward each time they fall. From Rwanda to Uganda, Israel, South Africa, and Tanzania, we hear stories of how it takes the best of us to heroically overcome the challenges of life exemplified by the ills in those among us.

The human race is capable of both good and evil, but when we look for good we find it, even in what appears to be a situation of despair and hopelessness. Social workers aim at strength, even when the need appears to be overwhelming. In war there is hope for peace. In death there is hope that the cause of death has taught the living something about finding a

meaning in life and working hard for a better world. We strive for a world without injustice, where people can live in dignity, respecting the worth of each person; and where untimely death due to preventable causes can end.

Interventions

In this special issue Hadidja Nyiransekuye gives testimony of how social work practice and African cultural practices complement each other. Healing is an act of God, but it takes an act of will in people who become a vehicle through which the healing miracle occurs. As one reads through "Social Work Practice in Rwanda: Drumming and Weaving for Healing," one witnesses how the interwoven relations between human sweat and human spirit give spiritual renewal to a nation and a people who rise to realize dreams of a future in the health of the generations to come.

In "Supporting Children Affected by Armed Conflict in Northern Uganda: Muse and Reflections from the Activities of Gulu Support the Children Organization (GUSCO), 1994-2010," we join Eric Awich Ochen and Robert Okeny in witnessing endurance in the human spirit. We feel for the formerly abducted children as if they were our own and also feel for the social workers as they battle with issues of controlled emotional involvement.

Itzhak Lander, in "Perspectives on Assisting African Refugees in Israel," takes us through an emotional journey of finding meaning in a common history of a people living in two nations, i.e., Israel and Ethiopia, but still bound together by a common cultural heritage. Africa embraces all and is embraced by many as a mother of children separated by the forces of history to reside in all continents while still

cherishing parts of the mother that they left behind.

Susan Rice, on the other hand, in "Teaching Nonviolent Conflict Resolution: A Form of Ubuntu," recounts how a conflict resolution curriculum embraces the dignity and worth of a person. This was possible with the Rotary Grant program at Stellenbosch University in Capetown, South Africa, where Rice taught non-violence. It also should be possible with similar programs elsewhere in Africa and the world.

Health

In "Prolonging Despair: Antiretrovirals Without Social Support in HIV-Positive Youth," Stephanie Pulliam introduces us to AIDS patient Lilly, an adolescent born to an HIV-positive mother. We are taken on a journey through agony, hope and despair, a test of human endurance. Lilly represents a generation of adolescent children and young adults born to HIV-positive mothers long before the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) program was invented. Some were started on antiretroviral therapy, with little preparation and psychosocial support to their families, and limited or no follow up. Professional intervention issues include policies of disclosure of the patients' status, and what support is available from friends and peers.

Julie Drolet makes a case for "Integrating Culture, Gender and Human Rights: Supporting Community-Level Strategies to Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Africa." Drolet shares her perspective on female genital mutilation (FGM) as a health issue that demands sensitivity to the culture that influences people's perceptions of feeling healthy or having a sense of self-worth. The countries mentioned by Drolet are only a few among many in Africa and elsewhere in the world where FGM is common.

There is need to address what aspects of culture influence resistance to the efforts of civil society and government institutions towards eliminating such forms of social injustice to women and children in the respective countries. It takes both genders to agree on how to embrace what is good in those

cultures and confront what needs changing in the inequities in gender power relations and in the gender roles that are enshrined in traditional institutions, including the family.

Education

"The Challenges of Re-establishing Social Work Education at Addis Ababa University: A Personal Reflection" is the story of a lifelong journey into academia by Wassie Kebede. This is a story of higher education as well as professional training in Africa. Kebede's heroic story represents many similar stories on the continent. What is special is that his is not only a personal journey, but also a journey of a nation and its institutions: the School of Social Work and Addis Ababa University. It is also a journey of the social work profession in Africa.

In "Despite a Flawed System, Northern Ugandans Seek Hope through Education," Sarah Klingler, through her work with the non-governmental organization *Invisible Children Teacher Exchange* program, takes us to Anaka, formerly a camp for internally displaced persons (IDP). This is a village bordering Sudan, in the Gulu district of northern Uganda. Here, we learn to see a glass as half full rather than half empty, and we see the strength perspective at work in Sarah.

Nancy R. Williams and Sharon Nickols, in "Traversing the Bumpy Road of Learning: Exploring Faculty and Student Experiences in an International Service-Learning Program in Tanzania," introduce us to the students involved in international or immersion service-learning in the Ukerewe Island of Lake Victoria, in the Mwanza region of Tanzania. We become acquainted with the lived experience of faculty and students as they go through life in Ukerewe, Tanzania. We join Williams and Nickols in "meaning-making," as they reflect on their role as faculty, helping students find their calling and make sense of their motivation for choosing service learning abroad, away from the comforts of home in the US.

In her "Scholarly Writing as a Tool for Empowering Change Agents in Ethiopia," Margaret E. Adamek advises us to learn from those we serve, in this case, her students at the Addis Ababa University School of Social

Work. In the Social Work profession, we give and receive: each time we give we must acknowledge what we get back. As for the African continent, its generosity is abundant in its culture, people, and their language, geography, and history. Adamek and her doctoral students inspire us to see the reciprocal relationship between us and those we serve.

Book Review

Finally, Dianne Rush Woods reviews the inspiring book *The Price of Stones: Building a School for my Village*, authored by Twesigye Jackson Kaguri with Susan Urbanek Linville. For those who care about Africa and its people, this is a good read. It is a shining example of a native villager, who, having achieved success in overcoming the poor odds dealt him by circumstances of birth, returns to better the lives of those he left behind.

Conclusion

This special issue on "The Heart of Justice: Social Work Innovations in Africa" inspires us to look for meaning in our everyday work as social workers, whether we teach, conduct research, design policy, or practice social work in Africa or anywhere in the world. For those of us privileged to live and work in Africa, it is important to appreciate that gift. See hope in every soul touched, look for strength and courage rather than weakness, and encourage a smile on every gloomy face.

Finally, smile back and generate laughter. Seek and you will find beauty, peace, and love in Africa. There is potential for good and opportunity for innovation in every challenging situation. So let Africa not be defined by what it does not offer, but by what it does offer. This is true for every nation and continent in the world.

~Theresa Kaijage

Acknowledgment

The Tanzania Institute of Social Work, funded by AIHA (the American International Health Alliance) in January of 2010, invited Dr. James J. Kelly and Luisa López, through the SWAN project of NASW (Social Workers Across Nations of the National Association of Social Workers – USA), to lead strategic planning sessions for Tanzanian social workers to revitalize their Tanzania Social Workers Association. It is through this kind invitation that I have had the opportunity to develop this special issue of *Reflections*.

~James J. Kelly

Theresa J. Kaijage, Ph.D., is the Director of Kaijage Consultants in African Family Health. She also volunteers with WAMATA: Walio Katika Mapambano Na AIDS Tanzania (People in the Fight against AIDS in Tanzania). Comments can be sent to: thjkaijage@gmail.com.

James J. Kelly, Ph.D., is the President of Menlo College in Atherton, California, and the President of the U.S. National Association of Social Workers. Comments can be sent to: jkelly@menlo.edu.

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN RWANDA: DRUMMING AND WEAVING FOR HEALING

Hadidja Nyiransekye, Ph.D., Metropolitan State College of Denver

The aftermath of the Rwandan tragedy in 1994 has seen a widespread cultural revival that responds to the need for the community to come together for shared pain and shared healing. The author examines how two groups of women took advantage of this renewed interest in cultural practices, as an innovative yet traditional approach to social work practice in Rwanda, by creating and fostering a free-flowing narrative that uses drumming (ngoma) and the weaving place (urubohero). These served, not only as a means of social support or working together to produce goods and services for everyday use, but also—and especially—as a way of healing.

"He who cannot stand, cannot dance." Rwandan proverb

News headlines on Africa are fraught with reports of famine, disease, and natural and man-made tragedies. They represent an unprecedented assault to human dignity, human rights, and social justice for the African people.

In the years following Africa's independence, solutions to these issues have primarily been influenced by outside funding sources, which are mostly Western European or North American. Traditional Rwandans, like those in other African communities, have considered every aspect of their lives as constituting one entity, where the spiritual, the emotional, and the physical are intertwined and, as such, treated together through cultural rituals. However, the advent of organized religions in post-colonial Africa has seen those cultural practices confined to special occasions, such as births, marriages, and funerals. Moreover, traditional healing practices have been replaced by Western medicine, especially in cities. Africa and its peoples are still facing the dilemma of trying to strike a balance between imported systems and traditional ways of dealing with current challenges. Approaches for healing war trauma or trauma resulting from tragedies, such as the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, also reflect this dilemma regarding a balance between indigenous and contemporary practices.

Providing the context for this discussion on the revival of innovative, yet traditional cultural practices—indigenous social work approaches—in Rwanda, I begin with a snapshot of current challenges to the peoples of Africa that represent a serious threat to their basic human rights. As a response to the traumas experienced as a result of the desperate situation in Africa, examples of cultural rituals used for healing are described, intertwined with a discussion of the impact of Western practices and organized religion. Selecting two salient cultural healing practices, I then examine how two groups of women have taken advantage of the renewed interest in cultural practices by creating and fostering a free-flowing narrative that uses drumming (*ngoma*) and the weaving place (*urubohero*), not only as a means of coming together for social support or working together to produce goods and services for their everyday use, but also—and especially—as a way of healing.

Assessing Human Conditions in Africa

Reports of human tragedies in Africa are common. For example, Reuters ("Uganda's LRA," 2010), citing Human Rights Watch, reported that Uganda's rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony, has abducted 697 people over 18 months and murdered hundreds of them, while forcing

others, including children, to kill fellow captives. While gathering evidence on attacks in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo, Human Rights Watch researchers discovered that the LRA has killed at least 255 adults and children, often by crushing their skulls with clubs.

On August 19, 2010, Voice of America (VOA), another news channel that has a special program on Africa, wrote that Somalia is confronted with a growing food shortage, while facing the challenges of insecurity caused by the ongoing civil war between different ethnic groups. In the last six months, United Nations aid workers have done their best to bring food assistance to more than two million people across Somalia. Armed insurgent groups have made humanitarian work difficult in that part of the world. Aid workers, especially Somalis, have been kidnapped or killed by warring factions. Insecurity combined with funding shortage has hampered delivery of critical assistance to Somalia, making it one of the neediest countries in the world. Charitable organizations have been forced to suspend their work because of threats and attacks (Voice of America, 2010). Because foreign aid is suspended from those who need it, locals have to figure out how to continue feeding their families and keep them safe. They have to come up with ingenious ways to stay alive.

The government in Niger, a West African country, reported that drought, leading to failure of the 2009 harvest, has resulted in food shortages causing nearly half of its population of about 15.2 million people to face hunger (IRIN, 2010). The World Food Program (WFP) is finding it arduous to bring food to families living in remote areas of the country, because the country is landlocked and has few usable roads. An estimated 212,500 tons of food will be needed between now and the end of the year.

Shortage of safe drinking water is another challenge faced by almost half of Africa's population of 680 million people (Integrated Regional Information Networks, IRIN, 2010). Such shortages make Africans vulnerable to a host of waterborne diseases. A South African university has created a cheap and effective

device that can purify water and make it safe to drink for millions of Africans, thereby reducing the number of waterborne diseases. But this would most certainly require funding that seems always to be lacking (IRN, 2010).

The 2010 Index for Risk of Food Security, calculated by Maplecroft, a British company specializing in risk analysis, in collaboration with the World Food Program, indicated that 9 out of 10 countries at risk are African countries. With Afghanistan at the top of the list, the other 9 include the African countries of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola, Liberia, Chad, and Zimbabwe. Some of the criteria used by the Index include the GIP (Gross Internal Product) per person, risks caused by extreme environmental factors, conflicts, and the quality of infrastructures. What is even more worrying about the above-listed countries, as well as others that have been left out, is the compounding effects of issues of famine, leading to poverty, disease, and armed conflicts. This paints a picture of a vicious cycle of never-ending catastrophe.

Where you find one such catastrophe, you often find others. They all represent an unprecedented assault on human dignity, human rights, and social justice for the African people. When you look up the meaning of "dignity," you find words such as self-respect, self-esteem, pride, and distinction. Situations that get in the way of people respecting themselves and being respected undermine the integrity of human life, and our moral obligation is to address the causes of these situations.

Social justice, on the other hand, is a requirement for a sense of equity among people. Every individual should have access to the same resources and services in equal measure as everybody else, instead of some individuals or groups being deprived while others have more. Social justice ultimately leads to respect for human rights. Yet different communities understand human rights differently, which can cause conflicts, discrimination, and oppression.

Lately in Africa, the continuous attack on human dignity, human rights, and social justice has caused the African people to lag behind other nations in bettering themselves and fully

contributing to human advancement. Two sayings from my people, the Banyarwanda—the people of Rwanda—come to mind here: *Udashinga ntabyina* [He who cannot stand, cannot dance] and *Ihene itiyambitse ntiyambika iyayo* [You cannot ask a goat to dress its youngsters if it cannot dress itself]. These sayings illustrate that it is almost impossible to expect people going through hardship to move forward if their basic needs are not met.

Models of Intervention: Cultural Approaches to Solutions

In the years following Africa's independence, solutions to the mentioned issues have primarily been influenced by outside funding sources, which happen to be mostly Western European or North American. I remember growing up at a time when powdered milk was also known as "*Amata ya Kennedy*" [Kennedy's milk]. Moreover, back then in Rwanda, boarding schools lived off food donations from the European Union.

My mother missed entire days of farm work because she had to line up at the clinic when she had a sick child, and the nurses there were then called "*bamadamazera*" because they were Whites. My mother, who is also a medicine woman, only used her skills for diseases that could not be treated by Western medicine. But now, all the herbs Mother used have been cleared away to make room for more construction and also because it is considered faster and more convenient to line up at the clinic.

Meanwhile, the traditional healing skills have been forgotten or no longer valued and are used only by people who cannot afford the health care fees or who live too far from the clinic. This is mainly because traditional healing practices have been replaced by Western medicine, especially in the cities. Any form of Western healing costs money and is practiced by people with a Western training; thus there is always a shortage of nurses and, even more so, a shortage of physicians. Passing on traditional healing skills requires rituals that the younger generations with a strong Western influence did not believe in, because they did not want to appear

uncivilized. I understood that Mother's healing skills could not be passed on to me, her first child. I would have felt privileged; rather the honor is traditionally given to the seventh child. One of my younger brothers was thus in line to inherit these skills. However, when he came of age, there were no more bushes around my mother's house from which to gather the herbs, and my brother was off to boarding school.

I still hear about Mother walking miles to find the special herbs to concoct potions for newborns with colic. But now my mother is aging, and the long walks, very early (before she meets other people who may interfere with the healing process) are tedious to her frail body. The art of healing among my people, the Banyarwanda, follows certain procedures: the healer has a particular way of purifying her or himself for the task, and must preserve the purity of her or his mind and body by avoiding anything that may interfere with the task, which includes not purposefully touching or speaking to other people before or while he or she is performing the healing.

Finding a Balance Between Traditional Ways and Western Ways

The dilemma is: Which way is the right way? It appears that Africa and its peoples are still trying to strike a balance between using imported systems and traditional ways of dealing with the numerous current challenges. In many cases, the traditional ways no longer seem suitable or have been superseded or made obsolete through the influence of Western culture. For example, cases of endemic famines and poverty used to be locally addressed by allowing families to temporarily migrate to neighboring locations.

Among my people, the Banyarwanda, the temporary move was called *gusuhuka*. Communities tended to have family relations or community ties with those neighboring locations. Today, migrating is an extreme alternative, because those receiving communities belong to different legal jurisdictions and sometimes are part of a different country; the migrating families would be considered outsiders and thus not welcome. Currently, Rwandans who move to Uganda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the

Congo, or Tanzania are considered immigrants—refugees—and have to be taken care of by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) because they are considered a burden to the receiving community.

Poverty and endemic famine are today addressed by Western countries, which send in their own experts to assess the situation and food donations and money to buy food and other necessities. This can be regarded as enabling the receiving individuals, because they may be led to believe that someone is going to take care of them. This discourages them from figuring out their own solution (Moyo, 2009).

Cultural Rituals as Healing

Rwandans, like the people of many African communities, have traditionally considered every aspect of their lives as constituting one entity, where the spiritual, the emotional, and the physical are intertwined and, as such, treated together through cultural rituals. For example, the Banyarwanda say, "*Agahimbaza umusyi kaba muni y'ingasire* [What gets the grinder excited and keeps her going can be found under the grinder]." Even though stone grinding seems tedious and hard work, the worker (traditionally, a woman) finds pleasure in her work by tuning in to the rhythm and sounds produced by the grinder. It is soothing, musical, and gives the worker the opportunity to turn within and meditate. She is not afraid to confront her fears, because the work makes it seem as if the fears are not the problem. The "poison" flows freely out of her and leaves her intact and healed.

The underlying idea here is that the Rwandans, at the time, did not think of compartmentalizing their lives. A human being is regarded as a whole entity. If the physical body is ill, so will the spirit and mind be ill. In fact, any ailment is usually considered to have been caused by some spiritual mismatch or dislocation. In this regard, Mazima (2002) believes that to articulate African metaphysics, one has to understand "the energy of cosmic origin that permeates and lives within all that is" (p. 219).

In another example, the *Muganura*, feast of the new crop among the Banyarwanda, is

a time to rejoice for the abundance of food for the community, a time to honor the contribution of parents for the guidance they provide to the younger generation, and the time to include the unseen world of the ancestors for their blessing and constant vigilance over the community. The departed ancestors are served first during the feast, followed by the community elders, and then the tasting of the new crop goes to the oldest, and the younger ones come last. This sharing ritual conveys a sense of togetherness, of strength and prosperity.

In times of calamity, such as when lightning strikes, once again the community (or at least the large family) will come together to curtail this tragedy. There will be a cleansing ceremony, and special concoctions will be given to the people who have witnessed or suffered from the tragedy. These practices give the victims a feeling of a clean start, after the calamity is acknowledged and given due consideration. Psychologically this allows the victims to be reintegrated into the community.

I remember the tale of a young, newlywed woman who had the misfortune of being raped by a stranger passerby. Her mother-in-law tried to shame her by saying that she had an understanding with her rapist. The stranger found out that the young woman was being mistreated by her mother-in-law and came back and raped the older woman.

After he left, the older woman, realizing she had been unfair to the daughter-in-law, offered to keep the secret between the two of them. But the younger woman knew that keeping it a secret was not going to resolve all the issues that come with being raped, namely a sense of shame and of feeling soiled. She protested, telling her mother-in-law that she could not afford to be quiet, because she still needed to have children and would need cleansing, in which case the mother-in-law offered to set up a cleansing ritual (*kumara amahano*), thus ending the effect of the bad event.

The Banyarwanda understand that women who experience rape can be affected in different aspects of their lives, and the handling of the consequences must address all aspects. By going through the prescribed rituals, the

community acknowledges that what happened is not a good thing and it can disrupt the normal course of the victim's life. It can traumatize the victim and have serious consequences in the victim's future relationships with her family and her environment and thus have dire consequences for the community, because what happens to one community member affects everybody. Mazima (2002) said of the African views of interconnection, "We cannot be satisfied with an individualistic approach but must understand that we are an organic part of a whole that includes diverse spiritual and physical entities" (p. 222).

A mother who loses her child through illness or a family who loses a member to death has to observe a period of mourning that is marked by certain cultural practices (*kwirabura no kwera*, which means, going from darkening your life to purifying it). Food that was in the house at the time of death is removed and thrown away; valuables are removed from the home before the person dies; the deceased is given a proper burial; the parent or spouse stays indoors; the mourning family has to abstain from sex for the time the mourning is going on; and families and neighbors gather around an ongoing fire for 7 days.

At the end of the 7 days, there is a special ceremony that includes the shaving and special bathing of family members, the deep cleaning of the home and symbolic laundry, and the handing over of the deceased's legacy by naming a successor and distributing the deceased's property to his or her heirs. These cultural practices allow the bereaved individuals to gain closure and move on with their lives. Different death circumstances are handled differently to make sure the soul of the deceased makes it to the afterlife and the surviving family members receive proper consideration of their loss.

None of these practices, however, were possible at the time of the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, when people were being killed en masse and their bodies thrown in mass graves. Some were thrown alive in latrine pits or buried alive or burned. The barbarism of that tragedy was unimaginable and has left surviving relatives, friends, and neighbors with a trauma

they will carry for a long time, or perhaps forever.

The Legacy of Organized Religions and Its Impact on Social Practices

The advent of organized religions during colonial times and their subsequent practice in post-colonial Africa have seen those cultural observances confined to special occasions, such as births, marriages, and funerals. Converts to Christianity or Islam were told that the ways of their ancestors were evil and satanic and were to be abolished. Those who still practiced rituals, such as the ones I have described above, had to do so in hiding. Christians could pray to Jesus and say invocations to Christian saints, but they were told that their ancestors were not part of the heavenly chosen people.

In recent years, though, I have noticed a loosening in religious attitudes. For example, children born in Muslim or Christian families can choose to practice the religion of the parents or convert to other faiths, with no dramatic consequences. Members of the same family may choose not to belong to the same faith. Even among those who have remained Christian or Muslim, many have become more tolerant of non practicing family members. They may frown upon them, but they do not shun them as used to be the case. There are still fierce devotees to imported religions, but more and more Africans are open to other forms of worship, and many practice a mixture of traditional beliefs and Christianity or Islam.

Urubohero (the Weaving Place) and Ngoma (Drumming)

Below I discuss two examples of the many approaches initiated by Rwandan women in response to the devastation our country has experienced. These approaches suggest innovative yet traditional ways of addressing the unfathomable traumas experienced by the Rwandan people.

Urubohero: The Weaving Place

The years following the 1994 Rwandan Genocide represented trying times for many of us. As many foreign non-government organizations (NGOs) flocked to Rwanda to

rebuild the country, our own local, all-women nonprofit organization, Réseau Des Femmes Oeuvrant Pour le Développement Rurale (also known as Réseau) benefited from a grant from a European donor to support our actions in reaching out to rural women. Our surviving members started tours, going from village to village to identify who was still alive and what kind of help they needed to get back on their feet. Many of the participants of our women's group had lost children, husbands, and other family members. The touring team was met by empty "gazes and looks," unresponsive bodies, and the sheer numbness and lethargy that characterizes individuals who have seen hell on earth and were not yet sure if the nightmares of the tragedy were over or if real life was an actual dream.

At that time, our team did not know what to do, but soon realized that the widowed women were picking up from the streets children who had lost their parents. We started gathering these women so we could distribute to them farm tools, household utensils, and small funds to buy a farm animal or any tool they might need for the time being. We used an old form of female gathering, known as *urubohero* (*imbohoro* in the plural).

Urubohero, the weaving place, was a place where young women met regularly for "leisure time." Traditionally, young women who were done with their daily household chores took time for themselves to meet with their peers to talk, counsel, and learn informally ways of becoming a woman. This was the time to weave mats, learn from each other new weaving patterns, sing and dance, and enjoy each other's company. Slowly awakening to our call to gather, the women started coming to the *urubohero* more regularly and more frequently. I, personally, assumed that the women wanted to come and meet so they could weave. I soon became aware that some came with no unfinished basket or mat or embroidery to work on, and I was rather frustrated, because I was convinced, at the time, that the objective of the gathering was for the women to make something to generate an income.

Then I realized that the women wanted to meet because the weaving place allowed them

to talk about their pain, mourn their losses, and offer each other tips for coping. Using their hands in weaving gave them a physical occupation, while their minds unwound what was burdening them. It allowed them to speak freely and deeply without censor, as the women joined in and finished each other's sentences. They cried together, laughed together, sang together, and unconsciously started healing together.

This form of mutual healing is different from having an expert come in and meet with individual women to talk about what happened to them as victims. Granvold (1996) believes that narrative methods used by constructivists, including storytelling, provide "opportunities for highly unstructured assessment and unharnessed self-exploration" (p. 348). The difference between Granvold's statement and what happened in the *urubohero* is that there was no expert to assess or evaluate or direct. The women used a free-flowing narrative that responded to their need to disclose, on their own terms and in their own time and fashion. If someone had come from outside the group and asked to talk about what had happened to them, they most likely could not have been able to say as much as they did among themselves.

It was through the *urubohero* that Godelieve, a member of Réseau des Femmes from Gitarama, who was a social worker by training, created a special group of rape victims, seeing that they had special needs. The women were accepting of her and guided her efforts to help them heal their wounds. It was because of the *urubohero* that Godelieve and other members of Réseau des Femmes initiated an advocacy group to change the law, making rape a crime against humanity and placing it in Category I, for crimes committed during the genocide. The following is a comment from a Réseau des Femmes member on how she is currently using *urubohero* with the women in her neighborhood:

Muvandimwe Hadidja, [Sister Hadidja]. Uracyabaho [Are you still there]? Nashakishije muri Amerika yose [I have searched all over

America]. *Ndakubura* [I did not find you]. *None ndangira aho nakubona* [Now tell me where I can find you] *nkagukoraho* [so that I can touch you], *bitari ibi by'ibi byuma* [not in a way of this technology], *nubwo, nicaye mu "rubohero"* [even though I am sitting in the weaving place], *rugizwe kandi ruyobowe cyane cyane n'umukobwa Athanasia* [made by and mainly led by lady Athanasie], *udasiba kunkubita agashyi bene aka kageni* [who never stops to remind me in this way]; *anyibutsa wowe n'abanditwigeze kwicarana mu gacaca ducuma amagambo* [she reminds me of you and others with whom we sat and talked]!

Nukora ubwo bushakashatsi urimo kwandikira "paper" [When you do the research you are writing about], *uzibuke ubwoko bw'urubohero nk'urwo* [remember the kind of weaving place like that one], *runashoboka iyo abarugize bategeranye* [which is possible even when the members are not together]! *Hera kuri ibyo byishimo by'ikibuguzo cyakugeze* [Start with the joy of the *kibuguzo* that you received]! *Kurwanya "trauma" birenze ibyo ni ibihe* [What other way of healing trauma is stronger than that]? *Ni ukunkoraho, nanjye nkagukora, tugakorananho* [You have to touch me and I would do the same, and we will touch each other]!

Ubu hongeye kwaduka twa "duseke" ndashidikanya ko ujya ukumbura [Now there is a comeback of the baskets that I know you miss, without a doubt], *tugenda ku mutwe cyanga se mu kwaha bitewe n'ingano n'uburemere bwato* [the ones we carry on the head or under the arm depending on their size and weight], *tugahinguka umuvandimwe akanezerwa* [the ones that bring joy

to a relative when they appear], *kandi ako kebo kuzuye kakazasubira iya "Mugarura"* [and the ones, when they are full, go back for a reciprocal visit]!

Mperutse kohereza abakobwa banjye mu kabande k'aho twita "Iwabo wa twese" [I recently sent my girls down in the valley we call our shared home]. *Bancirayo ubwatsi bwiza barabuhonda, barabwanika* [They gathered beautiful grass for me, they smoothed it for me and dried it for me]. *Maze ku gicamunsi babutabukana imicyamu yose ya Kigali uruzi*. [Then in midday, they walked through the whole Kigali neighborhoods and brought the grass to me]. *Abababona babaha impundu ngo "dore disi abakobwa baracyariho iwacu i Rwanda"* [People who saw them were awed and exclaimed, "Look, there are still young women in our country, Rwanda"]! *Ndetse no muri kaburimbo ya kapitali* [Even in the paved roads of the capital city]! *Benshi basabye "umuce" ngo biyibutse, abandi bati uwaduha umutima nk'uwo* [Many requested a small mat so they can remind themselves of how to make them. Others wished they had the same heart as the women]!

Barabwanitse buruma neza, maze si ukwiyibutsa twivayo [They dried the grass beautifully, and then came time for us to remind ourselves of our traditions without reservation]. *Dushakira "imigwegwe" kutayibura* [We looked for sisal]. *Ibirere byiza by'ingabo bifite amabara anyuranye tubimara mu ntoki ziboneka bigoye hafi yacu* [We found long, nice banana plant leaves with multiple color. These are hard to find in our area]! *Ubwo bwatsi twarabuboshye buvamo ibirago, imisambi n'utunye gamo,*

maze turasasa turisegura, dutaka inzu, ubundi twumva uko tubaye [We wove the grass and made big and small mats to sit on and other decorative ones; we displayed them in our houses and used other ones as headrests and felt very happy]!

Urwo rubohero rwacu ubu rugeze mu bworozi bw'inkwavu, zibyara buri kwezi tugashimishwa ukuntu "ubuzima bubura aho bwahoze, ariko mu kwicungura umurabyo ugatinda" [Our weaving place is now at the point of raising rabbits. They give birth every month and we are pleased with that fact. There is no missing life where life used to be, but in renewing themselves, they are faster than lightning]! *Ntacyo wanganya kubona buri kwezi havuka uturemwa dukura vuba bihebuje, twinsi kandi dore ko iyo havutse duke tuba ari 7, kandi nta na rimwe hadakura nibura 5! Urabyumva nawe ko akanyama katakibura muri urwo rubohero* [There is nothing you can compare with having so many animals that come to life every month. The fewest number we get is 7, and 5 of them always mature/survive. You understand that we do not lack meat in the weaving place]!

Ariko nkubwire igisumba ibindi [Let me tell you what is more important in all this], *n'ubu unduzi kuri iki cyuma nkwandikira* [even now that you see me on this machine writing to you]: *Umutima ukunda ndawukeshya "urwungo rw'ibikomere nkesha amasaha menshi twicarana n'abandi bakobwa* [I owe my loving heart to the healing effect of the many hours of sitting with other women]. *Twiyibutsa ibyo byiza byo gucuma urugwiro, tugashakisha igitunga ubuzima* [We reminisce on the positive effect of building warm

relationships; we look together for ways to nurture life]. *Tuboha, dutera amabara* [We weave and create patterns in the mats], *ari nako ducoca ibibazo bidutera imbaraga zo kuzinduka buri munsi mu bikorwa byabikemura* [while at the same time, we analyze problems that give us the energy to get up early every morning to be involved in activities that will resolve those problems]!

Urwo rubohero kandi nkubwira, twarushinze aho ntuye [The above-described weaving place has been created here where I live]! *Sevota n'izindi mbohero, nabo bakubwire ibigwi byabo, ibyo ni ibyanjye mpagazeho* [Sevota and the other weaving places will tell you of their own weaving place when they feel like it. I told you what I witnessed].

Ngoma: Drumming for Healing

"Sijye uzarota kuwagatandatu hageze ngo tujye mu ngoma [I cannot wait until Saturday so we can go to the 'drums']." I heard this comment from a young woman one day and did not know what to make of it. The women dance as if their lives depend on it. They dance as if no one is watching. They dance as if they are the only ones who matter, and they seem to be dancing for themselves and no one else. Women of all ages dance. In Rwanda, everybody seems to want to dance now. There are more You Tube videos about Rwandan music and dance than I have ever seen before. School girls have dance clubs; village women and Rwandans of the diaspora are finding any reason to meet and dance.

The Ngwinonshuti are a group of Rwandan Muslim women who live in Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda. The group started out as a gathering for women to welcome other women who had recently arrived in the capital when they or their husbands had had to move because of a new job. Ngwinonshuti wanted to create a welcoming framework to integrate the newcomers. They met once a week in the

beginning and gathered at one another's homes. They met more often when one of them needed help in situations of illness, a birth, a death, or a wedding, in which case, the gathering was called "*mwito*" and involved other people who were not initially part of Ngwinonshuti. *Mwito* is a Kiswahili word for "a calling." It could be used for "invitation to a function," but when I think about it, I get a strong impression of urgency from the caller and a sense of shared responsibility on the part of the person who is being invited. Someone can choose not to attend, but when the person misses the calling, this may result in dire consequences for the relationship between the person and the community. Missing a *mwito* repeatedly can lead to self-isolation. It is a matter of social networking and social responsibility.

It is about fun and work. *Mwito* are characterized by large numbers of people, drum beating, gift giving, food, music, and dancing. The drum is of particular significance. The women stand in a circle and place a drum in the middle of the circle. The most skilled singer usually beats the drum or has "an assistant" who beats the drum to start the dancing. Songs are usually provocative and get every person in attendance to want to say something or do something. The singer usually calls the lady of the house first. For example, in the song "*Anawubaya Gani* [She Does Nothing Wrong]," the singer tells the audience that the lady who has been called is such a nice person that everybody should be associated with her. The lady in question has to show up and show off. She gives money to the singer and customarily is joined by a family member or friend for support, and usually the older dancer will give something to the accompanying dancer (*guhamba* or rewarding).

This is where it gets interesting, because it combines several characteristics of Rwandan dancing and elements of Swahili civilizations. There is a call and a response, where the lead singer says something that is repeated by the audience. Someone in the audience takes over and expresses whatever is on her heart: praise to someone or complaint about a situation. The improvisation and

creative nature of this type of dance and song allow the participants to freely express themselves in a narrative that flows with the rhythm and emotions that are being evoked. For example, in the song "*Ninge Kuwa Kwetu Nakwetu ni Mbali Ninge Mlilia Mama* [If I Were Home and Home Is Far, I Would Cry to My Mother]," the lead singer gives permission to all these women who have never had a chance to mourn the loss of their parents, relatives, friends, and loved ones to break free and cry while they dance.

The women dancers use these opportunities to counsel other women, censure bad behavior, warn younger women who may fall for unworthy men, and talk about family relationships. These are opportunities for each one of the women in attendance to express themselves and be sure to be heard. You can tell which theme meets the participants' approval when many people go to the lead singer to request an encore by giving more money.

Two elements here are very characteristic of the ritualistic symbolism of the dance: the circle and the drum (*ngoma*). Women's dancing in a circle gives a sense of completion, support, and equal value to everybody's contribution. The circular form tends to be used in many Rwandan items: the circular shape of the traditional Rwandan house, the motherhood crown, the baskets, and the cooking pots, to name a few. Mazima (2002) goes so far as to affirm that the circle is "the African spiritual symbol par excellence....[It] stands for the constant renewal of life through death and birth" (p. 221). The women's dance in a circle unconsciously conveys the message of the cyclic nature of life.

The drum (*ngoma*), on the other hand, has always served as a communication tool. Different beats have different meanings, and the sound of a drumbeat conveys a sense of homecoming and of being among your own kind. The term *ngoma* has three meanings, depending on the situation: It can connote the musical instrument itself, the sound of the drumbeat, or the event that involves the drum, such as the *mwito*. The African self is a relational self with humans and other beings, with body, mind, and soul being connected.

What Rwandans do is a spontaneous recourse to a form of expression their inner selves hunger for: to gather in pain and gather in healing.

As the celebration progresses, the lady of the house is given the signal to bring in the offerings. In the case of a bridal shower, if she gives a cheap item to the bride-to-be, this can send a signal that she is "cheap" herself. My sister once told me there was a woman in the group who, when she attended a *mwito*, invariably brought a laundry basin. My sister then asked a rhetorical question, "What would she do if she had a *mwito* and all she gets from the people in attendance is a laundry basin?" That story tells me of the sense of reciprocity and social responsibility each woman holds towards the group.

On another occasion, my sister told me the story of a religious leader, a sheikh with rigid Muslim practices, who still believes that Rwandan cultural practices, such as dancing at the *mwito*, are "pagan, unholy" practices. When he had a *mwito*, he did not want any dancing at his home, only the gifts—no show of rejoicing or drumbeating. My sister reported that in such cases, people are reluctant to attend, and when they do, they stay for a very short period of time, because supporting the host with gifts is a good gesture, but is not the only reason people attend a *mwito*. When there is a *ngoma* (the sound of the drumbeat), though even uninvited, women show up and do their best to bring a gift to the family, so that they can be a part of the celebration and benefit from the community support and warmth from the dancing and singing.

At the end of the gathering, women make new friends. They report having fewer nightmares and as a consequence, sleep better. My sister told me that a non-Muslim woman who had attended a *mwito* at my sister's house asked her if she could invite other women. This woman mentioned having been surprised at how many more women she now knows, following her having met them at my sister's house. At a time when the Rwandan people are trying to reconcile after the genocide, the *mwito*, involving *ngoma*, is a positive forum to get people to gather and to know each other, cry together, build together, and heal together.

Stepakoff, Hubbard, Katoh, Falk, Mikulu, et al. (2006) acknowledged the importance of including the cultural dimension in any trauma-healing approach, because the victim's cultural practices have a unique meaning that reaches the inner core of her or his being.

The needs of Rwandan society are psychological, physical, and material. The activities initiated by the women in the above-described examples tend to be easy to organize, because they use approaches that promote interdependence and synchronicity, and are already inherent in the culture of the Rwandan people. They weave each other's lives around their shared pain, their shared joy, their shared skills, and their shared meaning and destiny. Rwandans say, "*Akimuhana kaza invura ihise* [The rescue from outside your own home arrives always after the rain]." It pleases me to know that Rwandans have been trying to find solutions to their own problems, while the outside world tries to help.

It is important that social work practitioners be educated in the different cultural practices of the clients they serve here in the United States as well as overseas with African clients. It can be a challenge to put aside the traditional way of practicing social work and instead, allow the unstructured, spontaneous outburst of cultural practices that seem out of place in a Western world, but have far-reaching effects on restoring wholeness to the African people.

References

- Granvold, D.K. (1996). Constructivist psychotherapy. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, CEO Article 63(June), 345-359.
- Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). (2010, August). Niger: Getting food in by truck, boat, camel, and cart. Retrieved from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=90199>
- Mazima, A.M. (2002). Afrocentricity and African spirituality. *Journal of Black Studies*, 33(2, November), 218-234. doi: 10.1177/002193402237226

- Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead Aid: Why Aid is not Working and How there is Another Way for Africa*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.
- Uganda's LRA killed 2,500 people, abducted 697 children over the last 18 months. (2010). *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.reuters.com/global/>
- Stepakoff, S., Hubbard, J., Katoh, M., Falk, E., Mikulu, J.B., Nkhoma, P., & Omagwa, Y. (2006). Trauma healing in refugee camps in Guinea: A psychosocial program for Liberian and Sierra Leonean survivors of torture and war. *American Psychologist* (November), 921-932.
- Voice of America (VOA). (2010, August 19). Somalia: Persistent insecurity disrupts food distribution. Retrieved from www.halganka.net/...somalia-persistent-insecurity-disrupts-food-distribution-bossaso-reliefwebint

Hadidja Nyiransekuye, Ph.D., is a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Metropolitan State College of Denver Department of African and African American Studies. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: hnyirans@mscd.edu

SUPPORTING CHILDREN AFFECTED BY ARMED CONFLICT IN NORTHERN UGANDA: MUSE AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE ACTIVITIES OF GULU SUPPORT THE CHILDREN ORGANIZATION (GUSCO), 1994-2010

Eric Awich Ochen, Ph.D., Makerere University, and
Robert Okeny, MA, Gulu Support the Children Organisation (GUSCO)

The protracted war in Northern Uganda has had devastating consequences on the communities within the region. This ranges from social disruptions, internal displacement of communities, socio-economic regression and virtual lack of government services in large areas of the affected region. However, one of the most significant effects of the war has been on the psychosocial and socio-cultural well-being of children. Since the beginning of the war, an estimated 30,000 children have been abducted by the rebels to be used as fighters, sex slaves, laborers, porters and human shields. Thousands more have also been affected through disruptions in their education, sociocultural socialization and accessibility to social services. In this narrative, the authors reflect on their activities as social workers within GUSCO in receiving formerly abducted children, supporting their recovery and rehabilitation, and reinserting them within the conflict-affected community.

"Children are the angels of the family/home." - African Proverb

Introduction

Gulu Support the Children Organisation (GUSCO) was formed by local children's rights actors in 1994 to respond to the physical, health and psychosocial needs of children returning from rebel captivity. These children are also called Formerly Abducted Children (FAC). Initially, the needs of children returning from rebel captivity were not being systematically addressed, creating room for an intervention that can provide support for FAC. While significant achievements have been made, these efforts have not been without drawbacks and challenges. This is because GUSCO's efforts in Northern Uganda were the first for any organization attempting psychosocial support, often using models developed in the Western world or areas outside Uganda. It is these experiences and lessons, learned over the years of working with children affected by armed conflict, that we shall discuss in this narrative.

This paper builds on our experiences as social workers and project managers, positions which brought us into direct contact with the

children who passed through the organization. We had the opportunity to share in their struggles, fears, joys, hopes and disappointments, as they negotiated their rehabilitation through the process of healing, reinsertion, and ultimate reintegration into their communities. From the outset we wish to state that this has been no simple journey and this paper will document both our perspectives regarding the emerging issues, and our evaluation of them, as we periodically reflected on and made decisions about how we could be better helpers, counselors, and friends to the children we supported through the healing and recovery process. It will also show how the experience constituted a significant learning opportunity for us as social workers and project planners.

The Nature of the Interventions

Children who received GUSCO services came initially through a Reception Center. Support activities in the Reception Center ranged from individual counseling sessions, group therapy and other structured activities,

such as learning to return to school or joining vocational institutions. Individual counseling was aimed at enabling FAC to recount their experiences and stories in order to come to terms with them, as well as to enable social workers to arrange support plans. Alongside individual counseling, we utilized group therapy through play activities/dance and storytelling to help the children of FAC to open up and to promote their psychosocial healing. Other support mechanisms included traditional cleansing ceremonies, the nature of which the family of the child had to decide on, although in our view this was more about a belief system than something that actually had a bearing on the normalization and healing process. We also followed up with children reunited with their families in order to offer further support for their reintegration into their communities, since this point in the rehabilitative process is where the children are supported and encouraged to live as normal a life as possible, by embracing community activities.

The Return from the Bush and the Reception of Children

When the children return from the bush¹ they are a pitiful sight, physically drained and weak, with many harboring life-threatening physical injuries, which were mainly inflicted on them during their escape, or during engagements with government troops or other fighting forces. As social workers we had to make decisions regarding what immediate support was required most when they were received into the Reception Center. This involved meeting a range of physical and psychosocial needs. These decisions, which were made together with the project nurse and Center teachers, were based on issues such as the provision of food – priority being given to ensuring that their nutritional needs were met and providing assurances about safety, offering medical care, and addressing psychosocial needs.

The determination of the sequence of this support was, however, dependent on a number of factors, ranging from the children's physical and psychological state, their health status, the availability of agency resources and the principle of children's "best interests." These

principles, which are enshrined in GUSCO's Center Operation Manual and Child Protection Policy, require that when a child arrives at the Center, a physical assessment is done by the duty social workers and the project nurse in order to determine an immediate course of action. Those children who appeared physically drained and weak were also assessed regarding whether they required immediate hospitalization. Those who are assessed to be in fair condition are kept at the Center, where arrangements are made for them to be taken for a more comprehensive medical check-up to Lacor Hospital within the first week. For all those children, however, safety assurances are made immediately upon arrival; this is considered to be very important for those who have lost faith in adults, since adults had been responsible for torturing them and subjecting them to horrific situations.

When we talk to the children, they expressed their fears and doubts about us as social workers, since we were strangers to them, and it was strangers in the bush who had trampled on their rights. How were they then to know that we would be any different from those people? Other questions they posed to us were: Was life worth living anyway? What community would they return to, considering their families might be in the camps or, for some of them, they had virtually no family left, except distant relatives? They would express these feelings of hopelessness to us frequently, especially those girls who had returned with children they had given birth to in the bush. There was one case where a child, whose immediate family was never traced at all, was sheltered by a member of the GUSCO board and adopted after he had spent several months at the Center.

As GUSCO social workers we thus had to address doubts and fears in the children, first by assuring them that they have returned to a different society: a society that values them as children, understands what they have gone through, and will give them an opportunity to make choices whereby they can reclaim their childhood and determine their future. Second, we assured them that they were safe and that no one was going to take their lives and dignity as human beings away

from them again. And, third, we assured them that we do not condone what they have gone through, but that we understand it and we do not in any way blame them for what happened. These issues, we found to be fundamental in order to obtain the children's trust.

When we looked at the children on their return, we could see that many did not feel that they had any hope at all, although they still believed there was a better life, somewhere, than the one they had been living. Initial discussion with them, therefore, provided an opportunity for the social workers to determine the potential length of their stay at the Reception Center for Psychosocial (PSS) support. The duration of residence would depend, however, on how each child responded to the *treatment plan* as directed by a set of indicators².

Much as we had our own fears and awareness about our limits in furthering the healing process, we were driven by our personal obligations and organizational objectives to offer our support. We felt dejected and were left in a *moral trance* from their stories, learning that they had been subjected to morally repugnant and difficult situations where some were made to kill their fellow children and other people. This was a huge weight on us as helpers: we could feel it penetrate us through our own sense of humanity, and yet inwardly we knew that these children were not criminally liable and that they would have said 'no' in similar situations had they been offered a choice. But they had no choice: it was a brutal visitation by the forces of darkness operating in the rebels' minds that robbed the children of their innocence.

Yet when we looked critically at the young person sitting across from us, we saw a flicker of hope: a yearning to be set free from the brutal past. One child revealed this sentiment to one of us by saying: "*Sir... I hope what I went through was only a dream that will pass away one day ... why should it be me? ... I would like to go to sleep and wake up to realize that all these (things) I am talking about is only a dream.*" This deeply penetrating statement was expressed by many of the children who passed through the GUSCO Reception Center and it indicates the

quest for freedom that the children felt they must somehow find; freedom from all that they have gone through. It also shows a desire to be delivered from the terrible experience that has held their minds captive. If there had been a way by which they could have dissociated themselves from such experiences, without doubt they would have done so willingly. One could thus see that the children, in their subconscious, would not want to have been part of the experience they had been forced to undergo, which was something they perceived to be foreign and unsolicited.

What came to our minds when we analyzed the stories of these children and their quest for freedom and deliverance was that the rebels had succeeded in enslaving their minds, spirits and the very essence of their humanity and childhood. This transcended, even, their physical enslavement when they were with the rebels in the bush. And that is where our work as professional helpers begins – freeing them from the enslavement they had been subjected to. The greatest challenge we face as social workers, therefore, is in helping the child, who has undergone such excesses of psychosocial (PSS) turmoil, to come to terms with his or her situation and to make him/her know that there is still hope. Many children would say something like:

"Sir...you are giving me this assurance that all will be okay...but will these things ever be erased from my mind? I only pretend it is not there, but what I have been made to do is very real in my mind and my personal history...but look at me, my education has been disrupted...I now have children to look after...where do I begin? My family is in the camp [for internally displaced persons] and my parents cannot help me either, as they are old and frail. Is there really any hope for me?"

For most of the children, their families were also living in an artificially contrived situation of poverty in the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps; therefore, how much support

could they possibly provide for their children? Social work intervention principles espouse empowerment and support for the children in the context of their families. But for much of the last two decades in this region, little change has resulted in the context of intervention despite a massive investment of effort (see Abola et al, 2009; Omona and Ocaya, 2010). The situation of these families, therefore, is inadequate to support their children's socio-economic reintegration.

We had to rebuild trust, hope, confidence and faith in humanity in the children. How do you defend *broken humanity*, which was evident in the way the children had been treated? What keeps us going is that we can see some hope. The children raised questions that required answers, and as social workers and actors in their lives, we had to look for the answers in order to provide them with hope. Consequently, we saw it as our obligation to the children, and to the nation, to do what we could to *normalize* their lives, although in some cases we were not sure of what the outcomes might be. The challenge for us as actors, therefore, was to point out to them that some of the support we were giving them might not bring about the desired change, due to the lack of complementary factors and interventions. This demoralized us as social workers and we questioned whether the little contributions we were making were good enough. But we were motivated not only by our desire to make a difference to the children and the community, but by the success stories and testimonies that we saw and heard as we carried out follow-up activities. We concluded, therefore, that if our activities could help just one child to fully transform his/her life, then it was well worth the effort.

On one occasion, a female social work colleague was providing professional support to a young girl. As the child recounted the most difficult moments of her rebel captivity and the effects it had on her, such as her perception of humanity and dread for the future, our colleague broke down. We found the child and social worker holding each other and weeping together. What an embrace it was between social worker and child. Yet our initial approach had been to keep distance between ourselves,

as social workers, and the client, i.e, the application of the principle of "controlled emotional involvement." Perhaps what the child needed above all else was a warm embrace to provide an assurance that all will be okay, a shoulder to cry on from someone who understood her situation and not a *simple exchange of words*, which could so easily be interpreted as hollow.

That experience was an awakening because we realized that we all could have found ourselves in the same situation and could also have shed tears—tears of sadness at how a young, innocent life had been so blatantly abused. The Programme Coordinator could not do anything about that "*breach of regulations and agency practice*" other than to organize a debriefing session for the social worker, who clearly needed support from secondary trauma. This was a learning situation for us, both as an organization and as social workers. While as social workers we ascribe to the key principles of social work intervention, especially that of controlled emotional involvement, we retain our human feelings and we, too, are vulnerable to our environment.

As can be seen from that illustration, sometimes we also are subjected to situations that overwhelm us, especially as we work in trauma counseling and support. We wondered if this makes you a bad social worker when you show your own *feelings* to the children? However, we came to the view that this approach would make the children feel better about the helping relationship, believing us to be empathizing with them. Perhaps the best helping approach, therefore, goes beyond social work and into a demonstration of humanity, where the helper (social worker) makes the children *feel* more like their own brothers, sisters, or even children.

This display of humanity was also important for a more general development of trust. Our analysis of children's responses, based on their stories and reactions to the Center's psychosocial support activities, awakened us to the presence of personal *agency* as a strong resource within the children (Bandura, 1982; Blanchet-Cohen, 2008; Elder, 1994). During their captivity, the *agency of the children* played a key role in

keeping them alive and facilitated the decisions, for many, to escape. Therefore, we had to support them to re-establish trust, hope and a recognition of their own *agencies* and the immense personal resources they had displayed, which would be significant in their management of the transition from captivity to Reception Center and then to reunion with their communities.

Studies have indicated that some children exhibit extreme *agency* in managing their lives in the bush by refusing to obey orders, which flew against their personal moral codes—decisions that led to a premature end to their lives (e.g., Baines, 2009). Testimonies of many children indicated that the escape process itself was fraught with many pitfalls, worst of all being recaptured by the rebels and killed. We therefore looked at our work as not just a job, but also as an obligation to the children in order for them to shake out their negativity and approach life positively. We also recognized the significant personal resources that they exercised in managing the post-bush healing process. This *self-actualization*, we realized, was important to nurture if they were to generate more self-belief and a dignified outlook toward their lives.

Integration of the Principles of Social Work Professional Helping: What Lessons Did We Learn as Actors and Social Workers?

As practicing social workers, we were fully committed to integrating the core social work principles of casework intervention (Hancock, 1997). While the context is significantly different from social work as practiced in a developed country, most of those core principles were fully relevant in the Northern Uganda situation where they were applied at all stages of the helping process. This included trauma intervention, rehabilitative support and the process of their return to, and reunion with, their families. Nevertheless, there were challenges, as we will show in the following discussion.

We applied the principles of individualization by appreciating that, while all children exhibited various, but similar, signs of trauma, each child responded differently.

Furthermore, the frequency and extent of exposure depended on the inner resources of the child, his/her interpretation of the situations and his/her position in the environment at different points in time. This also explains why, as an agency, we do not strictly lay down when a child will be ready for reunion, since his/her readiness depends on a set of indicators regarding psychosocial well-being as defined by GUSCO's Reception Center's Operational Manual and Guideline for PSS support. Although this manual, which is culturally positioned, individualizes each child, it emphasizes how the reunion process should be handled. For instance, at some point during the process, he/she should be presented with choices regarding what he/she wishes to do on return home, i.e., whether to go back to formal school, to enroll for vocational training or to do something else. Also, although guidance is provided, government policy influences the advice given, in that the younger children have to go back into formal schooling.

On the whole, the children and their families are allowed to make choices while, at the same time, the best interests of the child are taken into consideration. However, there are times when the Convention on the Rights of the Child definition of 'best interest' runs counter to the social work intervention principle of self-determination. For instance, a 12-year-old child who had grown to like carpentry, as there was a workshop adjacent to the Reception Center, made his interest known to the social worker; however, considering his age and level of physical maturity, we thought it was not in his best interest to do carpentry³. We therefore had to infringe on his self-determination in order to protect him. He was eventually counseled and, supported by the organization, and he re-entered primary education after reunion with his family. It will thus be entirely up to him and his family to decide, probably after primary seven, whether he still wants to pursue carpentry or other vocational training. With regard to a child's rights, therefore, self-determination per se is not absolute. Other considerations might also have to be made, especially those that maximize a child's welfare by protecting his/her future growth and development.

To ensure that the children enjoy their stay at the Reception Center, and not perceive it as detention, we have devised means by which they become fully 'part and parcel' of the helping process. This aim is also in consonance with the social work principles of participation: ensuring that clients play an active part in the helping process. In individual counseling we provide room for dialogue and the purposeful expression of feelings, whereby the social worker takes a backseat role by encouraging children to tell their stories and to describe what their experiences mean to them now and in the future. The children, therefore, are actively involved in determining their own courses of actions. And they also participate in group therapies, such as adaptations of games, dances, sports and round-table storytelling, usually the precursor to a general discussion of their experiences in captivity. This approach makes it possible for even the most timid of children to open up and talk about their situation, share stories, riddles and proverbs, which are instrumental in their opening up about their bush experiences. Acholi proverbs, riddles and folk stories have *morals* about consequences of one's actions and are thus important in generating accountability in the children, as well as in re-instilling social values and philosophies.

One timid child, Oryem, was a loner who never spoke much, but would always sit and listen to others. In time, however, he began to participate in group activities and, later, became more open with his social worker. When he was asked about what helped him to become more trustful and open up, he said:

"The fact that I was valued as a person and allowed to talk and make contribution at my own pace at my own timing in my own ways made me feel wanted, appreciated and made to feel important. I realized all of a sudden that I could open up and talk and not be laughed at [mocked]. This was very important to me and I was very grateful to be given such an opportunity. I was also able to develop trust with time in the social

workers and I realized that they had my best interest at heart, and were very supportive and wanted me to feel better in spite of my difficult time in the bush."

We apply the principle of confidentiality in all situations to ensure the maximum protection of the children and to create an environment of free expression (Hancock, 1997). In this regard, therefore, all helping engagements take place in a secure place; if in the compound, the venue is far away from other children; if in the office, only the social worker and child are privy to the conversation. Such confidentiality assures the children further and enhances their openness by allowing them to develop more confidence in us as social workers; it also adds to their sense of dignity and self-worth.

It is unfortunate that for some of the children their pre-abduction treatment by parents did not show love, care and the prioritization of their interests as is done in the Reception Center. Therefore, for such children it was the first time they had experienced genuine care and unconditional acceptance. The problem then becomes the environment where the reunion is to take place. Our biggest worry is that parents and guardians will not heed our advice to effectively support the child on his/her return. It should be noted that all these issues arise in a context of war, poverty and want. Therefore, while at GUSCO, the children have access to all they need, such as food, shelter, footwear, good bedding (many for the first time slept on a mattress) and now they may be returning to a community that is very different. Would this result in an unintended effect of our intervention in the child's welfare? Such was the dilemma of our intervention.

In our support of, and interactions with, the children, we also have to exhibit a high level of self-awareness (Hancock, 1997) in that it is important for us to separate ourselves from them and to clearly demarcate our roles and boundaries as helpers in order to consider their interests and welfare to be of the highest importance. Our own self-awareness is also crucial so as to avoid bringing to bear our own

challenges and personal issues on the helping relationship. Our reflections on self-awareness also enable us to be nonjudgmental towards the children, but to generate empathy as regards their situations and experiences.

Returning Children Home

In cases where the parents may not be alive, GUSCO's main concern is to reunite the formerly abducted child with his or her relatives. As earlier noted, at the Reception Center there are three categories of professionals who are all concerned with the well-being of children. The social workers are concerned with their psychological well-being, the teachers are concerned with educational matters, and the nurses are concerned with their health. Therefore, each child is supposed to be attended to by all three professionals, who consider the decision to reunite him/her with parents/relatives jointly. However, returning children to the community also has its challenges, since in many displacement cases the families were not living in their original setting. The GUSCO Reception Center operation manual clarifies that a child can be reunited within hours from the time of reception as long as it is in his/her best interest, or even after several weeks for the same reason. The main issue is how such best interest may be determined. Normally, GUSCO acknowledges that the parent or the family is the legal custodian. Therefore, if the parents or family members are capable of fulfilling the emotional and physical needs of the child, a decision can be made to reunite a child who is ready to go home.

As social workers, we are supposed to carry out family tracings and assessments where interviews are conducted not only with immediate family members, but also with community members. Issues we consider are primarily economic status, i.e., the family's ability to provide for the child's needs, including education, together with its attitude towards him or her and the attitude of the community. The attitude of the community is assessed to ensure that a returning child is not harmed, since some people in Northern Uganda view formerly abducted children as perpetrators of violence. In such cases, more elaborate

dialogue regarding community attitudes has to be done before reunion can proceed.

In some situations the FAC return far "richer" than their own families, due to the material support and seed money provided by the agencies into a context of want, need and squalor in the IDP camps. However, when we reflected on our interventions, we realized its limitations in that, due to resource constraints, we could not implement some activities that might have improved reintegration into the community. While we were aware of the limitations of our interventions in terms of empowering the children and their communities, we could not address all the challenges.

Building Positive Relationships with Children

As we indicated earlier, the most difficult aspect of our work was helping the children to re-establish trust and belief in adults. A lack of trust was not always verbalized by the children, but we could feel it from the way the children talked and behaved. For example, they exhibited "guardedness" and a reluctance to open up. We spent the initial interviews talking about their aspirations and fears in order to assure them about their future. Putting children at ease is necessary to enable them to regain trust in adults, and to develop their faith in people in the community and those close to them.

This issue of developing trust reminds us of the case of one girl, Harriet, who, like Oryem, had difficulty in opening up upon returning from the bush. In such cases we do not rush them, but provide ample time to come to terms with their situations in order to appreciate what they have been through. Therefore, instead of pressuring her to open up, we encouraged her to participate in indoor games and other activities that she showed an interest in. Therefore, no one, not even her social worker, put her under pressure to talk about her bush experiences. Later, when she opened up on her own, she was ready to talk about everything to her social worker. She revealed then that she could not trust people at first and imagined that the information she would reveal was going to be used against her and cause

her to be arrested and detained by the army. This was because she had a fear of soldiers and imagined the experiences she underwent while in the bush would be used to either imprison or humiliate her. She could not, therefore, talk for fear that she would give herself away and delay her impending reunion with her family. When the social worker provided further assurances, she opened up even more. In her own words:

"When I was in the bush, I, like other girls, were [sic] made to do many bad things...the most difficult one was when I was forced to hit people in a line...about ten of them over and over again with other girls...till they had all died. These images kept on coming to my mind and I could not talk about it to anyone. But when my social worker talked to me and assured me that it will be okay, I decided to tell her everything...and I felt lighter and much better..."

As social workers we felt that allowing Harriet time to bring out her experiences was instrumental for the healing process. If she had not chosen to talk then we might also have failed to devise alternative choices in order to aid her rehabilitation and post-reunion reintegration. The lesson we learned here was that, while social workers might give constant assurances and promises of confidentiality to a child who has undergone deep trauma, this, in itself, is not enough. It was therefore important to allow the child time to come to terms with her situation and develop her own sense of morality. As social workers, therefore, we consider one thing to be very important when working with sensitive children, and that is time. Just like any sort of relationship, it takes time to have a normal interaction with them. Relationship building, in the case of Harriet, proved to be more difficult when taking into account the possibility of her mental health being impaired due to the traumatic events she experienced. Consequently, we realized that for some girls, the violations of their rights and the abuses of their womanhood, or girlhood,

together with the invasion of their privacy, was not something they could talk about easily to anyone. To them it must have been like undressing in public. But with time, and after developing trust in their social workers, they opened up and recounted their experiences. We recognize, however, that not all children respond in the same way, because of their differing interpretations of their experiences. With time, the children achieved self-confidence, which hastened the healing process.

It is necessary for the social worker to be self-aware. Due to the children's experiences in captivity, which taught them not to take anything for granted, they tended to derive different meanings from ordinary statements and even actions. One day, after one of us thought he was making a nice joke, all the 'child mothers' at the Center refused to eat. This was because the joke was misconstrued as mocking them. Such are the sensitivities that pose difficulties in relationship-building between the children and their social workers. Therefore, the social worker must have *critical self-awareness* when working with such children.

An environment of friendship, coupled with confidentiality, also makes it easier for children to open up, since it further builds trust, which is instrumental in sharing their life stories. The issue of *space* is important in that, in recounting their experiences, some for the first time realized that they had vulnerabilities and recognized what they were. This was not possible when they were in the bush, as they were not expected to show emotion: *soldiers were soldiers*. On return, the children cried when telling their stories, since, for the first time, they realized the enormity of what they had been forced to do. They mourned for their victims, for their lost childhood, for the loss of innocence and for the brutality of fallen humanity. So our main lesson was that *creating space* is important in hastening the healing process.

The introduction of *structure* was important in enabling the children to fully appreciate the organization of society to help them be responsible for their actions. The Reception Center has an arrangement that

allows them enough time to sleep, play, work, and meet their social workers.

One key structural element is food preparation and cooking. Even if such an activity were meant to re-establish a normal pattern of life the child might have lost while in captivity, it was also used to build trust. We observed that, on arrival, the children were hesitant to eat, especially when alone, because they thought they would be poisoned. In order to address this problem, social workers made a point of involving them in the preparation of their food to the best of their ability. No child was made to do tasks that were beyond his physical ability, as was the case in the bush. This structure is important in preparing them for reunion and instrumental in the re-establishment of lost trust. This contrasted from the activities the children were involved with in the bush. Compared to such forced activities, Reception Center activities were regulated in a caring way, which enabled the helping process to be interpreted positively by the children.

Followup: Post-reinsertion Issues

Good practice presupposes that, after working with any individual, a follow-up is made, not only to ascertain the progress such a child has made, but to provide more support in case it is needed. The procedure at GUSCO required that all children come through the Reception Center. There they are categorized into *high* and *low-risk* so that more resources are devoted to following-up those who are high risk. The children considered to be at high risk: the child mothers who suffered sexual violence and returned with their own children; those who came back suffering from chronic illnesses, especially HIV/AIDS; children born in captivity; unaccompanied minors; those disabled as a result of injuries incurred during captivity; and those who presented with high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder. All others are considered to be at low risk, but they are still followed up at least once.

A follow-up schedule is drawn up for each child that requires a social worker to make four visits, one every three months, for a period of two years. A form designed mainly to collect information is always available for use.

Information gained is then passed to the monitoring and evaluation officer, both in soft and hard copy, for storage and analysis. The first step in the procedure is to categorize the children in terms of their degree of vulnerability. Initially, it is possible that a child who has just returned may not necessarily show signs of post-traumatic stress disorder, but signs may appear as soon as he or she is reunited with parents or guardians, due to trigger factors that might be present in the home. This might mean that the child's psychological well-being remains unfulfilled because he or she is not deemed to be at risk. In practice, therefore, there may be a great disparity between the procedure laid down and the way it is exercised. For any sort of visit to be called a follow-up, it needs to build on the initial process: there must have been an agreed plan of action regarding how such follow-up should be carried out.

GUSCO's practice has been that a social worker travels to an IDP camp where many children have been reunited with their families. The social worker would then meet family members at random, have a chat with them, and later pass the information gathered to the monitoring and evaluation officer. Also, the child would not know that he or she is going to be visited on that particular day. By using such a method, the follow-up process turns out to be very unsystematic. Although this may have meant that the organization collects valuable information, such unplanned visits have not been helpful to the children. The service aspect of the follow-up, therefore, has been completely missing, since social workers usually spend limited time with the children in their communities.

For example, if a social worker finds out that a child has suffered an emotional relapse, it may not be possible to address the problem within the time allowed. This is because most social workers live outside the communities where the children have been reunited. This problem has also been exacerbated by an inadequate "referral pathway," which means that children's identified needs remain largely unmet after reunion. However, as GUSCO social workers, despite all the flaws in the follow-up practice, we have carefully

documented information regarding the children in the community.

Many questions have been raised regarding the usefulness of GUSCO-type Reception Centers for formerly abducted children. Indeed, some claims have been made to the effect that there is no difference between former rebel captives, who go through such programs, and those who do not (Humphreys and Weinstein, 2007). There have, however, been positive testimonies about our interventions in the community, but there are challenges as well. If one had in-depth interviews with formerly abducted children who have returned home, they would, no doubt, describe a number of problems they are facing, but that does not mean that they have not been supported. If GUSCO had not intervened at all there would be numerous psychosocial difficulties arising from formerly abducted children growing up without rehabilitative support. However, since this is a qualitative intervention, its effects might not be readily visible.

Lessons Learned:

Where Do We Go from Here?

Our experience at GUSCO points to a direction of Psychosocial Programming that builds on the strengths of the children, is context-specific, and links interventions to other developments and peace-building initiatives within the region to ensure that affected children return to a community that can nurture them and support them to actualize their potential. We are aware that not all children who have been supported turn out to be "good citizens," a situation that, in the context of continued insecurity and conflict, could be expected. The overall lesson is that, while interventions might be developed with good intention, at times environmental factors act as constraints to the success and effectiveness of interventions (Bebbington et al., 2008). In this case, therefore, the limiting factors would be those elements that may have crowded out the *agency* of the children in managing the healing and reintegration process (Archer, 2000; Elder, 1994).

In reflecting critically on our intervention as an organization, we concentrated on

meeting the immediate needs of the children, whether they be physical, psychosocial, or socio-economic; however, perhaps we did not effectively address the empowerment issues of formerly abducted children. Perhaps it would be better for the children to be prepared for effective participation in the political process in order for them to confront the socio-cultural and economic inequality that stand in the way of their rights. This would have added a critical dimension to our programming within their communities.

In our view, the interventions have been too paternalistic, with a service delivery focus; its emphasis has been only at helping FAC to access goods and services and not on general *socio-political empowerment*, which would enable them to advocate for their rights. Our reflections, therefore, suggest to us that we did something for the children, but that we only remedied the children's immediate problems and did not bring the best out of them in terms of engagement with their communities.

Interventions for FAC should be fully integrated and made to address socio-economic recovery for the region. This is important if the potential of these young people is to be fully addressed. Further integration might be dependent on FAC being able to access socio-economic, psychosocial, and politico-cultural services for themselves during the programming phase. If facilities for providing such services are nonexistent, to where do war-affected children turn? Effective reintegration of *all* war-affected children will be dependent on strategic, well-thought-through, and positive interventions. These interventions should focus on rehabilitation, reconstruction and, in some cases, the development of socio-economic and political infrastructures, including rebuilding significant physical assets in areas where these have been destroyed or vandalized.

References

- Abola, C., Omach, P., Ochen, E.A., Anena, C., & Barongo, A. (2009). *Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation through Norwegian Nongovernmental Organizations in Northern Uganda (2003-2008)*; the Norwegian Agency for International Development (OSLO); Evaluation Report 3/2009.
- Archer, M. (2000). *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Baines, E (2009). Complex Political Perpetrators: Reflections on Dominic Ongwen. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, June 2009.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-Efficacy Mechanisms in Human Agency. *American Psychologist*. Vol. 37, No. 2, February 1982.
- Bebbington, A.J., Hickey, S., & Mitlin, D.C. (Eds.) (2008). *Can NGOs Make a Difference? The Challenge of Development Alternatives*. London: Zed Books.
- Blanchet-Cohen, N. (2008). Taking a stance: Child agency across the dimensions of early adolescents' environmental involvement. *Environmental Education Research*. Vol. 14, No. 3, June 2008, 257–272.
- Elder, Jr., G.H. (1994). Time, Human Agency, and Social Change: Perspectives on the Life Course. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 1994, Vol. 57, No. 1, 4-15.
- Hancock, M.R. (1997). *The Principles of Social Work Practice: A Generic Approach*. New York: Haworth Press.
- Humphreys, M., and Weinstein, J.M. (2007). Demobilization and Reintegration. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51: 531-567.
- Omona, J., & Ocaya, R.K. (2010). *Strengthening Community-Level Peace Building and Social Support Practices in Acholi Sub Region Project: A Baseline Survey Report Submitted to CARITAS Gulu Arch-Diocese*. Gulu district, Northern Uganda.

Footnotes

¹ The *Bush* denotes the period of captivity when the abducted children were still under rebel control. Both a physical bush is implied and a conceptual one of separation from the normal law and order society.

² These indicators, comprising analysis of both the psychological and social behaviour of the child were developed by the organization with support from an International psychologist, Elisabeth Jareg of Save the Children Norway.

³ Carpentry is an extremely physical task which involves carrying heavy tools and other materials.

Eric Awich Ochen, Ph.D., lectures at Makerere University and is the External Fund Mobilization Advisor at GUSCO, having earlier worked with the Organization as a social worker. Robert Okeny, M.A., is the Program Coordinator of GUSCO, having earlier worked as a social worker, administrator, and program officer. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: E.A.Ochen@hud.ac.uk

PERSPECTIVES ON ASSISTING AFRICAN REFUGEES IN ISRAEL

Itzhak Lander, Ph.D., Sapir College, Hof Ashkelon, Israel

This narrative relates the stories of a variety of Israelis who have come upon African refugees to Israel, and who have attempted to be of assistance. The author provides the reader with information on the reasons, scope and challenges associated with the recent movement of African refugees to Israel. The personal experiences and perspectives of refugees from Eritrea and Darfur provide further background. I relate the narratives of Israeli helpers: from the soldier who initially encounters the newcomer at the border, to the activist who is a catalyst for the development of culturally sensitive social services. The internal working models underlying their efforts are delineated and underscored. The meaning of their helping actions and sentiments within the complex Israeli socio-political context is explored.

"The stranger that dwells with you shall be unto you as born among you." - Leviticus 19:34

In 2003 the Darfur region of Western Sudan witnessed the beginning of a civil war that would culminate in genocide, leaving between 200,000 and 400,000 dead and up to 2.5 million displaced. In the southern region, yet another civil war, that raged from 1983-2005, left an additional 2 million dead and 4 million displaced. The large majority of those who found themselves homeless, up to 5 million, fled to neighboring Egypt (Derfner, 2008; Yacobi, 2009).

The situation of the Sudanese refugees in Egypt has been difficult. Beyond living in substandard conditions, they have been the brunt of racial and ethnic prejudice and a prevailing view that they are undermining the local economy. They are often pursued and harassed by the authorities (Kaminsky, 2009). Many are the victims of violence and a large number of women have been sexually abused (Yiftach Milo, co-founder of ASSAF, Aid Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel in 2006, interview August 10, 2010). The watershed event that led to the beginning of the illegal movement of Darfurians from Egypt into adjacent Israel took place on December 30, 2005. Thousands of Egyptian security personnel forcibly removed 250 Sudanese refugees camped in a park near the offices of the U.N. High

Commission for Refugees. Twenty-seven were killed, including numerous women and children (Barak, 2007).

The crossing of the 135-kilometer long porous border into Israel involves a physically demanding trek through rugged desert terrain. Refugees pay hundreds of dollars each to Bedouin smugglers to accompany them, in the utter darkness of night, to spots where the chance of a successful crossing is greatest (Derfner, 2008; Yacobi, 2009). There is a frightening risk of being arrested by the Egyptian border patrols and being severely beaten. Dozens have been shot and killed on their approach to the border markers (Kaminsky, 2009).

The news that Israel could be infiltrated by land reached refugees fleeing war, famine, religious and political persecution from additional African countries, including Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Congo, Somalia, Ivory Coast, and, in particular, Eritrea. For these refugees and asylum seekers, crossing the border into Israel is considered a better option than staying in Egypt or crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Israel is perceived as a relatively prosperous and liberal nation, which makes it a reasonable as well as a reachable destination (Kaminsky, 2009; Yacobi, 2009). Many face torture, imprisonment, or death should they

somehow find themselves back in their homelands (Shahar, 2007).

During the past seven years, extensive human trafficking from Egypt has taken place. Unofficial estimates are that as many as 25,000 African refugees and asylum seekers have made their way to Israel, where the large majority have remained (Yiftach Milo, co-founder of ASSAF, an organization founded in 2006 for the support of African refugees in Israel, interview August 10, 2010). Between dozens and hundreds are said to arrive each week, with up to 100 arriving some days (Barak, 2007; Kaminsky, 2009). Many of these are minors, including children and youth unaccompanied by their parents or other family members (Yacobi, 2009).

The lack of academic writing on the African refugees in Israel, coupled with a relative paucity of official reports and data, necessitates a reliance on Israeli media coverage, as well as informant testimony, in order to begin to understand the phenomenon of African refugees and asylum seekers in Israel.

Wasabe's Story

Wasabe's story may help shed light on the journeys of those Africans who have arrived in Israel seeking refuge.

Wasabe was saved from forced conscription at age 16 when he arrived for school late on the morning of February 3, 2006, only to find its gates locked. Two hours earlier the Eritrean army had made a surprise raid and, storming his school, forcibly recruited his classmates at gunpoint. Up until that day Wasabe had lived with his family in a southern village of sorghum growers. Having lost his father at age nine and being the eldest child in the family, Wasabe was the one largely responsible for the family's agricultural activity and livelihood. He recalls with a smile that when he arrived home early that morning, his mother was angry with him and commented that if he continued in this manner he would never complete his studies. When Wasabe's sister returned home from school, she told him there were lists posted on the walls of the market naming those youths who still faced

compulsory enlistment. Wasabe's name was included.

Wasabe hurried to flee. He did not pack a bag or change his clothes, but did manage to grab all his money: about 10 dollars. He did not say goodbye to his mother so as not to entangle her in his planned escape. He simply walked out the door, crossed the family's cultivated fields, and kept going. He did not stop until daybreak. Early in the morning he reached a nearby village where he bought some food. He hiked on. He walked mostly at night for fear of being spotted by military patrols. He sometimes ran into hyenas, but these frightened him less than the army patrols out during the day. He slept in secluded hideouts. When his money ran out he would look for a casual job, work for a few days and then continue. He would not stay in any one place very long as he was afraid of being caught and tried as a deserter.

It took him some eight months to reach the Eritrea-Sudan border, which he crossed at will and without difficulty. In Sudan he was taken in by fellow countrymen. During his month stay he contacted relatives who had fled to Malta years prior. They sent him a small amount of money for food. Wasabe used this to pay a truck driver to take him to the capital city of Khartoum and to buy a train ticket to Cairo. In Cairo he met fellow Eritrean refugees who warned him that he might be arrested there and even expelled back home. They suggested he join them on a trek to Israel, where they promised his life would be safer. Wasabe agreed that this seemed like a reasonable destination, although he had no real idea about where he was going. He believed that he had nothing to lose.

The group of boys hired smugglers to take them through eastern Egypt to the Israeli border. The difficult journey, travelled in large part by foot, took three days. On the fourth night they scampered toward the border marker and, just ahead of the bullets of Egyptian border guards, climbed over a barbed wire fence and surrendered to Israeli soldiers. The soldiers transported them to the southern Israeli city of Beer Sheva where they dropped them off. Wasabe and his friends walked through the streets and asked how to get to

the United Nations office. A university student they met put them in touch with local residents, mostly professors, who voluntarily assisted the newly arrived African refugees.

Gabana's Story

The story of Gabana highlights the experiences of many of the African refugees following their initial arrival in Israel.

On the night of March 3, 2008, Gabana, age 24 from Darfur, arrived in Israel. He had just climbed over large jagged boulders stacked by the Egyptian border police in order to slow the infiltration of African refugees into Israel. Standing one yard inside Israeli territory he stood perfectly still and, with hands clasped over his head, waited for the Israeli soldiers to find him. Gabana was uncertain and wondered about what they would do with him but had heard from other Darfurians he had met during his year-long stay in Egypt that he would at least be safe. Within a short while three soldiers had surrounded him. Shortly thereafter he found himself in the back seat of their Jeep on the way, he would later find out, to a large detention facility constructed near the southern border to house African refugees and asylum seekers.

Gabana was kept there three weeks. While in the detention center, he slept in a large barracks, housing about 100 men. The food was strange to him and a bit difficult to eat, but of ample quality and quantity. There were showers with hot and cold water, which was new to him, and ceiling fans to lighten the desert heat. In the central auditorium there were a few televisions. He would go many times a day to hear news broadcasts. Though he could not understand the Hebrew he waited in hopeful anticipation of seeing pictures from back home. There were uniformed guards, men and women mostly around his age, armed and unarmed, who tried to speak with him in their broken English. He liked talking with them about what it was like to live in Israel. Most of the day he would hang around outside with his fellow detainees, chatting and wondering about their fate. There were Hebrew language classes available, taught by the guards in a makeshift classroom. Gabana enjoyed attending as sometimes the young female

guards, whom he found very attractive, would bring their "students" cookies and candies from home.

During the three weeks he was detained, Gabana met several times with Interior Ministry officials who would decide his fate in Israel. What he mainly wanted to know was when he would be free to go. The detention center was not bad, but he was impatient to start his new life. At night Gabana would find himself thinking about his family. He was very worried for the fate of those who had survived the tortuous killing back home and who were in Egypt without, according to Gabana, any future. It was hard for him to accept that he would never again return to his country. At times he would find himself weeping when he remembered the night in Darfur when he witnessed his sister being group raped, at knifepoint, by the members of the militias.

After Gabana was released from the detention center he was transported in an army bus, along with another 20 detainees, to the dilapidated "central bus station" district of southern Tel Aviv, where he was dropped off without any money or other provisions. (This neighborhood has in recent years become a sort of transit camp with African refugees and asylum seekers joining thousands of predominantly legal foreign workers from Thailand, China, and India.)

When Gabana got off the bus, he walked up the first street he came upon and immediately noticed a number of small Internet cafés and bars, mobile phone outlets, hairdressers, and laundromats with Africans inside. He entered a café and introduced himself to some of the men sitting inside. He was invited to sit down with them and within an hour they took him to where they were living, a five-minute walk away. It was a large, grey, concrete bomb shelter, which served as short-term free housing for about 200 African refugees who slept on the floor on paper thin mattresses. The physical and hygienic conditions were poor, with two bathrooms for all the residents, and no shower or laundry facilities. This shelter was to serve as an interim stop between the detention center and a rented apartment. Gabana was immediately given a mattress and a few days' food from

the representative of an aid organization unknown to him.

After a short search, Gabana found employment as a dishwasher in a restaurant near the beach. Working for slightly less than the legal minimum wage, he spent most of the coming months there working 10-14 hours per day. Gabana moved out of the shelter within a month to a two-bedroom flat he rented on the same street along with seven other African refugees. Gabana has remained in his job, and spends whatever little free time he has socializing with other African refugees. They enjoy playing soccer together in the local park and swimming in the sea. Lately he has become involved in an organization of African refugees who themselves help newcomers with information and support. Once a month he goes to the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Tel Aviv, hoping to get more conclusive direction about his future.

Gabana has continued to suffer from chronic skin problems since his arrival in Israel. Untreated in the past, he is now cared for at a storefront medical clinic established to serve African refugees. He was referred by the clinic to a dermatologist in a local hospital who treated him without remuneration. His medicine is expensive in proportion to his salary. However, he prefers to walk to and from work and use the bus fare he saves on his prescription. Gabana has also experienced some mental health issues arising from traumatic experiences in Darfur and Egypt. He is aware that many of his fellow Darfurians in Israel are in need of support and treatment stemming from ordeals they have experienced. What is more, they have next to no contact with their families in Africa, are constantly concerned for their welfare, and are painfully aware that they may never see their loved ones again. Gabana has met a few times with one of the medical clinic's volunteer social workers.

Gabana is grateful for the assistance he has received from many organizations and individuals since he has arrived in Israel. He particularly notes a large public interest in the situation of the African refugees and favorable media coverage. He underscores the relative lack of discrimination and persecution

compared to his homeland and Egypt. However, he emphasizes that it is very hard to make a livelihood and, in addition, that his status in Israel is essentially temporary and unstable. He explains that he is constantly worried and even fearful that his permission to stay in the country will be terminated suddenly. Gabana wants permanent asylum and expects the Israeli government to help him.

The Israeli Government Response to the African Refugees and Asylum Seekers

The state of Israel has not embraced a clear policy with respect to the illegal entry of African refugees and asylum seekers. It has not fully acknowledged that they exist.

The hesitant and ambivalent response of the national government in Jerusalem appears related to the common perception that the illegal entry of Africans poses a delicate problem, which raises a complex dilemma for Israeli society.

On the one hand, the government is wary about being too hospitable to the newcomers, fully recognizing that there are several million in neighboring Egypt. The African refugees and asylum seekers represent an additional financial and logistical burden on an already strapped nation. Most important, however, they have been perceived as posing a potentially serious threat to the preservation of the Jewish character of the state. Israel guarantees a home to the world's Jewish refugees and claims that it cannot be expected to do the same for the world's non-Jewish refugees (Barak, 2007; Derfner, 2008).

On the other hand, Israel is well aware of existing legal, moral, and historical factors that mitigate against expulsion of the African refugees. Refugees and asylum seekers, according to international convention, are to be protected by the receiving country while they await a decision on their case. In addition, Israel is concerned about the safety and well being of African refugees it might potentially deport back to Egypt, including the possibility that the Egyptian government might expel them back to their home countries where many could face imprisonment or even death. Important in Israeli considerations is the fact that the

Sudanese government views any citizen who has stepped foot inside Israel as being guilty of high treason and subject to the death penalty, including refugees seeking asylum (Yiftach Milo, co-founder of ASSAF, an organization founded in 2006 for the support of African refugees in Israel, interview, August 10, 2010).

The inability of the Israeli national government to establish a clear stance with regard to the African refugees and asylum seekers has resulted in a situation whereby it offers no formal health or social services to them while they reside in the country. Most of the refugees reside in Tel Aviv or in the southern tourist city of Eilat. While many manage to rent apartments along with their fellow Africans after spending their initial weeks in shelters, others remain stuck in the shelters or are homeless. While the employment of Africans in the service sector is passively tolerated by the Interior Ministry and Ministry of Labor, and most refugees work, only a handful are issued formal work permits. Several hundred Darfurians, as well as a number of Eritreans who had escaped from their country's war with Ethiopia, have received formal resident status granting them a legal work permit, medical insurance, and social benefits (Yacobi, 2009).

It is not that the national government is entirely impotent with respect to the African newcomers. It is their correctional service, a branch of the Ministry of Internal Security, which operates the several detention centers where, in the last three years, thousands of African refugees have been held. Many detainees are released to reside in Israeli urban centers only after the detention centers are full to the brim and there is a need to make room for newcomers (Yiftach Milo, co-founder of ASSAF, an organization founded in 2006 for the support of African refugees in Israel, interview August 10, 2010). Prior to the establishment of these centers the refugees would simply be taken by army personnel to such cities as Tel Aviv, Eilat, or Beer Sheva and be dropped off, left to fend for themselves. Whatever limited help they received was either from student activists, volunteers, or select municipal governments (Yacobi, 2009).

The Tel Aviv municipality has been the singular government body that has exerted substantial effort in helping the African refugees and asylum seekers and the city of Tel Aviv is considered by many of them as a place of possibilities. In order to keep the refugees afloat financially, the municipality has established several shelters to house them on their arrival. While the shelters for male African refugees are grossly overcrowded and of substandard quality, the Tel Aviv shelter for African refugee women and children is considered adequately equipped to address the needs of its residents. Hundreds of African refugee children attend municipal schools and kindergartens and refugee mothers and children attend well-baby clinics. In 2008, when the mayor of Tel Aviv first announced a plan to build a much larger shelter to take African refugees out of the inadequate shelters and off of the streets, the project was stopped by Prime Minister Olmert's office (Yacobi, 2009).

The rhetoric on the national political scene has likewise reflected the government's fundamental ambivalence toward the African refugees and asylum seekers. Former Minister of the Interior Bar On warned that Israel would face major geo-strategic difficulty should it fail to stop illegal African infiltration. He emphasized that sympathy among the Israeli public for the African refugees was ill founded, as only a minority of those reaching Israel originated from the viciously embattled Darfur region (Shahar, 2007).

Similarly, former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert described the thousands of African refugees residing in Israel as a "tsunami." He called for stricter security measures in order to bar infiltrators from Africa and established detention centers for the housing of those African refugees and asylum seekers who did manage to arrive. In addition, it was Prime Minister Olmert who ordered the first deportation of 50 refugees back to Egypt, albeit only after receiving assurances from Egyptian President Mubarek that the deportees would be treated well and not be sent back to Sudan (Derfner, 2008; Yacobi, 2009).

Sixty-three members of the Israeli parliament, representing both the political left and right, signed a petition urging the

government to refrain from this deportation. This was part of a large public campaign, including substantial street protests and damning media coverage, appealing largely to the Jewish historical collective memory of persecution. Supporters likened the plight of the African refugees to that of the European Jewish refugees of the Holocaust who, in the face of a genocidal threat, also needed shelter and protection (Barak, 2007). The chairperson of the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, an extremely prominent public institution in Israel, proclaimed "We cannot stand by as refugees from genocide in Darfur are knocking at our doors" (Barak, 2007; Derfner, 2008; Yacobi, 2009).

Former Justice Minister Friedmann strongly advocated for the absorption of Darfurian refugees claiming that Israel must adhere to the principle of "biblical compassion." Drawing a clear parallel between the Israelite exodus from Egypt 3000 years ago and the current African refugees leaving Egypt, he urged Israelis to ask themselves to what extent their response to African refugees and asylum seekers is within the "pathway" of such compassion. He stressed the need for Israel to play its part in global efforts to aid these victims of persecution and war (Yacobi, 2009).

The Israeli Voluntary Sector Response to the African Refugees and Asylum Seekers

African refugee care has in large part fallen on Israeli humanitarian and aid organizations, as well as individual volunteers. Local charities, small businesses and families have donated food, clothing, transportation and temporary housing. Physicians, psychologists, social workers and lawyers have provided pro bono legal and health services. The arrival of the African refugees and asylum seekers has been the impetus for the expansion of the scope of the activities of various preexisting organizations dealing with human rights, such as the hotline for migrant workers, Tel Aviv University Law School's refugee rights clinic, Hamoked center for the defense of the individual, Amnesty International and others, along with community organizations, such as the kibbutz movement (Kaminsky, 2009; Ravid,

2007). A small number of new agencies have been established to aid the African refugee and asylum seeker, most prominently ASSAF, which seeks to meet their social service needs. Veteran African refugees themselves established the African Refugee Development Center as well as the Committee for the Advancement of Refugees from Darfur, organizations that sought to procure donations of basic food and clothing products, as well as money, for the most recent newcomers. In 2007 an interorganizational coalition was established, based in Tel Aviv, to create a network as well as to increase cooperation between the organizations (Yacobi, 2009; Yitach Millo, co-founder of ASSAF, an organization founded in 2006 for the support of African refugees in Israel, interview, August 10, 2010).

The Soldier

Rami, age 20, was drafted into the Army at age 18 for three years of compulsory service after completing high school, where his studies focused on music and dramatic arts. Rami is a gifted guitarist and sports a tattoo of a treble clef on his forearm. He brought an old instrument of his to the Army, and stores it in the corner of the camouflaged tent he shares with eight other young men. Rami's father is a computer programmer and his mother is an art teacher. After one year of exhausting basic combat training, he was stationed on the southernmost border with Egypt. There, in addition to undergoing advanced anti-terror combat training, he takes part in routine border patrols. These are done with three other soldiers who, dressed in full battle gear, drive in an open air Jeep up and down an assigned section of the border checking the fence and adjacent ground for any signs of infiltration.

Rami has encountered tens of African refugees on his nighttime patrols. "We are just driving and suddenly in the glare of the headlights you see them standing: still, silent, with their hands over their heads. They are usually in small groups. The smugglers wouldn't make a big enough profit from just one. They look frightened and tired. They don't speak until they are spoken to. We have to pull out our guns at first, until we can determine

for sure who they are. This is hard for them. I know they are scared of guns. The Egyptians shoot at them. Usually at least one of them speaks pretty good English. Quickly we have the situation under control. We usually carry food in the Jeep. They are hungry and gladly accept it. They laugh at our food. Some of them have never eaten pita bread and hummus before. But they always love the cola. We call for another Jeep, and while we wait we try to tell them about what will happen to them and we ask them about where they are from. We are just low-level soldiers but we try to be helpful. They go to our base for a couple of hours until we can organize transportation to take them to detention. Often they have been hurt on the trip in Sinai or on the border fence and the rocks (scratches, scrapes, that kind of thing.) The base medic takes care of them. If they have been shot, and that has happened to me a few times, we airlift them right away to hospital in Beer Sheva."

Rami talks about why he tries to assist the African refugees he meets. His words highlight positive childhood memories of his own experiences with Ethiopian newcomers in his small home town. In addition to a sentimental connection to his own past, Rami also appears loyal to his perception of a historical legacy of embracing those in need of a safe haven. Since its establishment in 1948 Israel has absorbed more than 50% of its entire population through immigration. The tens of thousands of men, women, and children actively brought to Israel during the last 30 years from impoverished, conflict-ridden Northern Ethiopia represent one of the most visible immigrant populations (Doron & Markovitzsky, 2006).

"I grew up in Kiryat Gat. When I was a boy I had a few Ethiopian friends. We used to play soccer together and we would visit each other's homes. I really liked them. They were a lot more polite than my other friends. When we met they would make a slight curtsy. And they were smart. I enjoyed their music. Africa seemed like a real cool place to me at that age-exotic.

One of them had a mother, her name was Memoo, who I liked a lot. I was always amazed at her white linen clothing. I had never seen anything like it—so white and clean. I even ate the injira bread she used to make on their stove. When my parents would work late, which was quite often, I would stay there after school, some days for hours.

"Besides we are all newcomers in Israel. Everyone came from some other place at one time or another. As a boy I was surrounded by Morrocans, Tunisians, Egyptians, and Yemenites. They all settled here after the war of independence. They left their homes in the Arab states of North Africa and came here. They were the shopkeeper, the school janitor, the repairman. I grew up with immigrants. My own grandparents came to Israel from Eastern Europe. Israel has always been a nation of immigrants. I wouldn't be here today if my grandfather and grandmother were not taken in. That is a large part of who we are. We should continue that way. It has built our country."

The Detention Center Social Worker

Orna, age 26, completed her undergraduate degree two years ago and her first social work position has been in a detention center established by the national correctional service to house approximately 1,000 African refugees and asylum seekers. Her appearance presents a juxtaposition of the personal and the professional. On the one hand her blue, military-style uniform, complete with three stripes denoting her rank, and on the other, her warm smile and personal manner. She is full of enthusiasm for her first job as a professional and wants to do her best. Her parents came to Israel from Syria and are still somewhat loyal to their traditional beliefs. Orna believes that working in the correctional service somehow reflects divine will. Every morning at 6:30 she makes her way from Beer Sheva in a large blue correctional service bus, along

with a dozen colleagues, to the detention center a mere few kilometers from the border with Egypt.

When the bus gets within sight of the detention center, one discerns a campus consisting of a large number of white buildings, the entire periphery surrounded by a barbed wire fence. Unlike other Israeli correctional service facilities, there are no guard towers but only a gate manned by two security personnel. Once inside, one encounters the caravans which house the administrative offices, including those of the seven full-time social workers. There are no detainees in sight. One has to walk a couple hundred meters beyond to reach the barracks. There are several large compounds for males and a separate compound for women and children. The women's quarters consist of large tents similar to those that house Israeli combat soldiers but inside these there is electricity, running water, and sanitation facilities. In addition to the military cots, there are wooden clothes closets, mostly adorned with photos of loved ones back home. The female guards in their early 20s mingle freely with the detainees. Orna brings red nail polish from home for an unaccompanied adolescent detainee from Eritrea. The girl is wearing blue jeans given to her by Orna.

At the far end of the women's compound is a child care center which Orna started. Much of the furniture Orna brought from the homes of her own relatives. The walls are colorfully decorated with tens of pictures drawn by the young children. Orna organized a fund, which most of the detention personnel contribute toward, to cover the monthly expenses of the paints and other art supplies for the kindergarten.

Orna is extremely committed to aiding the clients in her caseload, which number 200. During her ten-hour workday—minus a 15-minute lunch break she takes when she has the time—she is mainly busy providing individual counseling and support. She also administers a therapeutic group for female detainees who have been sexually abused, specifically on their journey through Africa. She also maintains contact with social workers in the southern region general and mental

health facilities. At any one time up to 20 detainees may be hospitalized. She attempts to provide guidance for those who are soon to be released into the community, and when she can she provides them with referrals to volunteer organizations, mostly in Tel Aviv. Orna has not missed one day of work in the past year and feels her professional services are crucially important to her clients' well-being. She has a strong sense her absence from work would cause at least some of her clients a strong feeling of abandonment.

Orna's explanation of her intense desire to help the African detainees relates strongly to a Holocaust discourse. Although Orna herself has no direct familial connection to the Holocaust, her vehement sentiments and beliefs emerged from her public school experience. Her Holocaust studies culminated in high school when Orna participated, as did thousands of other Israeli highschool students, in the "March of the Living." Overcome with emotion on her visit to the Auschwitz death camp, she vowed there and then that she would devote her life to helping others who have been victimized and persecuted.

"When I was completing my BSW degree, I happened to watch a rerun of the movie *Schindler's List*. That night I couldn't fall asleep. I sat up in my bed until the morning. I remembered all about my trip to the death camps. We were standing right in the middle of a gas chamber huddling together saying a prayer for the souls of the victims. I was sobbing. That's when I swore I'd give my life to helping the weak and oppressed. It was really at that moment that I started my journey towards social work. If there had been social workers in Germany maybe the Holocaust could even have been prevented. But in actual fact, no one helped the Jews in the Holocaust. Countries even closed their borders to us. Cuba cruelly turned back a boat full of German Jews. They were all slaughtered when the boat returned to port. We Jews are obliged to help whoever is oppressed and beaten down. We have a mission to help all refugees. It was that night that I figured that in my first job after graduation I wanted to work helping the Africans. I joined the correctional service for that reason. In my recruitment interviews I

almost begged them to send me to a detention center for the Africans."

The Social Activist

Ben, age 38, has devoted much of the last four years to developing and operating a new community social service dedicated to assisting the African refugees and asylum seekers. Prior to that, she was a public school teacher. However, for what now seems to her almost as long as she can remember, she has been working virtually around the clock on behalf of the newcomers. Since 2006 she has been on call most evenings and nights and more often than not she is called out to one of the shelters to provide food, bed clothes, or to help arrange for emergency medical care and medication.

In addition to her humanitarian work, Ben provides public lectures about the situation of the African refugees and asylum seekers in order to raise the level of public support for them and for government changes in policy towards them. Ben spends what remains of her time writing and phoning members of parliament in order to convince them of the need for the government to take formal responsibility for the African refugees, in particular with regard to their physical and mental health. She is part of the efforts of those who are promoting among Israeli politicians the concept of "social residence," whereby each and every person residing in Israel would have a right to full social and medical services irrespective of his legal status in the country. Before the arrival of the African refugees and asylum seekers, Ben was highly involved in humanitarian and human rights work on behalf of Palestinians living in the occupied territories.

Ben's explanation of her strong desire to assist the African refugees has at its core her vision of seeing Israel as a "light unto the nations." She sees her aid work as critically important in terms of the state of Israel remaining part of the "enlightened" world community. She explains her extraordinary concern for Israel's place amongst the nations in terms of a childhood spent in large part in foreign countries.

"When I was a child my father would be invited to go on missions outside of Israel for years at a time. I really loved living in those countries. We were in Sweden and later Belgium. From an early age I saw there were ways of doing things in this world different from how we are used to doing them in Israel. The big world out there became very important to me. Today it is very important to me that Israel be counted amongst the progressive world nations. Ideally I would want us to be a leader in humanitarian activity, but if not that, at least we need to be in the right club. If one day I will start to feel that my nation is part of the dark side of the globe, that will be the saddest day of my life. I will have to leave Israel for good and be a refugee somewhere else. Helping the African refugees is the best way I know of to prevent me, myself, from being a refugee in the future. I enjoy the big world for sure, and want to live abroad again, but I want to always be able to call Israel my permanent address."

The Teacher

Tami, age 48, holds a master's degree in education and has been a teacher approximately 20 years. She was born and raised on a kibbutz and has always been affiliated with the Israeli political left. She has been involved all her adult life in the promotion of literacy amongst new immigrants to Israel and during the past two years has devoted much of her after-school time to collecting and distributing English reading material to African refugees and asylum seekers in the Tel Aviv neighborhood where most of them reside.

Tami teaches a relatively large number of children from African refugee families in the Tel Aviv school where she has worked most of her career. She expresses an extremely strong commitment to these children and believes that the state of Israel should make a formal decision to support and aid the African

refugees. She expresses deep disappointment that their situation has become largely the concern of the city of Tel Aviv. Tami firmly believes that parental involvement in their children's education is a prerequisite for success and devotes school recesses to meeting with African refugee parents and coaching them as to how they might best be able to help their children learn. Tami has organized a cadre of volunteers who give the children private Hebrew language lessons after school.

Tami's explanation of her high motivation to assist the African refugee and asylum seeker families rests largely on her fundamental belief that the hallmark of an Israeli society she could value and remain part of is its ability to genuinely accept those who are different from the Jewish majority. Furthermore, it is of paramount importance to Tami that "her Israel" enhances the well-being of those who are "fellow travelers" in a manner equal to how it supports its Jewish citizens.

"I am staunchly committed to this country. I love our nation deeply and I feel that I have a huge stake in her future. What we are worth as a nation depends largely on how well we do in accepting our non-Jewish fellow travelers. Our society has failed miserably with our Arab countrymen. Now we have been given a fresh chance on a silver platter: it has literally come knocking on our back door. How we treat these strangers, for me, is maybe our last chance to show that we can be fair and kind to those who are different than us. We need to remember that in the Holocaust, we Jews were the different ones.

Look what happens to a society that rejects those who are not like the majority—that is a cancer for the society and will soon kill every good cell in the social fabric. And if we are able to learn how to accept and even embrace our non-Jewish fellow travelers, we will surely be able to embrace those

amongst us whom we have also tended to exclude: the homosexual and lesbian community for example."

The Physician

Dan, age 45, studied medicine at the University of Tel Aviv. After completing his specialty training in North America, he began to practice in northern Israel. He is considered by his peers to be one of the national leaders in his field. His quiet demeanor and modest clothing mask his professional success. He sports a *kippa*, the traditional head covering for observant Jewish males. He considers himself moderately religious. He firmly believes in the compatibility of science and spirituality.

Two afternoons each week he makes the long drive to the center of the country where he volunteers in a storefront medical clinic for African refugees and asylum seekers. He arrives home about midnight, stopping on the way for a roadside sandwich and to unwind emotionally. The work at the clinic is plentiful. Some days, a long line forms on the adjacent street up to an hour before the clinic opens its doors. The patients are all ages, both men and women, with problems that range from minor scrapes and sore throats to cancer. Dan has become familiar with the life situations of a number of his patients. Though typically politically uninvolved, he has become increasingly disturbed by the lack of assistance that the national government provides to the newcomers. He has even become interested in the efforts of several social activists he has met through the clinic, to lobby members of parliament for policy changes. Dan claims that the issue of African refugees has essentially woken him up from a kind of social lethargy. He concedes that he started to volunteer at the clinic for the "wrong reasons." At the beginning it mostly represented for him some sort of quasi-professional challenge. He was somewhat bored with regular medical practice and wanted to try himself under more challenging circumstances. Tel Aviv seemed closer than going all the way to a third world country.

Dan strongly believes that his volunteer work is bringing him closer to the principles on which the state of Israel was founded. He perceives helping the new arrivals from Africa as no less than a new brand of Zionism that has the potential to rejuvenate more tired Zionist ideas and activities.

"This country and its future are very important to me. My family would have been saved from the Holocaust if there was an Israel back then. The country has been terribly confused, for years now. I may be religious but I have to say that the occupation is draining from us a lot of our humanity. What has Zionism become? Settlements? Roadblocks? What can my children turn to when they think about where they want to live their lives? I guess that may be necessary for now; I am far from a politician and usually I saw politics as being something far away, even foreign to me. Now it's different. Since I have been at the clinic, I am looking for answers to the bigger questions. My work here is my Zionism. It is a kind of healing of a wounded Zionism for me. And not just for me, for lots of the people who volunteer here. Helping others, the weak, as we Jews once were, seems to me the essence of why we are here in the Middle East, why we have our own nation. In short, my work here has given me an idea, for the first time in a long time, of what this country was founded for. I have rediscovered Zionism in this clinic."

Discussion and Concluding Words

African refugees and asylum seekers in Israel appear to benefit significantly from the help they receive from a variety of local civil organizations and individuals. This benefit notwithstanding, the internal working models underlying much of this assistance may be

lacking in direct concern for the well-being of the newcomers.

A prominent element of the motivation to help appears to be the manner in which the provision of assistance brings Israelis closer to their sense of the Jewish historical collective experience, and in particular Zionism. Helping the African refugee and asylum seeker seems to speak powerfully to the Jewish "heart," triggering an almost instinctive desire on the part of helpers to connect more closely with a perceived and highly valued Jewish legacy of altruism, charity, and justice.

Emotion focused therapy (EFT) may prove useful in understanding the kind of helping that seems to derive from deep within one's guts. The EFT theory of human functioning (Greenberg, 2002) posits the fundamental importance of emotional meaning structures, or emotional schemes. These foundational schemes consist of emotions, along with their associated cognitions and orientations to action. The self identifies, interprets, heeds - and is guided by these emotional schemes. Such primary and deeply internalized psychic structures may be at the heart of much of the helping behavior of Israelis toward the African refugee and asylum seeker. The collective traumatic memory of the Holocaust appears to be a defining feature of the emotional schema of many Israelis. An additional element is related to the biblical imperative to be an ethical and humanitarian guiding light to the nations.

As a result, the assistance that many Israelis have extended to the African newcomer may be more motivated by an historical, deeply embedded, highly emotionally driven sentiment than by a clearly defined identification and understanding of the problematic life situation of the arrivals. What is communicated in the helpers' narratives is a commanding need to connect with, preserve, and promote what are considered essential Jewish, and therefore by definition, Israeli values. Many Israelis have an almost primal need to live in a humane and just nation: a nation that they will be comfortable identifying with and sacrificing for. The African refugees and asylum seekers have, in an important sense then, arrived at the right place at the right time.

This is not to say that such is the exclusive discourse found in Israel. To complicate matters there exists in the Israeli Jewish ethos, side by side with these prevalent and powerful emotional schemes, an extremely strong need to preserve the state of Israel as an ethnocracy, a state established to enhance the self-determination and well being of a particular ethno-nation (Yacobi, 2009). The tension generated between protecting historically commanding Jewish values and maintaining a Jewish majority in the state of Israel may at times be excruciating. To be a truly bright light unto the nations would mean the arrival of perhaps millions of African refugees and the possible extinction of Israel as an ethnocracy. On the other hand, to live in darkness would mean the bankruptcy of Israel as a state upholding Jewish ethical and moral values. Such a Jewish state would also have no viable future. Israel seems to exist in a precarious balance between these two poles of particularism and universality.

In light of this highly complex, fundamental and stubborn dilemma it seems appropriate to conclude this essay by citing a uniquely inspiring event that was reported in the highly respected national newspaper *Haaretz* (Kaminsky, 2009).

Just prior to last Passover, under the banner "a common bond of suffering seems to unite us and the Jews," a group of approximately 200 African refugees and asylum seekers labored voluntarily to help elderly Holocaust survivors refurbish their Tel Aviv apartments. These same 200 Africans later participated in a public seder symbolizing the ancient exodus of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. They had made a strikingly similar journey over 3,000 years later (Barak, 2007).

References

- Barak, R. (2007). Government: Darfur refugees will be refused entry into Israel. *Haaretz*, August 19, 2007.
- Cherrin, D. (2008). Taking refuge behind a blue door in Neve Sha'anana. *Haaretz*, October 15, 2008.
- Collins, L. (2007). The Sudanese dilemma. *Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 2007.
- Derfner, L. (2008). African refugees pose a dilemma for Israel. *U.S. News and World Report*, February 28, 2008.
- Doron, H., & Markovitzky, G. (2006). Family structure and patterns and psychological adjustment to immigration to Israel. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 15, 1/2, 215-235.
- Fradkin, A.R. (2008). Sudanese refugees in Israel and Egypt. *Harvard College Student Middle East Journal*, January 30, 2008.
- Greenberg, L.S. (2002). *Emotion Focused Therapy: Coaching Clients to Work through Their Feelings*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
- Kaminsky, B. (2009). Foreigners in a foreign land. *Israel News*, April 16, 2009.
- Lee, V. (2007). Eritrea, Ketziot, Tel Aviv. *Haaretz*, February 17, 2008.
- Mualem, M. (2007). Israel to grant citizenship to hundreds of Darfur refugees. *Haaretz*, September 5, 2007.
- Shahar, I. (2007). Bar On calls refugees sneaking in from South major risk. *Haaretz*, June 19, 2007.
- Yacobi, H. (2009). African refugees' influx in Israel from a socio-political perspective. *CARIM Research Reports 2009/04*, 1-15.

Itzhak Lander, Ph.D., is a lecturer at the Department of Social Work at Sapir College, Hof Ashkelon, Israel. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: Larrie@zahav.net.il

TEACHING NONVIOLENT CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A FORM OF UBUNTO

Susan Rice, DSW, California State University, Long Beach

The following narrative describes the author's experiences teaching conflict resolution in South Africa shortly after the fall of apartheid, with a focus on the changing relationships among black, white, coloured, and Indian social work professionals, as they work together under completely new roles and norms. The author provides examples of group discussion and learning, and explores the impact of training on herself and other participants. Throughout the training, the ubuntu concept of the essence of human relationships is utilized.

"A fish is the last to acknowledge the existence of water" - African proverb

According to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, "*Ubuntu botho*" (Abundance Project, 2010) means the essence of being human, and is one of the bedrock beliefs of African culture. He says that this concept "speaks about humanness, gentleness, hospitality, putting yourself out on the behalf of others, being vulnerable. It recognizes that my humanity is bound in yours, for we can only be human together."

This narrative will reflect on how the experiences I had teaching nonviolent conflict resolution when I received a Rotary Teaching Scholarship relate to the concept of "ubuntu." The scholarship was used to spend one semester teaching in South Africa, in the year 2000. Although this experience took place ten years ago, it came at such an important time in the country's history (shortly after the fall of apartheid), that this experience still has important insights to offer about social work with diverse groups, and about personal growth and learning related to abandoning stereotypes. Until the fall of apartheid, whites, black Africans, and "coloureds" (a term used in South Africa for people of mixed ancestry) had never worked together as equals. Since my field of teaching was in the area of nonviolent conflict resolution, these issues quickly emerged in my contact with students and also dramatically impacted me and my thinking about diversity.

I worked with undergraduate and masters' degree students in the field of social work, as

well as with social work alumni who wanted to receive continuing education, as well as various professional groups, including social workers from the South African Navy. During the four months of my stay, I met with nine different groups of people, for workshops that ranged from two hours to four full days. I came into contact with over 200 "students." Although my initial official contact was with the University of Stellenbosch, which was an Afrikaner university that had only recently switched to teaching in English, I also worked at the University of Capetown and the University of the Western Cape. (The University of the Western Cape had previously been open only to black students, and now had some coloured students as well.) Most South African universities now use English as the official language of instruction, although most students speak at least one other language (either a tribal language or Afrikaans). I was easily understood in all venues, and did not feel that my lack of a second language hindered me. I did make efforts to learn phrases in each of the tribal languages of people that I came into contact with.

Getting to Know South Africa

In general, my reception was very warm. South Africa has gone through incredible stress in the last ten years, but people of all colors (black, coloured, Indian and white) were eager to tell me about their impressions of change.

As an American, I was especially warmly received, because most blacks—who constituted 79.6% of South Africa's population in 2010 (South African Population Statistics, 2010; <http://www.southafrica.info/about/people/population.htm>)—believed that it was partially due to the United States' sanctioning of trade with the “old” South Africa, that helped to push people towards change.

I believe that some of the most interesting experiences I had related to my ability to help people confront their conflicts, but this time in new and open ways. Some of the groups I worked with were primarily of one ethnicity (black, white, coloured), depending on the venue, but all had some mix of people, who were interacting with each other in new and different ways. For example, the South African Navy had not had many coloured or black social workers before the 1990s. As the men (and women) of the navy were learning to deal with being equals in very close quarters (e.g., submarines) where they needed to depend on each other, the social workers were also learning to have case conferences and discuss issues of their clients in mixed groups. The social workers who were coming back for continuing education were primarily white and Afrikaans, who had been educated when apartheid was “normal” for them, and now had co-workers of color with very different ways of looking at their jobs and at the world. Even more difficult, were situations where black and coloured people were supervising white workers. Members of each group had to change the ways they thought and interacted with other group members.

Most of the students were used to the “British” style of education that utilized formal lectures and minimal interaction. My first task was to let people know that my expectation (with their cooperation) would be that we would function as a small group, in order to explore ideas about conflict in a meaningful experiential, as well as intellectual way. Most groups were initially ambivalent, feeling both excited and anxious about openly discussing conflicts that had been brewing inside of them.

Conflict Resolution Groups

My assumption (which I shared with my groups) was that much of the conflict people were experiencing in the work situation was related to ethnicity, because that was the subject that people talked about informally most of the time: How will it be now that the blacks are in power? White Afrikaners were frightened at the prospect of blacks taking “revenge” on whites for their part in South Africa's history. Coloured South Africans were frightened that they would still be second-class citizens. (During apartheid, they had been better off than blacks, but not nearly as privileged as whites, and now their fear was that they would not be given the same opportunity as blacks in the new South Africa). Black South Africans were excited at the prospects of greater prosperity, frustrated with the slow nature of individual progress, and frightened about how they would change their self-concept overnight.

One black man, whom I met at a “*shebeen*” (an illegal bar during the time of apartheid, when buying and selling alcohol was illegal for blacks) said, “For 30 years I was taught that I was nothing; now, how am I supposed to get a job, and perform, when I never, ever thought that I was capable of doing so?” This interaction moved me to tears. Here was an articulate (though drunk!) 30-year-old man, feeling that, because of his lack of self-esteem, the new South Africa was beyond his grasp. I think that day was perhaps the one that impacted me the most in my thinking. I was surrounded by a group of fairly derelict-looking, sounding, and smelling men, who, when they opened their mouths, had real truths to tell. I felt that I challenged my own stereotypes that day, and really got it, that underneath the way people appear, everyone has things to offer. This is the essence of stereotypes breaking and changing.

Using exercises that allowed people to warm up by discussing small (almost trivial) conflicts with people like themselves, we slowly began discussing conflicts with other groups that were larger. What emerged was (no surprise!) the fact that many conflicts emerged from a mistaken sense that people share the same assumptions about what behavior means

for them. People from different cultures act differently, and those differences are misread and grow when there is not enough comfort to explore the specific behavior.

For example, I asked group members to describe an annoying behavior on the part of a co-worker. A white woman (taking a big risk) tried to describe what she felt was a "disgusting noise" that a black coworker would make on a regular basis; it was a combination of a snort and a snore. She went on to say that the person must have no manners, and why didn't she just control herself? After the nervous giggling had died down, I asked the group what they would think about the behavior if it came from their best friend who was like them. They said things like, "I'd guess she had a cold, or an allergy," or "I'd guess she had a breathing problem." When we talked about why the same assumption wasn't made about this coworker, the woman who had offered the example was able to admit that she'd never thought of those things, because she just assumed the woman wouldn't have any manners.

This led to an intense discussion of how people need to look at themselves to start to challenge the assumptions they had about others. In this group there were no blacks, but two coloured women talked about how they had felt judged by their white coworkers, too, and gave examples, which were then explored by the group. When I ended by asking people what was the one thing they'd learned that they could take away from the workshop, the response was that they learned they had to look at themselves first, before wishing other people would change. This truth also is the underlying essence of ubuntu: that one needs to think with compassion and kindness before being able to counter stereotypes. Of course, one always wonders if people *will* take those changes home with them, but the group was powerful in its ability to allow its members to look at a frightening subject in a nonthreatening way.

There is an African proverb that says, "A fish is the last to acknowledge the existence of water" (African Proverbs, 2009). The meaning comes from the idea that a fish never realizes that water is part of its environment.

For years, white people in South Africa believed in the reality that black people were inferior; it was just "the way it was." Until the laws changed, and people had to examine that belief, there was no reason to think it might be wrong. Of course, this is oversimplified, because there never was a time where all white South Africans believed that black people were inferior. There were many incredibly brave people, who were white, black, Indian, and colored, who fought for years to change the regime in power. However, government policy held that inferiority was a fact, and people were not encouraged (in fact were actively discouraged) to challenge the laws and policies that backed up those beliefs.

Learning and Exploring Differences

I learned and grew in powerful ways. For me and for anyone teaching in this area, the frightening part was, and continues to be, allowing the discussion to unfold, knowing that initially it was hurtful to people, and yet trusting that the process would lead to a place of greater understanding. When the discussion described above first began, I was terrified that it would escalate into bashing blacks (who were not in the room). I had to ask myself to listen nonjudgmentally, and then ask group participants to explore the issue without threatening the original speakers' thoughts and feelings. Having other participants offer alternative explanations is always more beneficial than my offering them, because participants feel more like one another (despite being white and coloured) than like me: a white American, from a completely different background and culture. I believe that in teaching, this is a lesson that is almost universally true. When we can get students to feel safe enough to express what they are feeling (by creating a safe, nonjudgmental classroom atmosphere), the class participants will learn from each other to a greater degree than from the teacher in front of the room.

In a different setting, at a university undergraduate social work class that was 95% black, I helped the class to explore the topic in a different way. Black Africans have their own mistaken assumptions about coloured and white people, and in a discussion, one woman

wondered why coloured people often shared one meal from the same plate, which seemed unsanitary and rude to her. A coloured student was able to tell her directly that it had to do with a strong cultural norm about sharing and not allowing someone to sit without food when you have some. Thinking of the behavior in this way is less alienating than thinking of it as unsanitary or rude. The lesson is that if we assume positive intentions, we wait to find out what behavior means, instead of integrating it into our own sense of the world in a way that portrays someone else in a negative fashion.

In the longest workshop I led, where our group of 11 students (white and coloured) met for five hours, four days in a row, honest conversations emerged as I “pushed” people to explore the depths of their conflicts between those two groups. What emerged among white participants were long-felt feelings that coloureds were not as hardworking as them, not as capable at supervision and management, and not willing to recognize differences in education and past achievement. The coloured people felt that whites ignored their abilities and potential, given a fair opportunity, and were not able to acknowledge their own past mistreatment of others. Coloureds also felt that whites were unable to understand the issues that people of color dealt with.

After much painful discussion, both groups were able to realize that what they had in common was perceiving black people as third-class citizens (if whites were first-class and coloureds were second-class). This was reflected in the dynamics of the group. I felt that this was an incredibly successful workshop, because the comments about the last session were along the lines of, “I’m learning a lot, but I’m not having any fun any more.” What I hoped and wished for was that participants would be able to go back to their work environments and begin to treat their coworkers in a more egalitarian way, because these insights had become part of their way of thinking in the world.

In almost every workshop, there were epiphanies such as the ones that I have described, that allowed me to have a sense of hope that people are willing and wanting to change, if they can overcome their fears and

acknowledge their ignorance about the people they have long been in contact with, but whom they have not really known. These truths are directly applicable to our own country as well, where we have a history of pretending that differences do not exist, instead of directly facing and understanding them.

References

- Abundance Project (2010). <http://www.abundanceproject.net/>
- African Proverbs (2009). <http://www.afriprov.org/index.php/african-proverb-of-the-month/42-2009>.
- South African Population Statistics (2010). <http://www.southafrica.info/about/people/population.htm>

Susan Rice, D.S.W., is Professor Emerita at California State University School of Social Work. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: srice@csulb.edu

PROLONGING DESPAIR: ANTIRETROVIRALS WITHOUT SOCIAL SUPPORT IN HIV-POSITIVE YOUTH

Stephanie Pulliam, LMSW, The University of Texas at Austin

The purpose of this narrative is to recognize the lack of social supports for youth born with HIV and to discuss the ramifications and possible mediators of this deficiency. With two lines of antiretrovirals (ARVs) available in urban Tanzania at no cost, many children born with HIV have the resources necessary to survive; however, their survival does not depend solely on physical wellness. Without social supports, free ARVs do not always achieve improved quality of life for youth. This narrative follows the story of Lilly, a girl whose life was prolonged by ARVs but taken by intolerable emotional turmoil. The lifesaving supports needed for youth like Lilly are discussed, including family-based education, supportive counseling groups and a system for referral to these services. Note: Names have been changed for individuals cited in this paper other than Theresa Kaijage. Author does use real name for WAMATA.

"Kinyozi hajinyoi na akijinyoa hujikata."

Translation: "The barber doesn't cut his own hair and if he does he cuts himself." - Swahili proverb

Introduction

AIDS, death, poverty, and turmoil are commonly associated with Africa. The following is a true story of these terrors, a story that may elicit feelings of sorrow or anger. Still, as in most stories of turmoil in Africa, a profound message can be found. This article is about a needed change for a vulnerable population. Its purpose is to give life to the story of a girl who died trying to tell it, and to help interested parties prevent recurrences of her story in the future. Descriptions of the following interconnected environmental factors precede the narrative: my role and purpose, the narrative's setting, and my colleague for this case.

My Role and Purpose

Tanzania is a place of beautifully diverse scenery, fascinating local languages and rich history. The weather, like the dancing, vacillates between fierce and placid. Tanzania's largest city, Dar es Salaam, is a coastal metropolis, where traditional ways of life intermix with modern and international customs, creating an epicenter of cultural learning. This fascinating city was my campus for the final field placement of my master's degree in social work. My concentration

focused on leadership, policy and administration, though my classes and fieldwork included significant clinical learning as well.

I previously volunteered to manage program development and construction at a community school in Zambia for eight months. During that stint I visited a total of five African countries. Consequently, at the time of my placement in Tanzania I was familiar with many of the sights and sounds of sub-Saharan Africa; however, I had not received academic credit for my work, represented the social work profession or worked specifically with people living with HIV/AIDS, until I lived in Tanzania. Additionally, with an estimated 2007 adult HIV prevalence rate of 6.2% of the population (UNAIDS, 2008), Tanzania had a significantly lower HIV/AIDS rate than any other African country I had visited. I began to understand the spectrum of differences in HIV/AIDS rates between countries and to identify additional HIV/AIDS resources needed in sub-Saharan Africa. This was a location and population with significant need, where I could learn about the AIDS epidemic and make a meaningful contribution.

Resources are limited in Dar es Salaam. However, the people I served and socialized

with were eager to learn modern skills and facts that inform practice. My role in Tanzania reflected both the resource limitations of the area and my Tanzanian colleagues' eagerness to learn. Initially I was scheduled to assist in an administrative capacity at an HIV/AIDS clinic named Walio Katika Mapambano Na AIDS Tanzania (WAMATA), meaning *people in the fight against AIDS in Tanzania*. WAMATA provides comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention and care, focusing on the areas of home-based care, treatment of opportunistic infections, and support groups. While the majority of my time involved working on fundraising and program development at WAMATA, my internship was diversified to include additional tasks and work with other HIV/AIDS agencies.

Dr. Theresa Kaijage, the founder of WAMATA and my internship supervisor, is a charismatic connector of people and agencies. Through her connections and generosity I was introduced to other projects needing support and training for an enthusiastic staff. After several weeks of experimenting with various roles at agencies, my internship was structured to include regular observation, participation, and project leading at WAMATA, an HIV/AIDS counseling unit in a private hospital, and the Tanzanian Social Work Association, among others. The following narrative focuses on one experience in the HIV/AIDS counseling unit of a private hospital. It is representative of numerous stories from the other previously mentioned internship settings, where I encountered similar narratives and learning lessons.

Mlalakua Hospital

Mlalakua Hospital is a mid-range private hospital serving mostly middle- to high-income Tanzanians. Clients pay fees, though they are significantly reduced from the fees of elite hospitals serving wealthy domestic and international clients. Mlalakua Hospital medical professionals are generally knowledgeable and experienced, but often lack the resources required for providing the best possible care for clients. As is frequently depicted in movies and commercials involving medical care in the developing world, Mlalakua Hospital has

narrow hallways overfilled with sick and injured people. Some need more immediate care than what is available. Several of my most disturbing and haunting experiences in Tanzania included a walk down the hospital hallway, which doubled as a waiting room. I would squeeze between crowded benches lining the corridor, stopping between each bench to step aside for medical personnel and patients requiring emergency care. These patients would be rushed through the crowd along with their stretchers, IVs, and other medical devices. Often times the sounds of crying children would echo from the patient's rooms, intensifying the already desperate mood in the hallway.

The HIV/AIDS unit operates separately but similarly to the other hospital departments. Mlalakua Hospital's HIV/AIDS services are well-rounded and include testing, counseling, prescriptions, provision of medications, emergency HIV/AIDS care, treatment of opportunistic infections, and education. Much of the HIV/AIDS funding is acquired from the government through international aid, though clients still pay an appointment fee of approximately \$6.50 for each visit. Patients receiving medications for AIDS visit the clinic at least 12 times per year, at a total cost of at least \$78. This represents 17.7% of the 2008 average Tanzanian's yearly income of \$440 (Bureau of African Affairs, 2010). Additional costs may be incurred for special lab tests or medications, especially when clients show symptoms of opportunistic infections.

Nurse Afya

After discussing the goals of my internship with the human resources director of the hospital, I was introduced to Nurse Afya, the head nurse in the HIV/AIDS unit. Nurse Afya is a nurse by training, but a counselor and case manager by job description. Her duties include counseling individuals and families, educating HIV-positive clients about the illness, encouraging adherence to medical advice, and dispensing medications. While most of her client care occurs in her office, at times she attends to HIV-positive patients in the Intensive Care Unit. These clients typically enter the hospital not knowing they are HIV-

positive and are diagnosed after medical personnel order a test based on their symptoms of opportunistic infections. Nurse Afya conducts crisis counseling for these patients, while occasionally assisting with their medical care as well.

Curious about the discrepancy between Nurse Afya's training as a nurse and her role as a counselor, I inquired about the hospital's staffing and organizational structure. Affecting Nurse Afya's role was the lack of trained social workers or counselors. No one at the hospital had social work training and only several had certificates in counseling. With a degree in nursing and a three-month evening program certificate in counseling, Nurse Afya had the same level of training as the other hospital counselors. As I advocated for these professional fields with the human resources director, he admitted counselors and social workers were needed at the facility. Still, he and other administrators did not understand exactly what role those workers would fulfill or how it would improve services. In my discussions with Nurse Afya, the answers became obvious.

Nurse Afya admitted to me that she often felt unqualified for the work she was doing and wanted advanced clinical social work training. Her fierce ambition to continue her education always impressed me. When textbooks were available, she read in her free time in order to advance her skills. She tried several times to return to the university for a social work degree; however, she could not afford to leave her job and her work schedule was too demanding to permit both.

Due to these factors, as we structured my internship with the hospital, it seemed my time would be most effective in assisting and training Nurse Afya. Since she did not have a firm grasp of the difference between administrative social work (my concentration) and direct practice, Nurse Afya asked for my assistance with counseling. Nervous that I might be working beyond my professional scope, I sought advice from previous professors and internship supervisors. They all assured me my training and education in direct practice was more than sufficient in this situation and significantly beyond what was currently

available at Mlalakua Hospital. Additionally, experienced stateside professionals were willing to assist me throughout the semester. Ultimately, Nurse Afya and I discussed ethical conduct, social work roles, relationship-building strategies, and specific counseling techniques relevant to her clients. When time permitted I facilitated debriefing sessions after difficult counseling situations. We attempted to set aside the first 30 minutes of the workday to discuss cases. Later in the day patients were waiting in a queue in the hallway. Still, we would lock the door and carve out 15 or 20 minutes to have "morning" tea with *chapati* (a modified version of Indian flatbread), at noon or later, while discussing counseling techniques.

During sessions I was of little help. Appointments were conducted primarily in Swahili. Although Nurse Afya, fluent in English, would translate excerpts of the discussion, I was usually unsure of the session's general direction. Additionally, as a nurse, she was required to explain HIV/AIDS and instruct patients regarding their healthcare, something I was unqualified to participate in. I was most helpful during the few fleeting moments of calm in the office, when we would discuss cases. Still, when we met with a client in a difficult situation, Nurse Afya would translate consistently and ask me for advice during the session. One example of this is the tragic but informative story of Lilly.

Lilly's Story

Lilly, 17, entered the hospital with opportunistic infections, though she did not describe her condition that way. Her condition was generally obvious due to the dark spots on her skin, weakness and shakiness, and the presence of typical opportunistic infections. Due to her young resilient body, and despite the indications, she did not appear as ill as her blood work later proved her to be. She was immediately placed in the Intensive Care Unit for treatment. Though she was timid with the nurses, when asked directly, she finally shared her HIV-positive status with one of them. At that point, Nurse Afya visited the client to assist in developing a plan of action. Nurse Afya's shift was almost over and Lilly was

scheduled to remain at the hospital overnight. Therefore, after discussing appropriate care for Lilly's immediate medical needs, Nurse Afya made an appointment to see her the next morning, when I would be present.

According to my first impression, Lilly was a calm and timid girl who showed much respect for authority. She listened intently and spoke softly. She displayed her coherence and sincerity by greeting me warmly in English before sitting down. Though she walked holding onto shelves and file cabinets to support her weakening body, she looked comfortable and strong sitting in a chair. Her faded pink and white outfit seemed mildly worn and outdated, but well cared for. She looked like a fairly typical young client. Unfairly, after hearing about Lilly's hesitance with the nurses, I had expected her to present as confused and unkempt. Instead Lilly's maturity and respectful demeanor immediately dismantled my preconceived notions. I soon identified the source of her maturity; her story reflected a life lived well beyond 17 years.

Over the next 75 minutes, Lilly explained her story to us, taking breaks for Nurse Afya to translate, ask clarifying questions and explain medical aspects of HIV/AIDS. This seemed to be the first time Lilly had felt comfortable enough, or possibly desperate enough, to share her entire story with someone. During our meeting, Lilly shared secrets and feelings she had apparently never shared before; most notably, she explained how she discontinued the first line of antiretrovirals (ARVs) because in her intense emotional anguish, she wanted to die. Lilly was resolute about her plan and had been unwaveringly committed to it for several months. It seemed her embarrassment, fear, isolation, and physical fragility were too overwhelming, and she believed death was her only escape. Without further discussion of the medication, Nurse Afya and I both silently recognized that Lilly had probably developed a resistance to the first line of ARVs; however, since two lines of ARVs are commonly available in Tanzania, we still believed there was hope. Unfortunately, whether from forgetfulness or embarrassment, Lilly had withheld an important detail of her story. Lilly, silent and determined, had actually stopped

taking her ARVs on two separate occasions—first and second-line. At the time of our meeting, she was probably resistant to both. We discovered this two days later, and months too late.

Lilly began her story chronologically, starting with her acquisition of HIV. Her mother passed on the illness either during birth or during breast-feeding in infancy. Lilly tested positive around her third birthday, after both her parents died from AIDS. Before passing away, her mother birthed a second HIV-positive child, Lilly's younger brother Edmond. Lilly and Edmond moved in with their Aunt Agnes and Uncle Prosper, who were embarrassed by their illness, often lying about the cause of their parents' deaths. Though both were infected, Lilly and Edmond did not even discuss HIV with each other.

According to Lilly, AIDS and sex were taboo subjects within this new family. I believed that easily, knowing many of my clients had encountered similar circumstances. Despite the high HIV prevalence rate in Tanzania, sex is not generally freely discussed in Tanzanian households. Youth in Tanzania often learn about sex in their classrooms, through experience, or through stories and rumors from peers. Through these processes, Lilly learned that HIV can be transmitted through sex and since sex is a taboo subject, her HIV was something to be ashamed of. She learned that she must try to avoid infecting others with HIV, while her peers must try to avoid becoming infected with HIV. She wondered why she was burdened with the consequences for someone else's mistakes. Throughout her childhood and adolescence, her brother Edmond was the only person her age that she knew had HIV. Lilly recounted a peer asking her if she was HIV-positive because of the spots on her skin. Students teased and avoided her after she answered with a timid "no." From then on, some of the students suspected Lilly to be HIV-positive and ostracized her. This further discouraged her from sharing her status.

During our conversation Lilly expressed mild anger and confusion toward her biological parents. She seemed to be holding back, only allowing herself a hint of emotion. Yet the deep

anguish in her eyes belied her attempt. Since the death of her parents was never fully explained to her, she was left wondering which parent contracted the disease first and from whom. Were her parents happy with their relationship? What did they know about the prevention of HIV transmission? Did they actually want to have children? Did they utilize prenatal care and education to try to prevent transmission to Lilly and her brother? As Lilly grew older and understood more about the transmission of HIV, complex layers of questions developed. Meanwhile, her growing understanding of stigma related to AIDS deepened her inner turmoil and embarrassment over the disease. At this point in her story, I began to understand how Lilly's emotional isolation became so extreme that she wanted her life to end.

As a young teen, Lilly's CD4 (T-cell) count dropped below 200, and she was prescribed ARVs. This happened just as ARVs were becoming available in Tanzania. Without them Lilly would have been especially vulnerable to opportunistic infections and would have been at the end of her life. Lilly started receiving ARVs from her local government hospital, where the medication was free. (Unlike Mlalakua Hospital, the government clinic visit is free, in addition to the free medication.) While free services entice many impoverished Tanzanians, there are significant drawbacks to government clinics: most notably, long wait times and limited medication availability. Due to high demand, most patients wait several hours to a full day at government clinics before being seen. When they finally meet with medical personnel, needed medications for opportunistic infections are often unavailable. If patients do not have funds to procure the medications at a separate pharmacy, they must take additional time away from their responsibilities to wait at the clinic another day. Working patients usually miss an entire day of work every month to visit the clinic. Further, employees and students may find it difficult to have their absences excused without disclosing their status.

Confidentiality is minimal while waiting in long lines for hours. While the actual visit is confidential, waiting areas are typically not

confidential, creating an obvious waiting space used only by people who are procuring ARVs. Though this was true at Mlalakua Hospital as well, the wait at Mlalakua was usually under one hour and there were significantly fewer clients. Many youth are so embarrassed by the stigma of waiting in a long line with little confidentiality that they refuse to obtain medications at a free clinic. While Lilly said little about this process, it was probably a contributing factor in her decision to stop taking ARVs.

When Lilly began treatment at the government hospital, she was issued a standard national blue card for recording her medical history in case she moved or switched hospitals. At first, one of Lilly's guardians accompanied her during each monthly office visit. Together they would receive medical advice and medications. Lilly's guardians helped her remember to take her medication at the designated times in the morning and evening. Around age 15 Lilly expressed her desire to visit the clinic alone. Lilly's guardians allowed her to go alone, but verbally reminded her about appointments during the first few months. Over time they ceased reminding her to procure medications and to take them twice daily, deeming her old enough to do it herself. While Lilly was old enough to remember, she was not motivated enough to go to appointments. Secretly she stopped visiting the clinic and stopped taking the medications regularly. When she was motivated she would. When she felt depressed and helpless, she would not. Emotionally drained, Lilly finally stopped taking the medications altogether and hoped to die.

Eventually Aunt Agnes questioned Lilly's medication adherence and asked to see her blue card. At this time Lilly's behavior was exposed. Information on the blue card ended abruptly three months earlier. No office visits were recorded since that time, nor had any medication been dispensed. While Aunt Agnes was unsure how to support Lilly's wellness, she wanted to help. Without significant emotional displays or discussions, Aunt Agnes returned to the clinic with Lilly hoping to encourage her to reinstate her regular treatment schedule. Using a system of trial

and error the government clinic nurse determined that Lilly had developed a resistance to the first line of ARVs. By the time the story was relayed to us Lilly understood the importance of medication adherence, especially regarding the second (and last in Tanzania) line of ARVs; however, it was unclear whether she had understood the importance of adherence when she began treatment with second-line ARVs, and subsequently discontinued it.

This is when I began to understand the significance of the appointment fee and commitment to quality service at Mlalakua Hospital. While Nurse Afya does not have her preferred measure of training, she works in a supportive environment where the caseload is low enough for staff to feel invested in individual patients' treatment plans. For every new patient or new treatment plan, Nurse Afya conducts three appointments over the course of three weeks to discuss a checklist of information a patient must understand for the best treatment outcomes. Most importantly, the discussion includes medication adherence and prevention of transmission, including mother-to-child transmission when applicable. When beginning a new treatment regime, patients are fully informed of the repercussions of failure to follow the plan during treatment. They are consequently able to make independent, informed decisions about their health. Further, they can be advocates in their communities, helping to reduce the stigmatization and isolation of other people living with HIV/AIDS.

Though I was unaware of the procedures in place at Lilly's original government clinic, I had spoken with HIV/AIDS patients using other Tanzanian facilities; many of them make poor health decisions due to a lack of accurate information about the consequences. Lilly's clinic, overloaded with patients, may not have fully explained the importance of following her treatment plan, or may have only explained it to Aunt Agnes. Those issues, combined with her developmental level, could have prevented her from understanding the seriousness of discontinuing her medication. Lilly specifically stated she discontinued medication with the intent of dying; however, many youths in the

United States express this same intent in a "cry for help," an upset episode when a detrimental (often life-threatening) act is carried out but does not ultimately end in death. This can allow friends and adults to recognize the severity of the youth's pain and encourage the youth to seek help. For Lilly there was no going back. Discontinuing her medication for a month, a week, or even just a day, could prevent it from ever working again.

By the end of our meeting, Lilly had agreed to take two measures for her health: 1) attempt resuming medication (Nurse Afya and I were not yet aware that Lilly had discontinued both lines of ARVs) and 2) bring us her blue card the following day, Friday. Reading Lilly's blue card would allow Nurse Afya to gather more information about Lilly's discontinuation of medication and possibilities for increasing her CD4 count and overall health in the future. On the following day, Lilly was too weak to bring the blue card from her hospital bed, so her aunt brought the card. During this surprise meeting with Aunt Agnes, more information about Lilly's condition was revealed. Of utmost importance was the fact that Lilly had in fact discontinued medication on two separate occasions—first and second-line. This was evident from the gaps in service on her blue card. She stopped taking medication two to three months earlier and was likely to be resistant. Given this information Nurse Afya and I knew Lilly could attempt second-line medications again, but they probably would not work.

In addition to this heartbreaking news, Aunt Agnes recounted an unsettling story about Lilly's development and struggle with HIV. The story occurred about one year previously when Aunt Agnes visited a friend, leaving Lilly alone at the house. When Aunt Agnes returned she searched the house for Lilly, stopping near Lilly's bedroom when she heard a boy's voice inside. Through a knothole in the old wooden door, Aunt Agnes saw Lilly performing oral sex on a teenage boy who was unfamiliar to Aunt Agnes. To avoid a more embarrassing situation, Aunt Agnes largely ignored their behavior, listening and peering in occasionally to ensure their sexual acts did not progress. After the boy left, Aunt Agnes lectured Lilly

about the dangers of intercourse and foreplay. It seems the lecture was primarily an attempt to shame Lilly away from future sexual acts due to her illness. She was told definitively that she could never have sex because she would give AIDS to her partner.

I was impressed with Aunt Agnes' ability to discuss sex openly. Either Aunt Agnes was disregarding her family's customary avoidance of sensitive subjects or Lilly had exaggerated about the avoidance. While Aunt Agnes' interaction with Lilly was based in openness, concern for others, and knowledge of HIV/AIDS, it did not encourage Lilly to share her story, ask questions, or improve communication with her caregiver. The conversation shamed Lilly, leaving her to wonder alone "Why me?" She was angry and embarrassed about suffering through an illness that could be transferred in the most personal of ways. An earlier prevention-based conversation focused on sex, not just AIDS, may have been more helpful. It would have involved less shame and stigma. It may have even allowed for a new subject of discussion in the household, giving Lilly and Edmond more support in their struggles with HIV.

As it was, Lilly was far too embarrassed to share her HIV status with a boyfriend and knew having sex meant risking secretly passing on the deadly disease she inherited. With the standard risks of lesser sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy countering peer pressure and hormone changes, youth generally face difficult decisions regarding their sexuality. Lilly faced those same pressures, magnified immensely by knowing sex could be a matter of life or death for her partner. The culture in urban Tanzania is not very progressive regarding women's roles and sexual rights. For most young female clients I met with, the decisions to have sex and to use protection were made by the man alone, without input from the woman. This could make it harder for Lilly to speak up in a dating relationship, and could make her feel like she was forbidden from dating at all. This conflict deepened her emotional turmoil and further isolated her from her peers, during a developmental stage when sex and relationships were a common topic of

discussion. For Lilly, the most painful aspects of the illness seemed to be her inability to prevent it and her lack of emotional support from peers and mentors.

After hearing this story, Nurse Afya invited Aunt Agnes and Lilly to visit us again early the next week, then thanked and excused Aunt Agnes. I was unavailable Monday but returned on Tuesday, anxious to see Lilly or at least hear about her case. My enthusiasm soon waned as Nurse Afya relayed to me the news she received Monday morning. I sat motionless in surprise and sadness as I learned that Lilly had passed away on Saturday afternoon. Her death was a quiet but rapid fade into stillness. The doctors knew it was untreated AIDS. None of the emergency care available could save her. Even if it could, without access to a third line of ARVs, her life still would have ended too soon.

With the news of Lilly's death, Nurse Afya and I expressed our sadness about our dashed hopes for her future. There would be no third attempt at initiating ARV treatment. There would be no lingering hope of a happy and healthy future for Lilly. Nor would there be referrals to support and education groups, something I had quietly resolved to advocate for. In the morbid way of many social service workers, Nurse Afya joked about Lilly's death. "She wanted to die and we wanted her to live, so I guess she won," Nurse Afya said, covering her disappointment with an awkward laugh. I echoed her sad and gentle laugh, trying to decide if there really was some joy to be found in that statement. "You're right, Lilly won," I muttered.

Implications

While I regret my inability to say goodbye to Lilly, I have written this article as a memorial. Lilly's narrative is intended to raise awareness and inform practice. Not a single person in Lilly's social or resource network had the knowledge, enthusiasm, and courage Lilly needed to help her find an outlet for her emotional struggle. Lilly was one of the first to suffer in this way. There will be many more otherwise healthy children born with HIV who will not develop AIDS until their teen years. Since Lilly survived without ARVs until age

13 and started taking them almost immediately when they became available in Tanzania, she was one of the oldest in a growing generation of teenagers who contracted HIV from their mothers. Many of this generation were orphaned in childhood, their parents dying before ARVs were discovered and available. Lilly is not the only one who silently suffered the pain of losing her parents, was ostracized from her peers, became increasingly medically fragile, and was raised in a setting that prohibited emotional expression regarding AIDS.

Despite the growth of this population of youth, there is little recognition of the difficulties they face. Doubtless, others were praising the miracle of ARVs while I was mourning the loss of Lilly, someone who had access to this medication. This life-sustaining miracle drug is now available to roughly 30% of Tanzanians who need it (World Health Organization, UNAIDS, & Unicef, 2008). Yet, after hearing Lilly's story, I had mixed feelings about ARVs. They helped Lilly live a longer life, which only seemed to supply her with more misery. If ARVs can be consistently provided concurrently with emotional and social supports, they will be more helpful for youth like Lilly. Thankfully, Nurse Afya and I benefited from Lilly's story. We gained a deeper understanding of the tribulations facing the estimated 140,000 infected Tanzanians under age 15 (UNAIDS, 2008). Lilly's story and other personal experiences have helped me identify three social services that will likely improve outcomes for youth like Lilly: family-based education, support groups, and referral.

Family-based HIV/AIDS education is invaluable for families raising youth who are HIV-positive, especially when the youth have been orphaned and the caregivers do not have HIV. Not infected with HIV, Lilly's caregivers not only avoided the subject of HIV/AIDS, they did not even understand many of the physical and emotional struggles she faced. I question whether they had a thorough medical understanding of the disease. Conversely, families can be empowered to support their own HIV-positive youth through family-based education, a service that can be provided in a variety of forms. The most cost-effective form

would be a group classroom setting for many families to learn together. This could be offered at the clinic, or when resources are limited, at a local NGO. Unfortunately, a classroom setting would only benefit the families who are motivated to attend, not the families who are likely to need it most. A more comprehensive method would involve asking at least one family member to participate in the initial clinic meetings with youth. Both individuals could learn together about HIV's transmission, course, and treatments. If the youth develops questions or struggles with the illness, the family member would be equipped with the tools to support them. This type of education could have aided Aunt Agnes in becoming aware of the emotions and pressures Lilly faced. It may have helped Aunt Agnes feel comfortable and confident enough to initiate childhood discussions about AIDS and, later, discussions about sex.

Similarly, support groups can help youth feel more comfortable discussing sensitive subjects and can potentially encourage them to initiate dialogue with their families about their feelings, pressures, and decisions. Lilly's foremost complaint was, quietly but consistently, her lack of social support. She did not feel comfortable asking her friends and family members about AIDS, and did not want to reach beyond that to teachers, neighbors, and extended family. With peers insulting her and her family avoiding the discussion of sensitive subjects, Lilly found no support in her struggle.

Since HIV-positive youth have different struggles than their adult counterparts, support groups for only HIV-positive youth would be beneficial. Simply meeting other youth who have faced similar ridicule, emotions, medical treatments, and sexual confusion can decrease feelings of loneliness and increase coping skills. Support groups have the potential to help youth build friendships, open lines of communication, become leaders in decreasing stigma, and initiate peer outreach programs. These groups can be a healthy medium for providing youth-friendly sexual education. If youth choose to explore sex, they can seek advice in an open and honest environment where questions are encouraged and guidance and resources are

provided. Some difficulty may be experienced initially in building these groups due to the embarrassment and stigma HIV-positive teens face. Socialized to avoid disclosing their status, there will be struggles with discussing HIV, even with the other group members being HIV-positive. Improving systems of referral can help mitigate this.

Youth like Lilly can easily fall through the cracks when there is no system for referral to social services. Due to the stigma of the disease, they may need encouragement to visit an HIV/AIDS service provider. Further, they may struggle to find transportation money, and are likely to be limited to visiting the site closest to their home. This increases the opportunity for their friends and neighbors to see them entering an HIV/AIDS related facility, and subsequently decreases their ability to keep their status private. For these reasons, support groups and family-based education are best provided at the hospital or clinic itself, where confidentiality can be maintained more thoroughly. When that is impossible based on resource limitations, the clinic's counselors, social workers, and nurses can initiate the development of partnerships with local social service agencies that can provide these services. Mlalakua Hospital should refer their clients elsewhere at this time due to a shortage of counseling staff and confidential space. Since youth often need extra encouragement to pursue services outside their regular clinic, it may be valuable to help them arrange an individual and confidential meeting with one of the partner agency's staff members before they participate in a support group. With a gradual introduction to the agency's staff, members, goals and methods, youth are more likely to feel comfortable and eventually integrate into the education or support group.

The government and large nonprofits may best address the issue of referral. Currently Tanzania has a standard procedure for Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT), determined by the government and carried out by individual clinics. VCT is the system through which individuals are tested for HIV. The government sets standards for medical personnel in performing the HIV blood test as well as pre- and post-test counseling. These

government procedures were followed consistently at the agencies I worked with. A referral process could be included as a standard part of VCT. After testing, those who are found to be HIV-positive would be either immediately or at a future appointment, referred to family-based education and support groups provided at the testing clinic or a nearby social services agency. While some clinics currently practice this type of referral, an explanation and description of the referral process from the government may help enforce the process. For now, clinics may independently decide to develop partnerships and refer HIV-positive clients and their families to supportive services. Each clinic has the opportunity to give someone like Lilly the tools needed to thrive.

As for my contribution to social services at Mlalakua Hospital, I provided Nurse Afya with the tools for taking the first steps toward family-based education, support groups, and referral. During our conversation, Lilly had contemplated attending an education group about HIV for infected, affected or just interested youth. The group is at WAMATA, within walking distance from Mlalakua Hospital. While Lilly was never able to attend the group, I provided Nurse Afya with the contact information for a WAMATA counselor, who happily agreed to meet with future referrals. Additionally, my supervisor met with Nurse Afya, strengthening the connection between Mlalakua Hospital and WAMATA.

Two weeks before leaving Dar es Salaam, I met an American clinical social worker interested in volunteering in the HIV/AIDS field. After I introduced her to Nurse Afya, they began counseling together. This was similar to the arrangement Nurse Afya and I had, except that the new volunteer's clinical skills built on and furthered the concepts I had previously introduced. Due to the partnership I established with the human resources manager of Mlalakua, the new volunteer was in a position to advocate for developing social work positions there. Lastly, my professors donated and transported social work textbooks to Dar es Salaam, helping Nurse Afya and others improve their skills. While my contributions were small, they may serve as

steps toward a healthier and well-supported generation of HIV-positive youth.

Consideration of the emotional needs of HIV positive Tanzanian youth is needed in direct practice and administration. Preexisting agencies should develop programs dedicated to this issue, and entire organizations can focus on it as well. Lives will be saved, and every local and international staff or volunteer can make the difference for someone. Simply being aware of the situation and taking small steps to build understanding can make a dramatic impact on a life like Lilly's.

References

- Bureau of African Affairs. (2010). Background note: Tanzania. In *U.S. Department of State*. Retrieved August 31, 2010, from <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2843.htm>
- UNAIDS (2008). *2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*. Retrieved from http://data.unaids.org/pub/GlobalReport/2008/jc1510_2008_global_report_pp211_234_en.pdf
- World Health Organization, UNAIDS, Unicef. (2008). Towards universal access: Scaling up priority HIV/AIDS interventions in the health sector. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/towards_universal_access_report_2008.pdf

Stephanie Pulliam, LMSW, is a Conservatorship Worker with the Texas State Department of Family and Protective Services. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: SJPulliam@gmail.com

INTEGRATING CULTURE, GENDER, AND HUMAN RIGHTS: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-LEVEL STRATEGIES TO ERADICATE FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING (FGM/C) IN AFRICA

Julie Drolet, Ph.D., Thompson Rivers University

This narrative shares the author's reflections on international efforts to support community level strategies that promote the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in Africa. The author's perspective is informed, in part, by her former position as a United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) program officer in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and many years of international social work experience. The author aims to share how international organizations and community grassroots efforts have addressed the controversies surrounding FGM/C, in order to implement culturally sensitive programs for the abandonment of the practice, advocate for legal and policy reforms, and build local capacity to address all forms of FGM/C. Lessons learned from an international roundtable event will highlight how culture, gender and human rights intersect and inform innovation in Africa.

"Unity is Strength" - Ganda (Uganda) Proverb

Introduction

Despite diverse histories, circumstances and cultures, almost every country in the world has agreed on the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for achieving a better future. Some of these goals affect the most sensitive and intimate spheres of human existence, such as our reproductive health and rights, gender relations and population issues. According to the United Nations Population Fund (2010) "success, we have learned, requires patience, a willingness to listen carefully and a respect for cultural diversity. This is part of what we mean by a culturally sensitive approach." It is my perspective that different social and cultural realities create both challenges and opportunities for achieving internationally agreed upon goals in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. For example, work to change attitudes, behaviors, and laws, especially those touching upon reproductive health and gender relations, is a long-term and complex task. Practitioners have sought to mainstream culturally sensitive approaches into programming efforts by placing a greater emphasis on working with communities and local agents of change that engage in dialogue, listen, share knowledge and insights, and jointly plan the way we can move ahead.

In this article I share my reflections on the importance of understanding cultural dynamics in society and the positive, as well as the negative, cultural values, assets, expressions and power structures based on many years of international social work experience. Specifically, I will discuss international efforts to support community level approaches and strategies to end harmful traditional practices, specifically female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), by considering culture, gender and human rights. As a social worker and former program officer of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon, in Central Africa, I will share my reflections on how international organizations and community grassroots efforts are addressing FGM/C that include implementing culturally sensitive programs for the abandonment of the practice, and advocating for legal and policy reforms, while building national capacity to stop all forms of FGM/C.

Controversies on the Term "Female Genital Mutilation" (FGM)

There is no consensus among researchers and feminist activists on the correct term to designate the practice of cutting the female

genital organ (Kassam & Lalise, 2006). Some authors prefer the term “female genital cutting” (FGC) rather than “female genital mutilation” (FGM) because FGC is viewed as non-judgemental and makes discussion of this practice easier to facilitate at the local community level, particularly in using a human rights perspective. I have found that language is important because it frames the nature of the debate. Similarly, the term ‘abandon’ is used by some rather than ‘eradicate’ because FGC is not a disease but a social practice that can be abandoned (Ford, 2005). However, according to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) (2008), a leading international organization, female genital cutting and female circumcision are not acceptable terms for the practice of female genital mutilation.

IPPF argues that neither of these terms reflects the true horror and impact of the procedure on the girls and women who are subjected to it. Additionally, “female genital cutting” is believed to over-simplify the procedure. The term “female circumcision” is considered misleading because it may incorrectly align the procedure with male circumcision, which is a relatively harmless process that has been linked to positive health outcomes (IPPF, 2008). Some groups argue that female genital mutilation is an inappropriate term as some audiences may infer that the intent to mutilate extends to the cultures and contexts in which this practice is prevalent.

IPPF (2008) disagrees that FGM is a culturally insensitive term. IPPF (2008) argues that female genital mutilation is the most accurate description of the procedure and thus, continues to use this term in the hopes of broadening a deeper awareness of the procedure and its implications.

In this paper I have chosen to refer to the practice as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) because the term FGM appears to have a greater impact at the international level and FGC for discussions at the local community level. Both levels are important given the urgent need to work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Some United Nations agencies also use the term ‘female genital mutilation/cutting’ in

order to reflect the importance of using non-judgemental terminology with practising communities (World Health Organization, 2008). Both female genital mutilation (FGM) and female genital cutting (FGC) refer to all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (World Health Organization, 2008). Surprisingly, these practices have been reported to occur in all parts of the world, but are most prevalent in the western, eastern, and north-eastern regions of Africa, some countries in Asia and the Middle East, and among certain immigrant communities in North America and Europe (Jaeger, Caflisch, & Hohlfield, 2009; World Health Organization, 2008;). The countries reported to have the highest rates of FGM/C include Egypt, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Both terms emphasize the fact that the practice is a violation of girls’ and women’s human rights (World Health Organization, 2008).

The Context of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an estimated 100 to 140 million women and girls worldwide have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), and approximately 3 million girls are at risk of being cut every year (WHO, 2008). This is a significant number, and it is surprising that so many girls and women continue to undergo the practice. Traditionally, the procedure is carried out by women with no medical training. Anaesthetics and antiseptic treatment are not often used and the practice may be carried out using basic tools such as scissors, knives, scalpels, pieces of glass and razor blades. The risks associated with the practice are shocking. The type of cutting varies widely by ethnic group and/or region.

Today health practitioners are engaged in debates as to whether they should perform FGM/C in hospitals under sanitary conditions (Jaeger, Caflisch, & Hohlfield, 2009). FGM/C can range from a nicking of the clitoris to partial or complete removal of the external female genitalia and closing of the vaginal opening.

Many research studies have documented the adverse impacts of FGM/C on girls' and women's health (Adam, Bathija, Bishai, Bonnenfant, Darwish, Huntington, & Johansen, 2010; Ellis, 2004; Jaeger, Caflissch, & Hohlfeld, 2008; Kassam & Lalise, 2006). The World Health Organization (2008) has identified the immediate and long term health risks and complications of FGM/C. Every major international health and human rights consensus document of the last decade condemns FGM/C on the basis that the practice is a violation of girls' and women's rights to bodily integrity.

International and regional human rights treaties and consensus documents provide protection and contain safeguards against female genital mutilation/cutting. The set of international legal instruments and consensus documents that supports FGM/C abandonment efforts includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Rights of the Child; Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Human Rights Committee; African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, among others. In addition, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) calls on governments "to prohibit female genital mutilation wherever it exists and to give vigorous support to efforts among non-governmental and community organizations and religious institutions to eliminate such practices" (Paragraph 4.22). In addition, the Inter-Africa Committee on Traditional Practices adopted a Common Agenda for

Action on Zero Tolerance for FGM/C by the year 2010 and declared February 6 as the International Day of Zero Tolerance against FGM/C. A significant amount of international interest has fuelled these developments over the past several decades.

Female genital mutilation/cutting was adopted as a major health concern by WHO in 1982 and recognized as a human rights issues in the 1990s (Easton, Monkman, & Miles, 2003). Strategies for promoting the abandonment of the practice include legislation, medicalization (training health professionals to perform the procedure under sanitary conditions), religious condemnation, information, "just-say-no" campaigns, educational efforts, and attempts to institute alternative rituals (Easton, Monkman, & Miles, 2003). "We know that past efforts of colonial and national governments to legislate FGC out of existence have not only failed miserably but at times have had the unintended consequence of further entrenching adherence to the practice" (Martinez, 2005, p. 33). Many of these approaches failed because they did not recognise the need for locally generated initiatives to change social norms or social conventions (Mackie, 2000, cited in Easton, Monkman, & Miles, 2003). In fact, external intervention is perceived as cultural imperialism by practicing communities, and strengthens resolve to continue FGM/C in some contexts (Mgbako, Saxena, Cave, Farjad, & Shin, 2010).

Ford (2005) explains that UNICEF has tried several approaches to end the practice, including alternate rites of passage, alternate livelihood strategies for circumcisers, laws prohibiting FGM, and health messages and public awareness campaigns. As I learned recently at the International Conference on Health Promotion held in Geneva in July 2010, the UNICEF country offices, along with UNFPA, UNDP, and UNIFEM in Cairo, Egypt continue to support programs in this area, as does the national government. However, in the past many of these approaches were led by experts from outside the affected communities, often with little input or support from community members themselves (Ford, 2005).

I believe there are important lessons to be drawn from these experiences. While these

efforts have produced an increase in awareness, which is important, they have not changed practice nor produced large-scale abandonment of FGM/C (Mackie, 2000, cited in Ford, 2005). Consequently, the prevalence of FGM/C has remained more or less constant in the 28 countries where it is practised (Ford, 2005).

As a Western human rights activist and feminist involved in organizing an international roundtable event, I began to understand some of the practices associated with certain forms of FGM/C as horrifying for girls and women. At the time I was convinced that the practice had to be eliminated. Female genital mutilation served in some respects as "an icon of 'oppressed Third World womanhood' to be waved as a rallying flag to the cause of a universalist, individualist political philosophy whose cross-cultural validity might, upon deeper reflection, seem more deeply problematic" (Martinez, 2005, p. 33).

Feminist theories and perspectives have influenced the debates on development across disciplines, and this historical trajectory has changed the way we consider the centrality of gender in shaping every aspect of social life (Drolet, 2010). I was aware that female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a reproductive health and human rights concern, with devastating short- and long-term impacts on the lives of girls and women. The procedure itself is risky and life-threatening for girls undergoing it and throughout the course of their lives. This practice touches every aspect of the mandate of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), including reproductive health and rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as adolescent reproductive health. And yet, despite the severity of its impact, FGM/C has been practiced for thousands of years.

UNFPA, and other United Nations agencies, have drawn public attention to the importance of ending FGM/C, advocating specific actions including the need to work with communities in order to prevent the practice. At the country level, in Cameroon, I was involved as UNFPA formed partnerships with relevant stakeholders, including government ministries, particularly ministries of health,

social affairs, finance, gender, youth and education. UNFPA also developed relationships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), safe motherhood projects, community and faith-based organizations and religious leaders. In the legal arena, UNFPA undertook joint action with local human rights groups and governments in several countries in the region to develop legislation in an effort to end the practice.

As a former participant, I assisted with the organization of an international roundtable on eradicating FGM/C. More than 50 participants from Africa and the Arab world came together to discuss innovative and action oriented approaches for culturally sensitive community level actions at this event. I supported UNFPA's position to address the practice of FGM/C not only because it has a harmful impact on the reproductive and sexual health of women and girls, but also because it is a violation of their fundamental human rights. According to the World Health Organization (2008) FGM violates the human right to health and to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and, in some cases, even the right to life. The basis for a human rights approach is the affirmation that human well-being and health is influenced by the way a person is valued, respected and given the choice to decide on the direction of her or his life without discrimination, coercion or neglect.

The country program in Cameroon funded a group of female doctors to identify positive and negative cultural practices affecting women's reproductive health. Dialogues were sponsored with women in local communities to discuss these practices and their impact on women's reproductive health. The female medical doctors I met with were dynamic, outspoken, and a convincing group of women who drew from their medical background and health practice experience. In this process positive cultural practices are encouraged and negative cultural practices are discouraged. Because FGM/C was considered by the international community to be a negative cultural practice affecting women's reproductive health, it was widely believed that it could be changed without disrupting the

positive underlying social value that the practice represents.

One of the most common explanations for continuing the FGM/C practice is local custom. Women themselves are sometimes unwilling to give up the practice, as they see it as a long-standing tradition passed on from generation to generation. Women carry out the practice but they do not have the power to avoid or end the practice, or even bring it forward for negotiation. Some have argued that the practitioners are often unaware of the real implications of FGM/C and the health risks that it poses. Values include family honour, cleanliness, protection against spells and the insurance of virginity and faithfulness to the husband; these values are used as rationales to continue the practice, according to the Cameroonian female medical doctors. However, the persistence of FGM/C as a practice goes beyond simply understanding the harmful effects on girls' and women's health. It is for this reason that efforts have started to focus on how to create a process that addresses culture, gender and human rights to improve women's social and economic situation. It is important to consider the complexity of these inter-related factors if we are to improve our understanding of the sources of human rights abuses in the world.

The International Roundtable Event

I assisted with coordinating an event entitled "International Roundtable on Eradicating Female Genital Mutilation at the Community Level: Overcoming Constraints with Culturally-Sensitive Approaches." This event brought together more than 50 participants from Africa and the Arab World working at the community level or with groups at the grassroots in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Participants included representatives and staff from UNFPA, UNICEF, and WHO, International Planned Parenthood Federation's Secretariat in London (UK) affiliate family planning associations in the Africa and Arab Work regions and representatives from a wide range of grassroots NGOs working on innovative programs out in the field. The roundtable was organized into plenary presentations by keynote speakers, and

discussion of the issues was held in working groups. All of the participants agreed that FGM/C has attracted much attention over the years at the international level, and the intention was not to duplicate earlier efforts. The focus of discussions was on culturally-sensitive or culturally-appropriate methods to operationalize previous recommendations to eliminate the practice. Recently there has been a shift in language focusing on "ending" rather than "eradicating" these cultural practices, which implies the role of outsiders rather than social change from within the community.

The roundtable assumed that community level approaches are paramount to the eradication of FGM/C. The working sessions focused on action-oriented approaches geared to the development of culturally sensitive, community level action. Participants had the opportunity to review, assess, and learn from other programs. The creation of channels of communication and coalition building between grassroots organizations, and national and international organizations was considered vital to this roundtable. Considering the complexity of FGM/C and the resistance usually encountered within communities, grassroots activists indicated that they often felt extremely isolated. At the community level forum it was important for those attending to develop strong links with others working in different settings on the same issue, and to receive mutual support, exchange experiences and expertise, and share lessons learned.

Throughout the sessions, it became apparent to me that just as the type of FGM/C varies, so do the reasons given for the practice. Some of the reasons shared in the roundtable included control of female sexuality, religious beliefs, aesthetic preferences, honour, hygiene, tradition, social definition of gender, appropriate sexuality, livelihoods, and improving marriage prospects. The age at which girls are cut also depends, I found out, on the country and culture. In some places, girls are cut as infants, and in others, girls are cut during adolescence as a rite of passage into womanhood. All of the participants were knowledgeable about the emotional trauma of the procedure, which is almost always done without anaesthesia, and the seriousness of the health impacts and

medical problems resulting from infection and complications presented during childbirth.

Many personal stories were shared describing the pain and suffering experienced. As a participant in the roundtable and working sessions I listened to these personal stories and narratives that transformed and grounded my own commitment to fostering a practice of change. But I was unsure what this would look like. It emerged that both men and women participants developed their own commitment to abandoning the practice based on the experiences of family members. Some of the women participants had undergone the practice themselves and were committed to preventing others from experiencing it.

Despite these challenging realities, participants explained to me that the vast majority of members in their community did not think that FGM/C was wrong. Campaigns and messages from those outside of the community were generally not proven effective in ending the practice. I began to seriously question what I could do as a white, Western feminist woman. Stories were told about adopted laws and legal frameworks that had the result of driving FGM/C underground. These laws tended to carry no weight because most people did not support them. Participants explained that there are limits to law as an agent of social change. Legal reforms require local support from people for them to produce change. I learned in this roundtable that the law can be an important, but not a self-sufficient, component of social and cultural change.

Discussions were held on the need for FGM/C to be considered in an integrated and holistic program that supports girls' and women's education, health and empowerment in the community, given women's subordination in society. The discourse of "oppression" was not favored and efforts are required to develop programs with a better understanding of the socio-cultural context in which FGM/C occurs (Mgbako et al., 2010). The important question remained: how to bring about social and cultural change? I questioned my role in the process. What can an outsider do to facilitate this change?

Strategies for Abandoning FGM/C

In order to develop effective strategies for the abandonment of FGM/C, we need to understand the local community context in which FGM/C is practiced. Many decades of prevention work have been undertaken by local communities, governments, and national and international organizations and have contributed to a reduction in the prevalence of female genital mutilation in some areas. Communities that have employed a process of collective decision making have demonstrated that they have been able to abandon the practice. National and international organizations have played a key role in advocating against the practice and generating data that confirm its harmful consequences.

"Community education workshops are the foundation of successful initiatives in Africa" (Mgbako et al., 2010, p. 123). New communication strategies were developed to engage communities in a respectful way (Ford, 2005). Instead of condemning FGM/C as a "harmful traditional practice" the dialogue approach to communication starts with an understanding that FGM/C occurs because parents love their daughters and want the best possible future for them (Mackie & LeJeune, 2009; Mackie, 2000). Human rights principles such as self-determination, participation and inclusion are relevant in strategies for FGM/C abandonment (Ford, 2005). Effective strategies need to go beyond why the practice is harmful and then they must persuade individuals to stop it. They must help them discover how they can stop, by facilitating a process to take collective action.

The behavioral changes required to abandon FGM/C are complex and are embedded in cultural practices through which families and communities define gender relationships, express sexuality, negotiate marriages and maintain or improve social standing (Ford, 2005). Information about FGM/C is necessary but not sufficient to produce change (Ford, 2005). For example, the "Reproductive, Education, and Community Health" (REACH) programme of the United Nations Population Fund in Uganda developed a culturally sensitive programme aimed at

supporting the efforts of the community to discard the practice. My former colleague, Dr. Francois Farah, former UNFPA country representative in Uganda, in a respectful and non-judgmental way, encouraged the local Sabiny people to be proud of their culture while questioning the legitimacy of some of its practices. The community proposed to celebrate the ceremonial aspects of the initiative rites for girls into womanhood, but to relinquish the practice of cutting. Members of the community jointly developed a non-cutting alternative ritual that has the same significance as FGM/C. The process of facilitating social change is highly relevant where people are brought together to discuss issues so that they can collectively define the best development pathway for their community. It also has important implications for health promotion strategies.

There is another approach that has shared knowledge of female genital cutting and its adverse consequences, resulting in a decrease in adherence to the practice following implementation of an educational program aimed at empowering adolescent girls and women and promoting health throughout Senegal and eight African countries (Melching, 2010). *Tostan*, an international non-governmental organization, discussed the negative aspects of female genital cutting as part of a broader three-year educational Community Empowerment program with curriculum that covered democracy, human rights, problem-solving, hygiene, health, literacy and management skills. The effectiveness of the program was magnified through successful dissemination of information through extended African social networks in intervention villages (Ball, 2010; & Melching, 2010). Participants learn, discuss, and come to consensus on issues. They share topics with family, friends, neighbors, and the community at large, as well as surrounding communities. *Tostan* facilitates inter-regional gatherings allowing for critical discussion and consensus building on social norms. Returning to their own communities, participants engage in meetings, and together these social mobilization meetings lead to transformation. This process can take 2-4 years, and, in many cases, has led to a public

declaration for the abandonment of FGM/C in the community. For example, 4,888 in Senegal; 364 in Guinea; 76 in Mauritania; 48 in the Gambia; 34 in Somalia; and 23 in Burkina Faso. It is a necessary process because FGM/C is a social norm perpetuated by the intra-marrying group. Reflections on a variety of social norms take place through critical discussion in the context of human rights, the human right to health, and the right to be free from all forms of violence and discrimination. *Tostan* learned through program participants that one community alone cannot stop harmful accepted norms (Melching, 2010). Complex networks exist through intra-marriage, family ties, and extended kin. An individual alone is unable to change deeply entrenched social practices because the consequences will be too great. Attitudinal and behavioural changes achieved as a result of the program have contributed to a mass grassroots movement for public declaration to promote health and human rights through the abandonment of female genital cutting. The communities themselves reach out to their relatives in other African countries as well as in Europe and America as all members must be included in the decision to abandon the practice. *Tostan* offers a comprehensive model for sustainable development and positive social transformation based on human rights, leading to improved general well-being of girls and women by starting where they are and giving value to what they consider important. The education program has led to improvements for African girls and women by using their preferred ways of learning and knowing, and reinforcing what they already do well (Melching, 2010). The abandonment of FGM/C was initially not an objective of the program. According to *Tostan*'s executive director, Molly Melching, who presented on the program at the International Conference on Health Promotion, it is "a process of self-discovery and engagement as a necessary precursor to any meaningful social change" (Melching, 2010). The program has led to improved health outcomes such as increased vaccination rates, increased pre- and post-natal consultation, creation of dynamic health committees that include women and adolescents, significant

reduction of child/forced marriage, birth registration, and higher enrolment of girls in school; it has also led to the creation of income generation projects which improve nutrition and health in the community.

Discussion

"FGM/C remains a hotly debated human rights issue among scholars, activists, and practicing and non-practicing communities" (Mgbako et al., 2010, p. 114). Many Western human rights activists have paid insufficient attention to the cultural importance of FGM/C within communities that observe the practice (Krotoszynski, 1997).

It is not for us in the West to decide whether FGM/C is a human rights abuse, but to support women and community members in a process to critically discuss and reconsider the practice, given the context of women's subordination and economic dependence on men (Martinez, 2005; Monagan, 2010).

The Economist recently reported that many health practitioners are debating how best to stop FGM/C in the West ("Ending a Brutal Practice," 2010). FGM/C highlights the importance of understanding the social, economic, cultural and historical contexts before taking action. We are reminded that cultural practices and social norms make sense in the context of their social function. Practices such as FGM/C will continue unless beliefs and social expectations can be separated from cultural practices (Easton, Monkman, & Miles, 2003). Abandoning FGM/C as a practice that negatively affects women's health is important, but it does not necessarily dismantle other gender-based practices that are harmful to women psychologically, economically, and/or socially (Easton, Monkman, & Miles, 2003; Mgbako et al, 2010).

Workshops that promote community involvement and women's empowerment are shown to foster dialogue on religious and medical considerations in the ending of FGM/C, the cultural significance of the practice, legal aspects that consider modern and traditional law, and the importance of placing community approaches at the center of international efforts. Previous work tended to focus on mothers and grandmothers, while current

efforts have expanded to include male family members and young people in social change. Other innovative strategies to end FGM/C in Africa include "positive deviance" to identify local, community role models who have stopped the practice and are empowered to discuss with neighbours, community members and friends; finding alternative sources of income for FGM/C practitioners; economic and social empowerment for women; the promotion of alternative rites of passage; group discussions and media campaigns aimed at raising awareness; promoting the abandonment of FGM/C as part of a development package that includes a reduction of poverty and of inequities and inequalities between the sexes; and an increase in access to education and health services (IPPF, 2008).

Importance of FGM/C for Social Workers

"We now have more knowledge about the practice itself and the reasons for its continuation, as well as experience with interventions that can more effectively lead to its abandonment. Application of this knowledge through a common, coordinated approach that promotes positive social change at community, national and international levels could lead to female genital mutilation being abandoned within a generation, with some of the main achievements obtained by 2015, in line with the Millennium Development Goals." (WHO, 2008)

Considering that UNFPA and UNICEF recently launched a joint initiative that aims at reducing FGM/C by 40 per cent in 16 countries by the year 2015, "...the question is how to act effectively, not whether to get involved" (Martinez, 2005, p.42).

It is becoming increasingly important for social workers to understand the complexity of addressing diverse cultural practices, social norms, faith organizations, and ethical aspects of various human rights abuses around the world. There are many ways in which social

workers may encounter human rights abuse issues in their practice. The context and current status of female genital mutilation/cutting in the world presents an interesting case for our consideration. Some Diaspora communities experience a reinforcement of traditions, even though living abroad can be an opportunity to change and abandon harmful traditions (Jaeger, Caflisch, & Hohlfeld, 2009). There is evidence that some migrants may hold onto their traditional practices as a means of maintaining their identity in new communities. Social workers working with refugee and immigrant populations need to be aware of the populations' diverse views of this practice.

In an article on pediatric cases where there is a suspicion of imminent FGM/C, the authors recommend that pediatricians inform child protection groups or the authorities (Jaeger, Caflisch, & Hohlfeld, 2009). Allied health professionals (such as physicians and nurses) are not educated on FGM/C and may not know how to respond to a patient who has been cut. Social workers in hospitals and medical clinics may be able to help doctors and other health care providers respond appropriately and act in a culturally sensitive manner. Child welfare workers must also understand the practice and learn how to help children who have undergone the procedure or are at risk.

According to the World Health Organization (2008) a number of countries have declared the applicability of child protection laws to female genital mutilation/cutting, while others have enacted and applied specific provisions for the elimination of harmful practices, including FGM/C. Child protection laws provide for state intervention in cases in which the State has reason to believe that child abuse has occurred or may occur. These laws focus on ensuring the best interests of the child.

As international efforts continue to support community level strategies that promote the abandonment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) we are reminded of the need for innovation to address the complexity of integrating culture, gender and human rights, and promotion of social and economic justice for all. Social norms and

conventions can be discussed in the context of social movements that include community development work, political will, engaging government action and involving the media. A combination of approaches such as education, public discussion and public declaration are showing to be most effective in ending FGM/C in Africa (Mackie, 2000).

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge Erma Manoncourt, Francois Farah, and Molly Melching for providing feedback on an earlier draft of this paper. The views and perspectives presented in this article are those of the author only.

References

- Adam, T., Bathija, H., Bishai, D., Bonnenfant, Y., Darwish, M., Huntington, D., & Johansen, E. (2010). Estimating the obstetric costs of female genital mutilation in six African countries. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 88(4), 281-288.
- Ball, H. (2010). Prevalence of female genital cutting declines in Senegalese villages following educational program. *International Perspectives on Sexual & Reproductive Health*, 36(1), 49-50.
- Drolet, J. (2010). Feminisms in development: Implications for women and microcredit. *Affilia*, 25 (3), 212-223.
- Easton, P., Monkman, K., & Miles, R. (2003). Social policy from the bottom up: Abandoning FGC in sub-Saharan Africa. *Development in Practice*, 13(5), 445-458.
- Effects on sexual function. (2010). *Fertility Weekly*, 11-11.
- Ellis, H. (2004). Health care changes attitudes in Mali. *Australian Nursing Journal*, 11(8), 37-37.
- Ending a brutal practice. (2010, June 12). *Economist*, Vol. 395 (Issue 8686), pp 66-67.

- Ford, N. (2005). Communication for abandonment of female genital cutting: An approach based on human rights principles. *International Journal of Children's Rights*, 13(1), 183-199.
- Gregg, B. (2010). Deploying cognitive sociology to advance human rights. *Comparative Sociology*, 9(3), 279-307.
- Hosken, F. P. (1994). 110 million girls and women mutilated in Africa-middle east. *Women's International Network News*, 20(3), 29.
- International Planned Parenthood Federation. (2008, December). Female Genital Mutilation Briefing Paper. London, UK: IPPF.
- Jaeger, F., Caflisch, M., & Hohlfeld, P. (2009). Female genital mutilation and its prevention: A challenge for pediatricians. *European Journal of Pediatrics*, 168(1), 27-33.
- Kassam, A., & Lalise, A.D. (2006). Community-based approaches to reforming female genital operations in Africa: A case study from the Oromia regional state of Ethiopia. *Anthropology in Action*, 13(3), 22-39.
- Krotoszynski Jr., R.J. (1997). Building bridges and overcoming barricades: Exploring the limits of law as an agent of transformational social change. *Case Western Reserve Law Review*, 47(2), 423.
- Mackie, G., & LeJeune, J. (2009). Social Dynamics of Abandonment of Harmful Practices: A New Look at the Theory. Special Series on Social Norms and Harmful Practices, *Innocenti Working Paper* No. 2009-06, Florence, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. Retrieved October 26, 2010, from http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/iwp_2009_06.pdf
- Mackie, G. (2000). Female Genital Cutting: The Beginning of the End. In Bettina Shell-Duncan and Ylva Hernlund (Eds.) *Female Circumcision: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 245-282.
- Martínez, S. (2005). Searching for a middle path: Rights, capabilities, and political culture in the study of female genital cutting. *Ahfad Journal*, 22(1), 31-44.
- Melching, M. (2010). *Plenary on social and cultural change*. Proceedings of the International World Conference on Health Promotion. Retrieved August 22, 2010, from <http://www.klewel.com/page-iuhpe-conference-2010?talkID=26>
- Mgbako, C., Saxena, M., Cave, A., Farjad, N., & Shin, H. (2010). Penetrating the silence in Sierra Leone: A blueprint for the eradication of female genital mutilation. *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 23(1), 110-140.
- Monagan, S.L. (2010). Patriarchy: Perpetuating the practice of female genital mutilation. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 2(1), 160-181.
- Natoli, L., Renzaho, A.M.N., & Rinaudo, T. (2008). Reducing harmful traditional practices in Adjibar, Ethiopia: Lessons learned from the Adjibar safe motherhood project. *Contemporary Nurse: A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession*, 29(1), 110-119.
- Prazak, M. (2007). Introducing alternative rites of passage. *Africa Today*, 53(4), 19-40.
- Rahlenbeck, S. I., & Mekonnen, W. (2009). Growing rejection of female genital cutting among women of reproductive age in Amhara, Ethiopia. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 11(4), 443-452.
- Sharmon, L. M. (2010). Patriarchy: Perpetuating the practice of female genital mutilation. *Journal of Alternative*

Perspectives in the Social Sciences, 2(1),
160-181.

- United Nations Population Fund (2010).
Using cultural fluency for greater effectiveness. Retrieved August 21, 2010,
from <http://www.unfpa.org/culture/>

- World Health Organization (2008).
Eliminating female genital mutilation: An
interagency statement. Geneva: WHO.
Retrieved August 20, 2010, from [http://
whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/
9789241596442_eng.pdf](http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241596442_eng.pdf)

Julie Drolet, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor
at the School of Social Work and Human
Service, Thompson Rivers University,
British Columbia. Comments regarding this
article can be sent to: jdrolet@tru.ca

THE CHALLENGES OF RE-ESTABLISHING SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION AT ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY: A PERSONAL REFLECTION

Wassie Kebede, Ph.D., Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work

This narrative describes the challenges of re-establishing social work education graduate degree programs at Addis Ababa University through the lens of my personal experience. Both the challenges and successes experienced by the author are directly related to the development of social work as an educational discipline and as a profession as it was re-established and re-invigorated in the first years of the 21st century in Africa.

"Yetsinat Firew Tafach New." Translation: "The Fruit of Endurance is Sweet."

Until 1974, social work education in Ethiopia was limited to an undergraduate degree program at Addis Ababa University (AAU) led by the late Seyoum Gebreselassie and Andargatchew Tesfey. When the socialist junta came to power in Ethiopia that year, they shut down the social work education program and opened a new independent institute, to train political cadres: the Yekatit 66 Political Institute. The academic leaders of social work education were transferred to the Department of Sociology, along with other academic staff members. For the next thirty years those professors tried to integrate social work courses within the sociology curriculum. Thus, many people who graduated with degrees in sociology also attained some social work knowledge and skills. I was one of these students who graduated with the basic skills of social work, although my field of study was sociology.

Early in the twenty-first century, Professors Seyoum and Andargatchew, along with a few other academics from Ethiopia and abroad, recognized the need to re-establish social work education in Ethiopia. To demonstrate the need, they participated in an international assessment study conducted in 2001/2002. The assessment explored the potential demands for trained social work professionals by surveying service agencies across the country. The conclusion of that assessment was that there was high demand for social workers in the country. It also

revealed that because there were no professionally educated social workers, in their place, paraprofessionals and others with training in a variety of related and unrelated fields were functioning as social workers.

At the time of the re-establishment of the School of Social Work at Addis Ababa University in 2004, there was not a single social work professor in Ethiopia who had the capacity to establish or develop the school on a full time basis. Professors Seyoum and Andargatchew were retired and were unable to assume leadership. Thus, Dr. Abye Tasse, a French-educated sociologist and social worker, who came to Ethiopia for another assignment, took the responsibility to become the first Dean of the school. His effort was supported by Dr. Melese Getu, an anthropologist and faculty member in the College of Social Sciences at Addis Ababa University, who became the first Associate Dean.

In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the school, it was important to think strategically. Thus, Drs. Abye and Melese; and Professor Alice, K. Butterfield from University of Illinois at Chicago, Jane Addams College of Social Work determined that the first step toward building an internationally recognized academic program would be to build the internal capacity of the new school by attracting professors from the international community of social work education who would volunteer to teach at

Addis Ababa University. The basic concept was to grow the cohort of professional social workers by first establishing an MSW program and then, once that class graduated, offering them a Ph.D. program. The faculty were volunteers recruited from academic programs in Europe, U.S. and Australia. The curriculum and administration of the school were anchored by a partnership between AAU and the University of Illinois at Chicago, Jane Addams College of Social Work (the SWEEP Project: Social Work Education in Ethiopia Partnership). Funding for social work education was obtained from the World Bank and Department for International Development (DFID).

The first class of forty students admitted to the MSW program were recruited from those people who worked in non-governmental organizations providing a wide variety of community services. Two years later, in July 2006, 39 of the 40 originally admitted as candidates for the MSW program graduated successfully. In the same month, the school initiated the first Ph.D. program in Social Work and Social Development in Ethiopia and the entire region of East Africa. The school accepted eight candidates from 17 applicants from the first MSW graduates. As the first step toward building internal academic capacity, all of the Ph.D. students became lecturers in the school.

I was a member of the first class to receive the MSW degree at AAU and I was among those first matriculating for the Ph.D. in social work. My experience was typical: I had an undergraduate degree in Sociology from Addis Ababa University. My classmates got their first degree from disciplines such as public health, agricultural engineering and psychology.

Prior Work Experience as a Social Work Practitioner

Many members of that first class also had significant experience in community-based social service delivery. I had spent over 11 years as an untrained social work practitioner. I worked with orphans and vulnerable children, with persons affected and infected by HIV, with poor urban dwellers and with street

children. I realized then that my training in sociology did not give me sufficient knowledge or skill to deal with such challenging populations. Although I had long experience working in the field, I did not have a full range of professional skills. Therefore, I found it difficult to help my clients, I realized that formal training in social work would allow me to become more effective and more competent in my work with disenfranchised community groups. However, in the years prior to 2004, professional social work education was not available in Ethiopia. During that period, I did try to get training out of Ethiopia, but I was unable for reasons related to lack of financial support and sponsorship. Thus, the announcement that AAU was establishing an academic MSW program was the most important information in my life. Upon admission, I did not hesitate to quit my job.

The Successes and Challenges of My Social Work Education

I joined the MSW program in 2004 as a member of the first cohort of MSW students. I was also a member of the first Ph.D. class. The leadership of the school, supported by the international social work community, designed a very aggressive three-year Ph.D. curriculum including one year of course work and two years of research to complete the training.

When we first began our Ph.D. program, the limitations of Ethiopia made it challenging to complete such a compact and intense program within such a short timeframe. Access to the Internet for students was very limited. In addition, the professors in social work who served as advisors for dissertation projects came from universities outside of the Ethiopia, which made access to advisors limited. Further, the school had no clear guidelines for follow up evaluation for the doctoral students.

To counterbalance the lack of in-country resources, the School arranged for the students to be exposed to international Ph.D. students through exchange visits and attendance at international conferences. Many of us, as doctoral students, got the opportunity to participate in exchanges and conferences. For example, upon successful completion of my

coursework and qualifying examination, I attended the International Council for Social Development (ICSD) symposium in July 2007 held in Hong Kong where I met outstanding Ph.D. students from around the world. I also made my first exchange visit to the Institute of Social Work in Tanzania in July 2008 where I learned about social work practice at the grassroots level. During my exchange in Tanzania, I met Dr. Theresa Kaijage, who shared her experience of completing her Ph.D. in Social Work in the U.S. Dr. Kaijage advised me that, despite the shortage of academic programs and research projects in Africa, pursuing educational and research opportunities in Africa has advantages and strengths, especially the depth of contextual knowledge to be gained and the value of research performed by Africans, for Africans and about Africans. I have found this to be true in my educational career.

Attaining a Ph.D. in Africa also has many challenges. There is an almost universal shortage of qualified African faculty. Other resources are also limited; for example, accesses to libraries and to the Internet remain significant challenges. At the time of the opening of the School of Social Work, there were no relevant books at Addis Ababa University. What library books existed were collected by international professors gathering books from their own shelves and from those of colleagues.

Depending on foreign faculty also created challenges. For professors from the West, it was not easy to contextualize their teaching syllabus to the African situation in general and to Ethiopia in particular. There was no local research database in social work in Ethiopia at the beginning of our Ph.D. study, making it difficult to identify an appropriate subject for further research. Ultimately, based on knowledge gained during my work experience, I chose to study adolescent social networks and sexual practices by applying mixed methods research. It was not easy to organize the literature on social networks and sexual practices from an Ethiopian perspective. To compensate for the lack of prior research, I defined local reality by conducting an exploratory study, prior to conducting the larger

project which was the focus of my dissertation. The time and effort required to define and then to expand the work was significant.

For our class in particular, there were other significant challenges. Everything we did was for the first time, and so, for example, the school had not developed formal guidelines to evaluate the progress of students. It was necessary for the school leaders to take on-the-spot action for each phase of the Ph.D. training. The school had no established evaluation system for our qualifying examinations, our proposal defense, or for the defense of our doctoral research. As a result, the first cohort of Ph.D. students was the first for whom new evaluation systems were developed and refined.

Being first also had advantages: the school paid great attention to us as individuals and as a class, and appropriated all available resources to assure our success. This dedication was compensation for the lack of systematic rules and the lack of strongly developed models upon which to base our education and our research. My own experience, as the first member of the class to defend my dissertation proposal, was filled with challenges, but greatly sweetened by the success of the effort when I became the first Ethiopian to receive a doctoral degree in Social Work from an Ethiopian University.

I will continue on this pathway, helping to pioneer Ethiopian social work education and research for Ethiopians in Ethiopia. My teaching and research continue to focus on social network analysis, community development, action research and social research methods. In addition, I hope to continue to contribute to the professional development of African social work, since August 28, 2010, I was elected Secretary of the African Schools of Social Work Association (ASSWA).

Wassie Kebede, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor at Addis Ababa University, School of Social Work. Comments regarding this article can be sent to:
bethlehem2001@yahoo.com.

DESPITE A FLAWED SYSTEM, NORTHERN UGANDANS SEEK HOPE THROUGH EDUCATION

Sarah Klingler, M.Ed., Upper St. Clair High School English Department, Pittsburgh

A summer teacher exchange program immerses the author into the severely flawed rural Ugandan education system where students face huge class sizes, teacher absenteeism, lack of resources, and violent discipline. Despite the hardships and struggles of daily life, students place a high price on their education, making financial and personal sacrifices to overcome obstacles and attend school. This generation of students is growing up in a culture of war, never knowing peace. These are students who view education as the key to a peaceful and prosperous future for themselves and their country.

"The hunger that has hope for its satisfaction does not kill." - African Proverb

The village of Anaka in northern Uganda rises with the sun. Teenagers cart yellow jerry cans to the village's sole water pump and drink from their hands before filling jugs for their families. Leathered men looking older than their years carry sickles and hand plows to fields of maize and nuts. Women shuffle down the red clay roads, taking their goats to graze. And as the sun comes up through the netless, crooked goal posts of the soccer field, students in green skirts and slacks, white dress shirts, and the embroidered sweaters of the Anaka Secondary School cross the grassy lawn and gather in front of the staffroom in the middle of the new block of classrooms for morning assembly. Some of the students are finishing their breakfast cups of *ugali* porridge, while others are whispering quietly or giggling with friends. Behind the students are skeletons of the proposed new girls' dormitories, though construction stopped several months earlier when the supporting non-profit's funding ran out. The head boy and head girl step onto a deteriorating sidewalk and the hundred or so students in front of them maintain silence. The head girl sings a clear note alone, then is joined by her classmates in the Ugandan national anthem:

Oh Uganda! May God uphold thee,
We lay our future in thy hands.
United free, for liberty,
Together, we always stand.

In the summer of 2009, I spent six weeks in Anaka, Uganda, as part of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) *Invisible Children* (IC) teacher exchange program, which pairs up Ugandan and international (that year, American and Canadian) educators for team teaching, information sharing, and skill building, with the purpose of generating collaboration among global educators. The program took our cohort through an intense week-long training and information-gathering session and then placed us in Ugandan secondary schools with a Ugandan partner teacher to address teaching challenges and share strategies through team teaching.

While most of the cohort was housed in the *Invisible Children* house in Gulu, a city in northern Uganda, four teachers and I were placed in Anaka, a village (and former internally displaced persons, or IDP camp) an hour north near the border of Sudan. As an IDP camp, Anaka faced its own set of challenges. But its inhabitants also had quiet, careful hope for the future, a hope that the villagers felt the need to protect, lest it be ripped away by rebel soldiers or a distracted government.

I am no expert on Uganda, its history, or its educational system. My initial interest in *Invisible Children* grew from viewing the documentary *The Rough Cut*, presented in an assembly at the school where I student taught. My knowledge of the country and its people comes from Internet searches, reads and re-reads of the few books I could find on the subject, and the relationships I forged in

the short time I spent in the country itself. It would be presumptuous of me to even attempt to explain the current educational problems in the country, or offer proposed solutions. What I can and will share are my experiences and observations through my own cultural lens, through my journal entries and conversations with my teaching colleagues and Ugandan students.

Education in Uganda

A day after entering Uganda, the seventeen members of our newly arrived cohort were shuttled to the U.S. Embassy in Kampala to meet with Rose, a Ugandan employed by the Ugandan Department of Education, who would give us a history of the Ugandan educational system, especially regarding the impact of the recent end of the nearly thirty year-long civil war. Rose's presentation, however, was heavy with concerns and warnings for us: poor funding, scholarship scams, and high numbers of uneducated children due to abductions and the war.

According to Rose, teachers, like many Ugandans, struggle to make ends meet and will take on additional jobs to supplement their incomes. Some will even take on another full-time teaching position, running back and forth between two schools during a week. Teacher absenteeism is a huge national issue, and with no day-to-day-substitute teachers, students are left unattended and uneducated. Rose expressed serious concern over the lack of parental involvement, stressed the importance of parental interest in their children's education, and even suggested that parents should show up at the schools to hold teachers accountable for their attendance.

As expected, the lack of resources was a major issue, though we were made aware that while a school might actually own a set of textbooks, they often are locked away in cupboards to be kept safe. The news of inadequate, crowded facilities and large classes with little personal space did not come as a surprise, nor did the talk of trauma from war, lack of special needs programming, and extreme poverty, leading to a high dropout rate and secondary school graduation rate of 7.5%.

Surprising, however, was the dim view that Rose painted of the educational profession: a reflection of the failing system itself. Rose explained that in Uganda, teaching is taken up only "when people have failed out of everything else," and is the lowest paying government job. A teaching degree is obtained in three years, and generally is a fallback option for those who cannot get into a four-year university. Going into teaching in Uganda is not generally praised. I remembered comments from friends and family upon my own choice of career, suggestions that my "quality education" would be wasted on such a path. I questioned in my journal, "How has a job that more than any other has the potential to shape future generations developed a negative reputation both at home and abroad?" However, unlike in America where the majority of teachers enter the profession voluntarily and enthusiastically, a majority of the teaching population in Uganda did not choose the career for themselves. What does this mean for the students, and for the education system as a whole?

Along with a need for better educated and more motivated educators, Rose shared her educational wish list: health education in native languages to take on the subjects of pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other STDs, stronger local leaders in school areas, a focus on peace education, education for child mothers and children born out of wedlock (both are shunned by the community), and low-cost community housing for teachers to be closer to their schools.

Despite her frustrations and fears for the Ugandan educational system, Rose stressed the importance of education as the country recovers from the horrors of the recent civil war and begins to rebuild itself and its people. She spoke of the excitement in the villages in the north when schools were reopened, the lines of students waiting for their turn in the makeshift classrooms, the lessons taught by writing on clay ground with sticks and rocks with children crowding around the teacher, fighting for view. Ideally, education will serve as more than just the retention of subject knowledge for Ugandans. Instead, it will educate for peace, health, financial stability, organization, leadership, and hope for the future.

of this country. She thanked us for our work and wished us luck for the journey ahead.

But after leaving the embassy, we visited a secondary school in Kampala, ranked among the top schools in the nation. With 80 kids to a classroom, a library with outdated and disorganized books, eight creaking machines in the computer lab, and a science classroom that differed from the other subject area rooms only by the presence of a sink in the corner, we wondered what to expect in our upcoming school assignments.

Invisible Children's Involvement

Invisible Children was founded when three college film majors traveled to Africa to "find a story." Their travels landed them in Uganda where they became aware of the civil war, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and a group of kids—called "night commuters"—who traveled miles from home every night to sleep in the safety of bus depots and hospital basements to avoid abduction. They returned home and created from their footage the documentary *Invisible Children: The Rough Cut*, which they then began to show at screenings around California. Several years after their initial Ugandan experience, I watched this documentary with my students in inner-city Philadelphia, and was brought to tears by the image of a young boy holding a skinny wax candle for his friend who worked on his schoolwork in a dripping, puddled basement. Despite the violence and fear of his current situation, this student had dreams for his future, and knew education was the vehicle to get there.

As the LRA began to disintegrate and retreat into the Congo and Sudan, *IC's* leadership team in Uganda recognized the need for a shift of focus to educational support, and since many other NGOs' work is with primary schools, *IC* chose to focus on secondary schools specifically. In addition to the Teacher Exchange program, *Invisible Children* created "Schools for Schools" (S4S), which matches American schools with Ugandan partner schools for fundraising initiatives, and the Visible Child Scholarship program, which provides funding and a mentoring program for Ugandan students. During one of many visits to the *Invisible Children* office in Gulu, an

IC Schools 4 Schools representative stressed that the organization "...is a partnership, not a handout, and is concerned with economic development and sustainability." The organization generally does not build schools, but rather sets out to improve those already in existence, always with an exit strategy in place. There are many who know more than I about international aid and economic development, and there are many differing opinions about the role of westerners in the development of third world countries. For my part, however, I was regularly impressed by the organization's self-reflection in regard to their place in the rebuilding of northern Uganda, as well as their intelligent and dedicated Ugandan leaders, most notably Country Director Okot Jolly Grace, who has been with the organization since its inception.

Invisible Children has clear views for its educational involvement. First, the focus is quality rather than quantity at this point; other NGOs focus on quantity with disaster relief programs, and *IC* wants to take their sponsored schools and students "from good to great." Since *IC's* involvement, northern Ugandan students are receiving higher percentages of government scholarships. But beyond the numbers, the representative from Schools 4 School said simply, "Our involvement gives hope," and that the teacher exchange, an incentive program where the investment in schools is time and relationship, brings a huge "high" to the schools before, during, and after the program. I did not understand this dire need for *hope* within Ugandan schools, however, until I arrived in Anaka and came face to face with the flaws in the system that students, teachers, and administrators deal with on a daily basis.

Teacher Absenteeism

After a long, bumpy *mutatu* ride from Gulu to Anaka, the village where my four co-teachers and I would spend the majority of the five remaining weeks of the program, we dropped off our baggage in the parish house where we would sleep. From there we went to school to meet with the Head Teacher, who showered us with school statistics: graduation rates, numbers of students taking exams, number of student clubs (though in five weeks,

we saw no club meetings). He seemed determined to impress. Ugandan conversations are slow and repetitive. In the U.S., repeating facts or stories shows flakiness or disorganization in Uganda, repeating information stresses its importance, so we heard these statistics over and over again. After our first meeting, we were to report to tea with our partner teachers and then attend the remainder of the day's classes with them. Only one of the five teachers had arrived at school that morning, despite the fact that all five of them were scheduled to be teaching classes while we were meeting with the Deputy Head, who called each of the missing teachers. In turn, each assured him they were on their way. None of the teachers showed up that day, and we spent the remainder of the day sitting in plastic chairs outside a block of classrooms, waiting.

Later that night, as we walked through the main road of the village that consisted of a few scanty buildings and a water pump, we ran into Aaron's Ugandan partner teacher, Okeny John (who we had met the weekend before at an educator's conference in Gulu) and sat down with him for a Coke outside the tiny shop that sold fabric, used shoes, and soda. His demeanor quiet and embarrassed, he apologized to Aaron for his absence at school, but explained that he spent the day in a government office in Gulu—his third visit of the week—unsuccessfully trying to sort out the fact that he had not received a paycheck from his teaching job in over eight months, and was struggling to feed his family at home. John turned out to be one of the more reliable partner teachers despite his failure to solve his paycheck problem during our stay. He and Aaron formed a solid, working relationship and strong friendship during their time together, and before Aaron left, he and John had enlisted IC's resources to handle the subject of John's missing salary.

Lalwen Nancy, partnered with American teacher Kelley, was the most reliable, enthusiastic, and adaptive teacher in our group of Ugandan partners. She was the only teacher to show up on our first day, and did not miss a single class for the first three weeks of the exchange. Nancy had a two year-old son living an hour away in Gulu with her family,

and a husband working in Kampala, and lived in a tiny, one-room apartment with another teacher to save money to support her family. Nancy was a strict disciplinarian in the classroom but encouraged and supported her students, designing lessons to make the most of the limited resources and crowded spaces. However, two weeks before the end of the program and the end of the term, Nancy was offered a job teaching *Lwo*, the native language of the Acholi tribe, to Peace Corps workers in Kampala. This would pay significantly more than her current teaching job, which she did not want to give up as the Peace Corps job was only for two months. She decided to take the supplemental job but kept the news private around the school, telling only the head of her department who told her to forge medical leave notes so that she would be able to miss the final weeks of the term without repercussions. Such are the challenges of the Ugandan teacher: the opportunity for two months to reunite with her young son and husband and earn a significant paycheck, while having to leave her students for the last two weeks of the term before exams. Kelley continued to teach for the remainder of the term using Nancy's lessons, and Nancy called every day to check in, see how classes went, and answer any questions before the next day's lessons.

Lack of Teacher Support Leads to Apathy

My partner teacher was a young woman named Lakot Grace. Grace had been displaced to Gulu from her village when she was eight years old, so Gulu had been home for most of her life. She and her husband Martin, also a teacher, met when they were both teaching in Gulu. Grace was teaching at Anaka Secondary's displaced location; Martin taught at another local school. They married and had a daughter, Martha, who was three at the time of my stay. Early into their marriage, Pope Paul XI School returned to its pre-war location in Anaka, and husband and wife were separated. For three years, Grace and Martin have lived over an hour apart; Martha lives in Gulu with Martin and his niece, who he took in after her parents died of AIDS. Grace explained that her living conditions in Anaka

were unsuitable for a child, and also that both her family and Martin's could help look after Martha in Gulu.

I asked Grace why she didn't look for another teaching job in Gulu to be closer to her family, and she explained that though you can request a specific teaching location, jobs are handed out by the government and you can be placed in any school across the country. The Ugandan motto is "All For Uganda," and the government's view is that any teacher should be grateful for a job teaching anywhere in the country. However, with over 47 native languages, if placements are not carefully planned there is a strong chance that students and teacher will not share the same native tongue. After Pope Paul XI School's return to Anaka, Grace put in a request for transfer to Gulu, but three years later had no opportunities to relocate. Looking at the clay floor of the staff lounge, Grace said that her "heart hurts" being separated from her daughter, and that when money allows, she goes home for the weekends to stay with her family. She often does not come back to Anaka in time to teach. Grace did not show up for the first full week of school, despite promises to the administration that she was on her way. Toward the end of the week, she did call our cohort's shared mobile phone to let me know that Martha was not feeling well, and she would be remaining in Gulu through the weekend. So her students had been without a teacher for a week, and were nearing the end-of-term exams.

Of the twenty-five days Grace and I were to partner teach, she was at the school for six; out of those days, was present only once for her earliest class.

The last weekend in Gulu, Grace invited me to her home for Martha's birthday. She was a different person in her hut with her family, proudly showing off Martha's new knowledge of Ugandan and teaching me to cook traditional Acholi dishes of *posho*, spinach and beans. Despite Martin and Grace being happily married, Martha was clearly a child of a divided home and clung to her mother as if in constant fear that she could depart again at any minute. Teaching is an exhausting and demanding career and a settled and supportive home life is as important to teachers as it is to

the students. Grace's lack of hope for a reassignment closer to her family directly influenced her performance in her profession, as did Nancy's concern for supporting a family far away. Until the Ugandan government places greater emphasis on meeting the needs of teachers—whether it is timely salaries, being able to provide adequate financial support for families living in reasonable proximity to them—teachers will need to be the ones fighting for their own needs, often at the expense of the education of their students.

A Culture of Violence

The rebel army has been out of Gulu for over three years. The school returned to its pre-war location in Anaka from its displaced site nearly six months before our arrival. While exact populations are unknown, residents estimated that the population that had climbed from just a few thousand to over fourteen thousand in the IDP camp was finally returning to pre-war numbers. Walking to school one day, we watched two men gently pull the thatched roof from an abandoned hut in the middle of campus, relocating it along with their family to their original home. Anaka was returning to itself before our eyes, though the scars ran deeper than a pile of clay bricks and the circular stain of a hut's foundation in the dirt.

Despite the recent peacefulness and attempts to return to normalcy, this is a community and a country that has been heavily influenced by war; to know and feel this, you need do nothing more than walk through the village, notice the blank expressions on the faces of villagers, and wonder what horrors they witnessed. It is no exaggeration to say that every person in the village was affected by the war. Nearly one hundred elderly "orphans" lived in barren huts on the open land behind the parish. Displaced to Anaka, some as long as twenty years earlier, these elders had lost their families to the war. Unable to rely on the Ugandan tradition of caring for elders and living in family compounds, these individuals turned to begging to keep from starving. More than half of my students had lost at least one parent or older sibling to the conflict, and I had both abducted children and child abductors in the same classroom, coming

together in search of an education. Once every week or so, the Ugandan border patrol switches out their officers, rattling through the village on the road to Gulu in souped-up, open-backed army trucks overflowing with soldiers holding AK-47's and duffel bags, it was an event that took some getting used to.

On one of the few days Grace taught classes, we were co-teaching a lesson on conditional sentences. After teaching the concept and creating examples as a class, we asked the students to create their own sentences in their notebooks while we walked around to offer our help. In a room of about 90 students, I read over thirty-five sentences specifically referencing violence, the war, drugs, or sex:

"If I were Kony, I would kill people."

"If I were Obama, I would kill Kony."

"If I were a girl, I wouldn't allow a boy to touch me."

"If I were alone, I would kill animals."

"If I found a dead body in the bush, I would report it to the police."

"When I am older, I will do opium."

My greatest concern was not the lack of understanding of the conditional sentence. Though reminders of the war are constant, there is no post-war counseling offered to the residents of Anaka, for two priests, Father Martin and Father Leonsyo from the parish house at the top of campus. The school is publicly operated, but it sits on land belonging to the Anaka Catholic Parish; in addition to teaching secular classes at the school (math and consumerism) these two men serve as community leaders, counselors, cooks, and medics.

Toward the end of our trip, I went with Father Leonsyo on one of his weekly visits to the orphaned elders who live behind the parish. Weekly, he visits each of the individual elders who lives on the parish land, sometimes simply to make sure they are still alive. Often, he takes them bread or several shillings, but expressed his frustration at the sheer number of people unsupported by other family members and his inability to provide them with the medical, financial, or social support they so obviously need. "These people live for now, not for yesterday or tomorrow," he told me

while walking from the hut of an elderly man who lost all five of his sons to the violence and his daughter to AIDS. So many in Uganda feel that they cannot plan for the future as a result of the war, or are unable to do so because of its emotional and physical effects.

As for the students, there was no transition from a "school-less" life of wartime to "normalcy" of regular education. One day school was closed, the next it was opened, and they returned, though clearly still affected by the conflict, with no psychological support. It should come as no surprise, then, that Kony and the rebels and fighting was at the surface of their thoughts, and that education—a foreign experience for so many—was so closely knit to these experiences of war.

In the middle of our time in Anaka, the community held a dance competition and students from many of the schools in the north came to our village to compete. Smaller dance groups performed in a tiny clay building with barred windows, and a teenage boy stood at the door with a tree branch, swatting at the calves of the young children who tried to peek in. The larger dances took place outside, and we had a front-row seat in the swaying mass of onlookers for the schools' creative dances. Though these dances incorporated traditional instruments and steps, there was an element of modernity where students acted out stories to music. Lalweny Nancy sat next to me and translated one of the modern dances: "*They are at a school. See, that student is a door. Now the students are entering; see, they carry imaginary books. Now there is someone coming. Someone bad. He has a gun. He is stealing a child.*" A boy with a wooden gun danced into the circle that Nancy explained was the school, and as he put his prop to a student's back to "abduct" him from the classroom, the music became more frantic and the children wailed and danced violently. Two more dancers emerged, carrying two more wooden guns and wearing camouflage. "*That is the police,*" Nancy explained, "*They are coming to rescue the child. See, they are returning him to the school.*" Sure enough, the dancing "officers" sent the abductor away, returned the child to the classroom, and proceeded to build a "fence" around the school, planting bopping students along the perimeter

of the school building, linking their hands in a finale, and keeping the school safe.

Student Discipline: Violence and Humiliation

Journal entry from July 5, 2009:

"First week of the exchange, sitting in the staffroom with Aaron. Eight students are brought[from] their classes for dress code violations. Two are in sandals, without black leather shoes. A teacher pushes the students face down on the floor, takes off their sandals, and with a three-foot, half inch thick reed from the windowsill, is delivering sharp cracks to the students calves. The sounds – the cane slicing through the air, the child crying out in pain. I don't know what to do. The teachers in the staffroom are laughing and taunting each child, saying things like 'we'll show him a hard time!' John is here now, dragging a student by the collar of his dress shirt, and announces to the faculty, 'This is my brother's son. Which [cane] is good enough for you, boy?' He makes his nephew pick out his own cane. The boy is kneeling at the foot of the head table in front of the faculty, who are berating and humiliating him for his actions (wearing flip-flops instead of black leather shoes). He has been at the table now for nearly a half-hour. They are caning him too and sending him back to class.

A ninth boy is brought into the staffroom, accused of sharing his school fees with his brother so they could both attend classes. As a result, both boys are short the following term's fees. He, too, is pushed to his knees at the front of the classroom. He looks at the ground and silent tears run down his cheeks. A teacher comments, "Do you think your teachers are people to be deceived? Forgiveness is for the Lord." This child, too, is beaten, after he is humiliated by his teachers.

Two girls are brought in for 'haircuts' – their hair is longer than ½ inch, and a teacher haphazardly cuts an 'x' into each child's hair and tells the girls not to return until the rest of her hair is as short as the 'x' This child will go to classes the rest of the day with a sweater draped over her

head in shame.

These kids risk coming to school out of uniform, or without haircuts, because they believe in education. I feel so helpless. Why am I here? What am I supposed to do?"

We were warned in our application packets for the program that caning, though illegal, was still used as a punishment in some Ugandan schools, and we were told to prepare ourselves for what we would do if we witnessed it, keeping in mind the cultural "tradition" of this type of punishment. While somewhat prepared for the possibility of the act itself, I was unprepared for the level of humiliation and demeaning taunting of the children that preceded the violence itself. When the last student left the staffroom, Aaron stood up, slammed his chair under the table, took me by the arm, and walked me outside. The teachers had gone back to their tea and *chapati*, and shaken, we returned to the parish house to consult with our IC educational reps in Gulu. *Invisible Children*, as an organization, does not condone caning or other forms of violent punishments, but the western members of the organization lack the cultural understanding of the roots of this type of punishment and hesitate to be the ones to step in and prohibit the actions. Rather, after heavy discussions and phone calls to Patrick, the Ugandan representative for the Schools for Schools program, we decided to have a round table meeting at the end of the week with our partner teachers to bring up the topic.

My immediate response to this decision was frustration; I felt an injustice had been done to these children, and I wanted to see the involved adults punished. I felt that IC was being too easy, too accepting, too lax. However, at the end of the week, when Patrick asked the roundtable about our thoughts on caning, an interesting discussion ensued. It turned out that much of the power in the school belonged to one of the deputy heads, an older man who had been in the educational field for many years. Our partner teachers, interestingly, expressed a similar feeling of helplessness, though some of them had been among those jeering earlier in the staffroom. They questioned the effects that this outdated punishment had on the relationships with their

students; Nancy worried that “this violence is crushing the spirit of the students.” We Westerners, rather than telling how it should be done, listened and validated their concerns, and then brainstormed alternate possibilities for student discipline. Later that week, we sat in that same staffroom and watched our Ugandan counterparts express their concerns about the canings to the administration and share their alternative ideas. The head teacher and one deputy seemed interested in the new ideas, while the other deputy defended the practice, resulting in some heated discussion with little resolution. But at least the topic was raised, discussions were opened, and alternatives were considered.

Later that week, the deputy head who supported caning stood in front of the morning assembly and lectured on the state of a particular girls’ dormitory, naming those students who lived there, calling them “sluts” and “dirty slob.” Nancy grabbed Kelley’s hand and began walking away from the staffroom door, away from the deputy head and the rest of the staff, with a smirk on her face. One of the other partner teachers saw Nancy’s move, nodded at the other American teachers, and we all walked away from the assembly. When we were huddled behind the building, nervous and excited, Nancy said, “*He may never change. But we do not have to follow him. This is our silent rebellion.*”

Hope for the Future

My personality is that of a problem solver, and my plan was to go to Uganda, find some problems, and help solve them. Once I arrived, I learned that I had grossly mistaken my role as a volunteer, and had to be content with being a cheerleader, a supporter, and a sounding board, allowing the Ugandan educators to take the lead in rethinking their country’s educational system. We were told upon our arrival that the biggest resource the Teacher Exchange would provide to our partner teachers and schools was hope: for new possibilities, new approaches to learning, new ways to face challenges. I had to be content with this happening on a small scale: student leaders who review notes with a class when teachers don’t show up for school, a priest who cares

for elders otherwise forgotten, teachers standing up for something they believe in.

On our last day at Anaka Secondary School, we stood before the morning assembly for the last time. Aaron, who had been given the Acholi name *Okeny* (meaning “man among women,” as the only male in the five-teacher cohort), stepped up to address the students we had come to love and respect, and for whom we had at once both an ache of fear and hope. He told them how smart they were, how hardworking. How he wished that our students in America shared their respect for teachers and passion for learning. How they had taught us more than we could have ever hoped to teach them.

Behind us, the girls’ dormitory, whose construction had been halted before our arrival, was alive with activity. The NGO had apparently found the funds to resume building, and workmen poured concrete and laid bricks. The girls would soon have a place to live that was sanitary and safe.

After the Ugandan national anthem was played, the head boy and head girl led their fellow students in the school song and we all stood together, united for a better Uganda:

We young women and men of Uganda
Are marching along the path of education.
Singing and dancing, we join together,
Uniting for a better Uganda.

We are the pillars of tomorrow’s Uganda,
Let’s rise now to embrace true knowledge,
Yielding disciplined resourcefulness,
To reveal a great, great pearl.

Sarah Klingler, M.Ed., works with the Upper St. Clair High School English Department in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: sarah.klingler@gmail.com

TRAVERSING THE BUMPY ROAD OF LEARNING: EXPLORING FACULTY AND STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM IN TANZANIA

Nancy R. Williams, Ph.D., and Sharon Y. Nickols, Ph.D.,
University of Georgia

Cultural differences, peer relationships, personal coping styles, dealing with conflict, developmental stage, and life experiences of the students don't only shape student learning but affect faculty as well. Effectively assisting students with their emotional experience in a course taking place in a remote area of Africa can be an interesting challenge for faculty. The purpose of this narrative is to explore the subjective experience of two faculty members from different disciplines as they accompanied a group of interdisciplinary students for a month of immersion service-learning. Drawing from their personal journals, the authors reflect on the challenges in service-learning and the personal impact of leaving the traditional classroom to accompany their students on the bumpy road of learning.

"Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors." - African proverb

Nancy's Journal (June, 10, 2008):

"What a couple of days! Some discussion among the students—cracks beginning to evolve. Faculty are taking different positions, and tensions are arising within the leadership team—appears to be a clashing of generational values and roles. It is such a reminder of the challenges for us "teachers," and also how hard it is for me to be a student; how complex it is to assume a facilitator role in an experience like this. It is difficult to draw boundaries when one minute the topic of discussion is the state of one's bowels, and the next attempting to help students make meaning out of experience."

Introduction

In May 2008, an intrepid group of ten interdisciplinary students and three faculty members set forth for a month-long service-learning project in a rural district of Tanzania located in Lake Victoria. We faced our leave-taking with high hopes intermingled with anxiety, not knowing exactly what we were

facing or what was expected of us when we arrived, in spite of many months of preparation. Several in the group were experienced travelers and about half were quite familiar with African culture, while at least three of the students had never traveled out of the U.S. But regardless of experience, no one was immune from the ups and downs of the powerful learning experience in Tanzania. As the social scientist members of the team, the authors of this paper, Nancy and Sharon, initially set out to capture and evaluate the kind of learning that took place through our students' journals. However, we quickly discovered that just as the emotional journey of the students' learning became a prominent focus, so too were our own affective responses. We realized that before we could tackle an analysis of the student's learning, we needed to explore the impact of this experience on ourselves.

The faculty perspective in the unique and intimate partnership of learning that occurs in international service-learning is an important piece of the larger narrative; but it often is left unexplored. Warner & Esposito (2009) refer to the experience of "immersion service-learning" as being a particularly richly

transformative learning opportunity as students and faculty live and work side by side for an extended period of time. They claim that "the impact of service-learning on faculty and their teaching is an integral factor in the outcome of student engaged learning (p.511)." Thus, they suggest that students and faculty living and working together as co-learners enhances the learning possibilities for the student. Philosopher Paolo Friere (1970) commented frequently in his writings on the role of the "teacher as learner" as imperative in a democratic society:

"Although the teachers or the students are not the same, the person in charge of education is being formed or re-formed as he/she teaches, and the person who is being taught forms him/herself in the process...There is, in fact, no teaching without learning" (p. 30-31).

International service-learning, or immersion service-learning, is an increasingly popular educational platform within a broad range of disciplines in higher education. This particular application-based approach to education provides an alternative to traditional study abroad programs for both students and faculty in higher education, combining the benefits of service-learning¹, well documented for a host of extrinsic and intrinsic learning outcomes with the addition of the learning opportunities found in both international travel and cultural immersion in typically underserved areas. Sternberger, Ford, and Hale (2005), suggest that international service-learning builds:

"...on the success and principles of domestically-based approaches in order to help students encounter their own ethnocentric perspectives, while simultaneously providing a means to enlarge their knowledge base and apply components of their burgeoning discipline and/or

profession in another culture" (p. 78).

International service-learning can increase educational learning opportunities exponentially for the students, but it also can be a stretch for faculty as roles and boundaries are redefined. While the students are thrust into unfamiliar and often uncomfortable living circumstances away from family and friends, so too, are the faculty. Even as students struggle with the inevitable, and emotionally-charged, intra-group dynamics issues, faculty are often invited into the fray while being expected to remain above the conflict, even when the faculty may be the target. Additionally, close traveling and living circumstances typically force re-conceptualization of the relationship between learner, teacher, and community partners as evidenced by the plethora of new roles that all are expected to assume. Thus, values, personal qualities, developmental stages of the students, and even one's sense of self, come into the forefront when navigating the challenges with which all are inevitably confronted. All of this was strong fodder indeed, for a learning experience in which one could not wholly predict or control the direction of the exciting—if at times bumpy—path on which we all traveled.

Because of the complexity of an immersion service-learning course of study, many layers of challenges arise that provide an impetus for the learning process for students and faculty alike, often beyond the time frame of the actual course. However, faculty returning back to campus after such an experience may find few opportunities to "de-brief" or find validation for their adventures, or to share after-thoughts as they make sense of their own experiences. "Was it worth it?" is a common refrain as faculty arrive back to the office, often drained, and wondering what and who benefited, and in what way. The environments that returning faculty come home to often do not make a space for dialogue about "meaning-making," particularly when friends, family, and colleagues may view a returning faculty from an overseas course as having been on vacation. Typically the

questions will range from “Did you have a good time?” to a general, “How’d it go?” or even the jibe, “Must be nice...”

Purpose of this Narrative

The purpose of this narrative is to present our lived experience as faculty “up close and personally,” drawing primarily from our own journals and interspersed with our students’ voices as we experienced Tanzania side by side. Warner & Esposito (2009) comment, “In the immersion service-learning experience, the roles (for faculty) multiply to include...being a human being with emotions, flaws, and imperfections (p.511).” By reflecting on the personal challenges as well as the triumphs we encountered, we were able to revisit and make meaning of the emotional processes we experienced. Now, we more comfortably understand them to be an important, even necessary, part of the educational process.

Nancy, an associate professor of social work, and Sharon, a professor of family and consumer sciences, served multiple roles in the planning, implementation, and facilitation of the experience. On location, we were course instructors, faculty liaisons to a community group, mentors and advisors for students, participants in cultural activities, and facilitators of the focus groups that were part of our data collection process for our qualitative research project. This list doesn’t reflect the many other informal supportive services we also provided. A third colleague was the director and administrative leader of the program, as well as the primary liaison with our Tanzanian partners. In keeping with our plans to explore the student experience, the students were asked to keep a journal and participate in focus groups consistent with human subject protocols. We, too, agreed to keep a journal to document our experiences, impressions and feelings and all these data have provided us with an intensive lens to better understand our experiences. Though we collected data formally, it is not our intention to present a formal qualitative analysis of the students’ learning at this time given the subjective focus of this paper. We have drawn from the students’ journals to punctuate our own impressions. What we are addressing in

this paper is the multitude of reactions that we documented in our shared personal journals. After returning home and upon further reflection, we decided that our own experiences are a prominent part of the story. The fact that our living and working circumstances were so deeply intertwined with those of the students increased the intensity of the experience for both of us. These issues drew heavily upon our own levels of adaptability and resiliency, as well as personal philosophies as we were confronted with issues similar to those faced by our students.

About Nancy

When I was approached with the idea of accompanying a group of as yet unidentified students to travel to Tanzania to help facilitate a multi-disciplinary service-learning project, I jumped at the opportunity, though admittedly I was privately a bit intimidated. The focus of the trip (working with local groups on economic development, girls’ empowerment and agro-forestry) was out of my expertise as my experience is in micro-practice, specifically clinical work with individuals, couples and families. I certainly did not have specific knowledge in working with African populations, even though I had attended an African women’s conference in Kenya and had also spent a week in Tanzania, traveling with a non-profit development organization that specialized in girls’ education and community water projects. At that time, I felt a surprising level of kinship with the women I met, deeply moved by their strength, resiliency, and buoyancy. I was highly motivated to return for more.

I likely had been invited to participate in the Ukerewe project because of my leadership in promoting service-learning across campus in my role as Faculty Affiliate for the newly developed Office of Service-learning for the university. I also had a particular interest in and personal experience with international service-learning. However, my previous experience leading a service-learning group was in Northern Ireland, light years away from the culture of East Africa. This invitation filled me with excitement even as I wondered what I could bring to the experience. On a

professional level, I had been personally grappling for quite a while with the notion of faculty as “co-learner” rather than as “teacher/expert”—as is so prominent in higher education—in light of my keen involvement with service-learning and other forms of experiential learning. That question was particularly relevant as it pertained to my primary assignment in the School of Social Work: teaching social work master’s students clinical skills in a way that was meaningful to them and facilitated their learning. In my way of thinking, working with people always involves a journey into the unknown, to be entered with great humility and an appreciation for being in the role of learner. Thus, even though I was entering this trip with no real content to enhance the students’ learning, I had enough experience (and/or hubris), to feel confident that I had something useful to offer.

I was particularly excited that social work students were going to participate. Four very diverse students were involved: an African American BSW student; a Caucasian MSW student who had been raised in Africa; an MSW alumna and current Ph.D. student in family and consumer sciences (all female); and a male Tanzanian MSW student who served as a graduate assistant and skillful Kiswahili translator. As the director of global studies for the School of Social Work, I was thrilled that this interdisciplinary experience was available because service-learning pedagogy seems to have been more slowly integrated into social work curricula than other disciplines. I felt confident that the social work students would enrich the group as well as broaden their own horizons substantially, by participating on an interdisciplinary team.

About Sharon

During the fifteen years I served as Dean of the College of Family and Consumer Sciences, developing more study abroad programs for our students was one of my top priorities, and a goal in the College’s strategic plan. Having “stepped up to the faculty” two years previous to the beginning of this service-learning program, I had decided I should “walk the talk” as a faculty member in a study abroad program. Expanding opportunities for students

and undertaking research on their experience were the drivers that propelled me on this journey.

Like Nancy, I had fallen in love with places and people in Africa, beginning in the 1980s when I was privileged to be a Fulbright-sponsored faculty member in Malawi. Spending that academic year teaching and (mostly) learning from my students, observing rural women working on their farms and managing small-scale enterprises, and absorbing the rhythms of the natural environment and the culture was exhilarating. Visits to my graduate students’ research sites in Kenya and Swaziland in the late-1980s and early-1990s, respectively, and an international conference in Ghana in 2000, further fueled my desire to reconnect or explore another place on the African continent. When I was invited to join a team of three to assess the suitability of Ukerewe as the site of a new service-learning program in Tanzania prior to the course, I was happy to undertake the assignment.

While in Tanzania for the first time, I was inspired by the work of a dynamic Tanzanian woman leader who had served in prominent governmental leadership positions, including the representative of her district in the Republic of Tanzania Parliament. She also had received a prestigious prize in promoting global citizenship. “Mama” N², and our University had developed a Memorandum of Agreement with the goal of sustaining a relationship that would address priority development needs in her district and provide opportunities for student engagement. The local groups with which we visited expressed interest in the concept of students coming to participate in their community efforts focusing on agro-forestry, women’s economic enterprises, and girls’ social and educational development. Despite the shortcomings of the lodging facilities, the isolation of the island, and the poor conditions for travel on the island, the desire to fulfill the University’s part of this commitment trumped any reservations the review team and I might have allowed to surface. My interest in helping to breathe life into the Memorandum of Agreement was based, in part, on my long-standing interest in

women's issues. In my thirty years of employment in higher education, I had become indignant that so many memoranda of agreements between universities abroad and in the U.S. had fallen by the wayside, never fully realized nor appropriately terminated. I didn't want this breach of ethics to happen with this initiative, especially when most of the intended benefits were for women and girls, the most neglected segment of the population in developing countries. I was confident of my skills as an administrator; I liked being associated with a project in a rural area because it connected me to my Kansas farm roots and I was eager to work with a small group of students who wanted to contribute to making life better for others.

About the Students

Nine students in all were recruited for this pilot program. In addition to the BSW and MSW social work students, there were four other graduate students: two from wildlife biology, one with a BS in child development who was a beginning doctoral student in Child and Family, and a Master's student in theater performance. Other students were undergraduates majoring in international studies and consumer economics, respectively, and a newly-minted BS graduate in ecology. Three of the group—two undergraduates and one graduate student—were African American, the rest Euro-Americans/Caucasian except for the MSW graduate assistant who was Tanzanian.

The social worker students along with Nancy and the MSW graduate assistant represented a sizeable portion of the group (38%). The entire group of students ranged in age from 19 to 38 years old. Many of the students had extensive travel experience, while only three of the group had no previous international travel experience. Five of the students had been to Africa before, four of them for long periods. One of the graduate students had served in the Peace Corps in Mali and the other lived and traveled professionally in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both of these women found the service-learning aspect of working with community groups an appealing part of our program. Three of the female graduate students had strong career

aspirations to return to Africa professionally after completing their degree, making the trip especially important to them. The diversity of subject area emphasis, the variety of experiences, and the assortment of skill sets (not to mention personalities) enhanced the group, but also posed challenges in intra-group dynamics on various occasions.

Preparation and (Maybe) Letting Go

Nancy's Journal (May 25, 2008):

"It feels a bit strange yet liberating not to be in charge, yet then again, I wonder what my place, my role is. Am I a participant/learner or am I an authority figure? What guidance/comfort leadership is expected of me? What expertise? I am so touched by the courage of these students—facing their fears and driven by a lust for adventure and idealism. Each of us wondering, what's ahead. I'm hoping to learn to let go, to not be in charge, to go with the flow, to have less investment in outcome, less ego."

For months prior to the trip itself, we met in both the large group as well as in subgroups. The large group meeting focused endlessly on logistics but not on interpersonal process and team-building as we might have done in social work. One of the students commented on this process in her journal:

"Though we spent an entire school year planning the program (yet some of the team members didn't come on board until much later), I did not get the chance to know everyone on a personal basis. The interaction we had was always very goal-based and usually rushed because of our busy school schedules."

Because I (Nancy) was not in charge and my input wasn't solicited, I sat quietly during the large planning meetings as my role was still unclear. An overriding goal, one that

miraculously was met, was to obtain funding for the ten students and three faculty; a significant investment and herculean effort. Much of the credit for this can be attributed to the efforts of our colleague, the director of the Tanzania program, and to Sharon, who took responsibility for seeking grants and gifts, especially to cover the program fees for the graduate students. She also assumed the role of reporting on the state of financial affairs to the anxious students. There was often confusion, as often happens in a large institution. Eventually, nearly everyone's expenses were covered. However, this issue turned out to be a source of dissatisfaction for the students at the end of the trip, and it created some level of disappointment in the faculty for the perceived lack of acknowledgement or appreciation for the fundraising efforts that allowed all of the students to go gratis.

My (Nancy's) assumed assignment was to provide direction for one of Mama N's goals for the trip, which was women's economic development. A subgroup was formed, comprised of two of the younger, undergraduate students and the MSW student who had strong aspirations to return to Africa and work in the area of women's empowerment and violence against women. Our Tanzanian graduate assistant also joined us to assist. Our group met on a monthly basis at least six times before the actual trip, and we struggled to figure out how to address the goals with minimal information about the people we were going to be serving. The social work students and I had more process-oriented expectations in that the relationships to be established were paramount. We were of the belief that we needed to hear the voices of the women and what they wanted in order to appropriately plan next steps. The students felt enormous pressure to produce a plan and I spent time attempting to provide direction while secretly sharing some of their trepidation. As our MSW student reflected:

"I'm excited and nervous and frankly am unsure of what to expect. Obviously I have an idea of what will be going on but as far as working with the women's group

goes – I feel anxious. The primary reason (I don't know if I should be admitting this) is that I feel unqualified to help a women's economics and leadership development group. The only thing I'm confident in is that I am going to learn an amazing amount from them – I'm just not sure it can be the other way around."

Preparations: Assumptions vs. Reality

Sharon's Journal (May 24, 2008):

"The main thing that sustained me through all the preparations, unclear procedures, and the need to fill gaps to help the students—primarily with their finances—yet be diplomatic, has been the eagerness of the students, especially X's academic trajectory and dedication to making her career matter to others, and getting to know Nancy as a colleague and friend."

During our planning meeting, I (Sharon) shared my very brief experience and observations as well as the opportunities and challenges our service-learning group would likely face. Much of the focus was on Mama N's expectations and goals for her district. We discussed health issues, travel details and students' goals. I wanted to make sure that the course-related aspects of service-learning were appropriate to the students' majors, career plans, and personal goals, as well as to secure adequate funding for everyone. Our program director communicated with Mama N's staff about accommodations, transportation and arrangements with the groups in Ukerewe, and reported on this in our meetings. Conveyed, with some level of urgency, was the expectation that the group develop a detailed plan and tangible goals early in the months before the trip itself.

The students and faculty were organized into three subgroups and each of the groups was loosely facilitated by one of the three faculty members. We had limited knowledge

of the community members from the brief initial investigative meetings in Ukerewe, and only a general idea of their level of organization. Yet with incomplete information about the level of the community's knowledge and sophistication of expectations during this preparatory phase, we made the assumption that the communities we would be working with were at a fairly elementary stage. Indeed, the women's group that the visitation team had met with in 2007 was not well organized and had very limited resources. However, as we were soon to discover, this initial group was not the group that was selected as our local partner. Conversely, Buré Gardens and the girls program were more familiar because our visitation team had actually met some of their leaders and members. We tried to prepare to be providers of knowledge—possibly “experts” even though we all knew better—at least theoretically. This assumption would create a good bit of individual and group distress upon arrival.

The reality was that we were charting new waters in this pilot project in a part of Tanzania and Africa that was unexplored by the university. The existing Study Abroad in Tanzania program, geared primarily to undergraduates, was well-established, thanks to the untiring efforts over many years of our colleague and director of our program. But the inclusion of graduate students and serious service project meant to be ultimately sustainable, the stakes felt high. The challenges inherent in planning across time zones and through interpreters made communication, at best, challenging and so, with the very best of intent we all found ourselves to a large degree “making it up as we went along.”

Welcome to Africa!

Sharon's Journal (May 31, 2008):

“Nearing Mwanza, the tread came off one of the tires on the jeep in which I was riding. Roy [our driver] unloaded the luggage, got out the spare tire, and changed it. Children walking home from school stopped to greet us as we waited by the side of the road. None of this

ruffled me—it's just part of the travel experience in an African country. It became clear we would not meet the ferry schedule.”

One of the most intriguing things about visiting Africa is the mythical invitation to slow down and succumb to the seductive sense of time-warp that comes with an infrastructure that is unreliable. The truth is that it is easy to romanticize for those who are not encumbered with a lifestyle of subsistence survival as is true for much of the population for whom those obstacles present ongoing unwieldy life challenges. However, for our group of 13, as we approached our final destination by way of a 3 ½ hour ferry ride through the waters of Lake Victoria, many of us still reeling from jet lag and days of safari, the delay that the flat tire created was a welcome reprieve. A student commented:

“I love the fact that there's only one ferry to Ukerewe per day and that we missed it. I love it because it's so different from being in the U.S. where everyone is so impatient all the time and to be delayed a full day is almost unheard of. I love it because it forces us to just take things as they come and adjust to them, rather than making everything around us adjust to us. I love it because it reminds me that I am not the center of the universe, nor is anyone else.”

It should be noted that being freed from the burdens of budget and schedules has a lot of advantages and it is rare, as a faculty member, that I have had that experience. My reaction to missing the boat was as follows:

Nancy's Journal (May 31, 2008):

“I am feeling peaceful this a.m. as we had the gift of a night in Mwanza—lush, lakeside city filled with the sounds of teeming life: laughter, industry and flowers. The hotel is overlooking Lake Victoria. How fortunate we were to “miss the

boat" and to find a better one. How often in life does that happen?"

Arriving at our Site

After spending a week traveling through Tanzania, driving from Arusha up through the Ngorongoro Crater, stopping at a Masaai bomba, and thrilling at the opportunity of a lifetime to travel through the Serengeti National Park, we finally arrived via a ferry trip on Lake Victoria to our island. We arrived to the sounds and sights of teeming life, bustling energy, and the brilliant colors wrapped around the graceful looking women as well as the inevitable stares of the children. White people, referred to as "Mzungu" was a frequent refrain, as one student described in her journal:

"Having everyone stare at us 'mzungus' is an educational experience in itself. To feel what it's like to be the minority, and even to be candidly stared at by throngs of people, gives one the sense of how the Masaai might feel to have some of us observe them as they conduct their daily business/lives."

In a similar vein, Sharon had the experience, when walking to the market with the program director, of having a small child giggle to her mother, "That lady is wearing a funny hat," pointing to Sharon's head of thick white hair. It is a thought-provoking experience to be "the other," and it takes some getting used to on the part of the visitor/interloper as one of the other students observed toward the end of the program:

"Awoke, went jogging by myself for the first time. It felt very good to know the roads and to have very few people staring anymore. The town must be getting used to us, as the cheers were all friendly, 'Habari za a subui!' 'Good morning!' I think only one kid yelled, 'Mzungu!' which is a huge improvement. 'Mzungu' is getting old and I am wearing thin on being

called 'white.' It does not fill me with good tidings."

We were met by Mama N's team, who thoughtfully had taxis waiting to whisk us to our hotel. Yes, in the midst of Lake Victoria, miles from land, in the main island village where electricity has just been available since 2006, there was a newly-built hotel with rooms reserved for us. We were all given private rooms that had showers, with most having squat toilets rather than the bowl type. The rooms, each equipped with a chair, desk and lamp, all had ceiling fans and mosquito nets covering the beds. We were quite surprised, but the reaction was not universally positively. Some of the students had been preparing for a more physically rigorous experience, where we would be living at the level of most of the community. One of our experienced students was concerned about our comfortable living arrangement as she commented in a focus group when the topic of survival skills came up:

"...one of the things I have been a little frustrated with is the amount of comfort we get here and the barrier we have between us and the community. And it is almost like in here, we could be in the United States, and it doesn't really feel like Africa...just feeling like I am being in luxury and not fully experiencing the community."

However, as the rigors of the busy schedule took its toll, our living situation proved to be a welcome retreat from the intensity of the program.

Our meals took place in an open pavilion covered by a tarp in the middle of the hotel complex. Mama N had arranged for a group of local women to cook all our meals. While we felt a bit uncomfortable with this privilege, we also were aware that they were being paid wages they might not have been able to earn otherwise. All of the cooking (for at least 20 people at a time) took place either in a small open air cooking hut with two small propane burners, or over an open fire contained by three

stones as is customary. The cooking group and the team of interpreters and program assistants and coordinators became precious resources and dear colleagues and friends: they were our closest Tanzanian community members with whom we could relate on a regular basis.

Speaking of Survival Skills... and Acclimation, Too

The topic of survival skills generated a wealth of opinions from the students, both the experienced, well-traveled ones as well as those with little experience. One of the students who had never traveled outside the U.S. shared in a focus group:

"I feel like I have exercised survival skills during this trip (already). I have learned how to say, OK, there is a spider in my room. I am just going to have to adjust in order to live with this. OK, I have to squat to pee; let me make adjustments. So there have been different subtle adjustments that have made me say this is a new way to live, a new way to survive and I'm going to try to be as adaptable and complain as little as possible about this because I'm in this position."

One of our older students in the same group commented:

"So, for me, survival is much more about coping and being 'on' all the time. Holy smokes! There are two different cultures, two different languages, trying to always show my best, you know, my best side and that I'm really trying to be a help and not a hindrance and hopefully my ideas are being offered in good faith and not taken as being presumptuous. Let's have a good conversation and learn from each other and always try and hope that doesn't get lost in translation. So I find myself just being incredibly wiped out after like only three

hours, and at home in the U.S., I can go for eight, nine, ten, eleven hours straight at hard work."

As for faculty "survival," my (Nancy) concerns were less externally focused on living conditions. I worried about things such as group dynamics and students having good experiences, and also managing to get myself "out of the way" as I was often unclear about my role—especially within the service project itself:

"Finding my bearings today after dealing with student anxiety, my own anxiety, and adjustments to the lifestyle here. Yesterday 'X' was sulking, refusing to share, and the night before 'P' was the same way. I am fairly convinced that in both cases shame was the culprit. Speaking of shame, I brought a bag of candy (to the women's group) and distributed it to mixed results. I struggled with my regret as it was obvious that it was clumsy and likely incredibly inappropriate. I was embarrassed in front of the students for my efforts and I feel ashamed that I needed to be the one to grab control."

My (Sharon's) experience as a traveler in India and other parts of Africa help me put the accommodations in Ukerewe in perspective. I was happy with our living situation, as I noted:

"I had experience with latrines and squat toilets during many previous travels, so the porcelain squat toilet was quite acceptable. Toilet design did not matter to me; what mattered was if the bathroom was clean, and it was! What I didn't expect was that some students complained that these accommodations were too comfortable—they wanted to live with families in a village. Whereas, other students complained about

specific features of the accommodations—shower water was always cold, sleeping under a mosquito net was 'weird,' there were 'monster roaches' in the room, and so forth. The call to prayer broadcast over a loud speaker from the mosque just a block away from my side of the hotel at five o'clock in the morning was typically the only thing that disturbed my sleep, but I grew to anticipate it and the crowing of a rooster as part of the morning routine."

On the Subject of Security

Risk management training is required of all faculty at our university who lead or participate in study abroad and international service-learning programs. Even without this training, the health and safety of our students is foremost among our concerns. It did not escape our notice that the life jackets on the ferry we took from the mainland to Ukerewe District were padlocked in a metal cage. Nor did it escape our notice that pedestrians and bicyclists were routinely run off the road by speeding cars and lorries. Nevertheless, there was the inevitable push from students to have more individual freedom and to venture out on their own. As adults and professionals (Nancy, a trained and experienced social worker, and Sharon, well aware of the vulnerabilities of youth) we felt a deep sense of responsibility to safeguard the welfare of our students in this location with virtually no modern medical services, limited transportation and communication services, and the lack of visible law enforcement officers. In retrospect, the students were cooperative, but in the crush of on-site daily activities even a fantasy discussion among the students about "checking out the local scene" can create some stress for program leaders. However, security considerations continued to be a prime motivator for decisions, much to the consternation of especially the younger students who were chomping at the bit for a night out. We were grateful to the program director for adhering to the policy of a night-time curfew. When facilitating a service-

learning program, we recognize that it is essential that safety considerations be discussed with students and policies be clear and consistent.

The Need for Personal Time

Sharon's Journal (June 4, 2008):

"Two older ladies came to show us how to weave reeds. I did that for a while, then returned to the (my) room to write in this Journal. Writing in the journal was a good opportunity for being out of the crowd. I need these times away from the students and other faculty."

As a more introverted personality, it was no wonder that I used the quietness of my room to refocus my energy. While most of the undergraduates seemed to be constantly in motion, going to the market, playing soccer, practicing dance moves, and were even animated when they huddled together to have a conversation, I needed that quiet personal time as I noted in my journal:

"I am so grateful for a chance to recover today. It (rest) seems necessary in order to keep up positive interactions. We are constantly "on" here as we interact with the local people. As thoroughly enjoyable as it is, I need this alone time to recharge my battery."

Food

Staples of the diet in the Lake Victoria area are *ugali* (prepared from cassava or maize flour) and fish: fried fish (with the head, bones, and skin), boiled fish, fish stew (also with bones). The local green, leafy vegetable resembled the collard greens that are prevalent in the Southern diet of the U.S., and it was served at nearly every meal. Other vegetables were carrots and potatoes, sometimes varieties of peas. Boiled eggs, bread and butter were the mainstay on the breakfast table. The ubiquitous banana found as different varieties throughout most of Africa was served every morning at breakfast; occasionally we had

fresh oranges or pineapple. Although a few of our students had dietary issues (one adhered to a vegan diet), most were hearty eaters. Admittedly, although provided in the necessary abundance, this diet did become monotonous.

On one of the Sunday mornings when the students and other faculty accompanied Mama N to church, I (Nancy) stayed at the hotel to prepare French toast. It was at a point when the group was dragging (I know I was) and I thought it would give everyone a bit of a familiar lift. Besides, it came at a time when I was feeling particularly helpless in my work with my group of students, and it seemed like a tangible way to provide some nurturing. Sharon put two jars of Skippy® peanut butter—a product she always carries when traveling internationally (which proved to be extremely well-received)—on the table. As Sharon noted after the breakfast, “A more welcome feast could not have been presented. As the students and Tanzanian cooks (with curiosity) devoured the French toast, the students’ joyous murmurings were a huge morale boost.” Later I (Nancy) wrote about it in my journal:

“I cooked French toast for the group. The women who are cooking for us, such as beautiful Angelina, and I are having our own cultural event. They are interested in what I am doing and I am entranced with their communal rhythms. It was very gratifying on many levels—nurturing the students, teaching the women, having that concrete activity of usefulness. Oh yes, back in my comfortable saddle once again. I helped clean up while the students went off to church. I must admit that I am more relaxed than I have been in a long time.”

Personal Growth and Self-Awareness

The “self” of the student, as well as the inter-relationships of all, are essential components in service-learning pedagogy. Personal development is often lauded as a benefit of service-learning, with participants expected to gain in compassion and sensitivity

to social issues (Bernacki & Jaeyer, 2008); increase in self-efficacy (Bernacki & Jaeyer, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Sedlak, Doheny, Panthofer, & Anayat, 2003; Simons & Cleary, 2006); demonstrate an increase in tolerance and appreciation for diversity (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Parker & Dautoff, 2007; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000); deepen values development, particularly as it relates to social work values (Williams & Reeves, 2004; Williams & Lindsay, 2002), and leadership and problem-solving skills (Moely McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002; Simons & Cleary, 2006; Johnson, Johnson, & Shaney, 2008). With the addition of the international travel and living component, Sternberger, Ford, and Hale (2005) suggest that:

“Unavoidably, students’ world-views are challenged as they confront a number of different and often conflicting beliefs and behaviors in settings that are typically outside their range of experience” (pg. 79).

These world-views are shaped by a host of variables such as age, race, gender, family, individual characteristics, and ethnicity—all of which students bring to the experience. Their learning is filtered through these lenses of being and seeing. As such, experiences quickly presented themselves as travel plans went awry, sleep deprivation kicked in and especially challenges to self-confidence surfaced. These same variables are true for faculty. However, faculty’s personal growth has been less of a focus in the literature. The role of the teacher as learner in the learning cycle for students in traditional education is subtle to non-existent, but a factor that can’t be ignored when the confines of the traditional classroom are left behind. Friere (1970) suggests that the roles of teacher and student are both intertwined and interchangeable, as he writes:

“The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is him/herself taught in dialogue with the students, who in

turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (p. 67).

Parker Palmer (1998) describes the learning process as relational at its base and refers to it as the "dialectic of knowing." He suggests that learning occurs when a person is in relationship with what it is they are learning about (the subject) and also with others who are also in relationship to that subject and each other.

One of the places in our busy schedules that created an opportunity for a thoughtful facilitated dialogue was during our focus groups, where we encouraged open expression. I (Nancy) felt this was an important addition to the program for the students and one where I could tangibly contribute as I reflected:

"I thought that we had an awesome group meeting last night. Finally feel like I have a role, some strengths to contribute. The students are an exceptional bunch, so insightful, bright, and the diversity of the group makes for opportunities galore. Can we move into that hardest of territories to talk about—the differences that lay between us? We approached it last night when 'X' opened her heart to share her experiences as a woman of color."

Putting the Service into the Learning

The hospitality of east African cultures is legendary. The community groups in our service-learning program had been selected by Mama N's staff, and they were aware that our group would be coming to work with them. On their first day, the girls' program team was welcomed at a school with a performance of songs by a chorus of girls. The women's development group was greeted at the roadside by the women with songs, ululating, and a rhythmic procession to the leader's yard and outdoor kitchen for their first meeting. The agro-forestry group received an official welcome statement from the project's leader

and a tour of the facilities which included a wood frame office, chicken house, goat corral, crops and tree-seedling plots, and the large trees under which much of the project's activities transpired. Each of us had a surge of excitement in response to our respective welcomes.

Quickly following the enthusiastic greeting, the challenges that all three groups faced began to emerge. One of the initial challenges was a disconnect between who we thought we'd be working with, the actual composition of some of the groups, and the community's expectations of us. As the faculty, we were experiencing some of the same "disconnects" as the students. Although we had similar feelings as the students, we were also expected—perhaps an expectation that we placed on ourselves—to avoid the anxiety, frustration, and fear that the students were experiencing. We felt it was incumbent on us to help them make the necessary adjustments.

The family and consumer sciences doctoral student assumed primary leadership for the girl's empowerment group³. We both felt great pride in her performance, relational abilities, and the leadership she provided in her group. This student embodied social work values and her commitment to the work, along with her ability to adapt to the program challenges, were significant. Over the months she and her team had carefully prepared activities for teen-aged girls focusing on different aspects of empowerment such as physical safety, sexuality, hygiene, communication skills and goal planning. They believed that they would be working with a small, stable group of girls. The reality was much different, as they were shocked by the large group of students who flooded the classroom, the community's expectations, the difficulties regarding scheduling and access to resources, and the rigid, sometimes punitive attitudes of the adults towards the girls. Below are some of her initial observations regarding her group's assignment:

"They (the community) had us go back into one of the stand-alone classrooms at the school and were

asking us to critique them – the skits, and tell them how to improve, etc. It definitely was not what we were expecting and we were all suddenly very anxious. It was overwhelming. They wanted us to tell them what our goals and objectives were and what we were planning to ‘deliver’ by the end...Something else that surprised us was that the women were expecting us to train them – not to directly work with the girls. They were expecting seminars and workshops on working with the girls – something we were completely unprepared for.”

In this and similar situations, part of our role as facilitators became helping our students “pick themselves up” after such experiences, regroup, develop a strategy for the following day(s), and help them figure out ways to communicate their strategies to the translators so the interest and commitment was maintained by the community group. But, who was there to “pick us up?” In many respects, we (fortunately) were able to do that for each other.

Nancy and Sharon faced very different issues in our two groups. Nancy’s community group was comprised of six women who had formed an economic cooperative of surprising sophistication and detail. Some of the women were related to each other and all of them were neighbors, tied to a grueling subsistence lifestyle with dreams of an economically easier life. The group ranged in age from late teens to early 60s and clearly wanted to “get down to business” and get their project implemented right away. The women had, in fact, been a group with what they called a “Constitution,” officially filed for at least six years. They had identified that they wanted to purchase a chalk-making machine (cost approximately \$750) to produce chalk for Ukerewe schools. They had accomplished the remarkable feat of having already saved the equivalent of \$250 over a six year period toward this goal. Their accomplishment, considered in perspective, is truly remarkable since each family’s entire

income for a year was approximately the equivalent of \$100. This income was generated, in large part, by growing and preparing cassava, a starchy root-like vegetable used in the area’s staple food, ugali. The root is hand-pounded into flour and spread out in the sun to dry. It is then packed into 50 pound bags which the women carry on their heads for approximately 10 miles to market early on Thursday mornings. This was just one of the women’s many tasks to survive a life of unthinkable toil and hardship. Not given any information whatsoever about our group prior to our arrival, we had prepared for the group’s needs at a much more basic level and discovered, after months of meeting, that our efforts were woefully inadequate.

One of the students who initially had the most difficulty was our MSW student who aspired to work with women’s empowerment issues in Africa upon graduation. She felt very inadequate for the task and remained stuck in this position for several days:

“I told (the group) that I’ve got nothing to offer them...I know the others in the group, especially ‘X’ feel that they have something to offer – but I really don’t. I feel like I’ll learn a lot by being a part of this discussion but I really feel like I can’t contribute anything of value. I kind of feel like me being here is a waste of money and space. I really want to feel like me being here brings some benefit to the women but I just don’t see it. I’m incredibly discouraged.”

Frankly, at first, I (Nancy) shared some of this student’s uneasiness as well, but felt certain that we as a group fundamentally had the resources to figure things out as I reflected in my journal:

“Women’s group has been a stretch for me, too, as I have no experience with business except common sense. My conviction that solutions are born out of relationship is not fully embraced

by the students in my little group, but because I don't bring credentials as an authority to the process they likely don't trust my input. Since I am also stumbling in the dark, I'm not convinced that my way is correct. My struggle is to be able to generate confidence in my position when I lack it myself. But it's all about learning—theirs and mine and so perhaps starting from specifics will work out. The women are a fascinating blend of unearthly and grounded wisdom, smile easily, sing like angels, gritty and determined, and grounded in communal cooperation. If they can do it, so can we!"

However, in spite of my personal conviction that we had the resources to figure things out, morale got substantially worse before things got better. For me, much of my personal challenge had to do with maintaining my objectivity and equanimity in the face of emotional upset, odd because when I'm in a professional setting with my clients, or even in a traditional classroom setting, my professional boundaries are far more secure:

"A difficult day...I am taking (way too) personally the struggle of the students assigned to the women's group. Three of the four students are depressed and low energy and everything I am doing to try and motivate them feels futile. They are definitely not receptive to my suggestions. I commented to them today that the way I am feeling with them—in the dark, frustrated, baffled, lost—is the way they may likely be feeling in their work with the women's group. The students are very uncomfortable with the process and, it would seem, that if I was honest with myself, I would have to acknowledge that I am equally uncomfortable with the students' learning process. Additionally, I am not feeling well today. Sour

stomach, feeling queasy, light-headed, not feeling rested."

Looking back, I am all too aware that everyone, and most of all me, needs the time and space to embrace an experience and settle into it. However, it was apparent that my anxiety got the better of me as I spent many efforts trying to "cheer students up," rather than tolerate their process. As I now look deeply within, I can see how stretched I really was as I tried too hard to carve out a meaningful role for myself, violating my own fundamental belief that we all need the room to stumble in order to find our own light. With patience and acceptance, growth has the room to occur, as of course, it did.

Sharon's group, agro-forestry, had still yet a different experience. This group, too, was a well-formed community co-operative that had been running successfully for a period of time. They had already received the attention and services of other universities and were quite clear regarding their expectations and presented themselves in a more business-like manner. It should be noted that it was likely that all three groups were possibly expecting money and resources from "the Americans," and certainly did not have an understanding of the concept of service-learning.

Although Ukerewe is a relatively remote area of Tanzania, development "experts" have been to the islands in the district at various times. In the minds of our service-learning partners at Buré Gardens (and likely the other sites as well), foreigners who come to see them must surely have answers to the problems they face. Thus, their expectations were that we would advise and instruct them. Explaining that we were there to learn from the members of the Ukerewe organizations and to work *with* them was indeed a challenge. As Sharon describes:

"The team at Buré Gardens, where I was the faculty team member, sorted this out fairly early in our relationship. Our group worked on building a chicken coop even though chickens were never mentioned as a priority in previous

communications. The students and I brainstormed some possible approaches and explained them to the Buré Gardens leaders. As the project unfolded, every suggestion we made was countered by a better approach on the part of the local residents. As we sawed and hammered and wove vines together, the students and I gained a profound appreciation for indigenous knowledge. Later, a very successful demonstration of how to construct a mud stove to conserve fuel and improve safety by one of our students who had been a Peace Corps volunteer in west Africa assured the Buré Gardens partners that we actually did have some useful skills to share."

My (Sharon's) strategy with the students in my group was to encourage them to take the initiative. However, I found the behavior of one of the students on my team vexing. While she possessed relevant expertise and ultimately demonstrated it, her kinetic energy, a perceived lack of attention to tasks, triangulating behaviors with the faculty and questionable influence over impressionable students were intolerable irritants to me. Conversely, I recognized her magnetism with the children and I admired her relational ability with them. Other experiences with individual students pushed me into the ambiguity of roles in a service-learning environment, where living conditions are so close. A conversation with the mother of our youngest student about her dietary limitations at the pre-travel orientation concluded with the mother saying to me, "Please take care of my daughter." So, was I to be a teacher, an administrator, or a surrogate mother? Perhaps the answer is a little bit of everything.

More Learning...

Sharon's Journal (June 10, 2008):

"While Nancy's primary issues centered on relationships and self-awareness, I (Sharon) also felt

some anxiety over my relationship with the students. While I enjoyed a satisfactory to even a close bond with some of the students, with the others, a close relationship simply didn't materialize. I would like to feel a closer bond with the students, but I don't have that warm, comforting personality. I'm great at organizing information and giving structure. My class is going pretty well, although we have to squeeze it in whenever it's convenient. The discussions are thoughtful and students express appreciation for the readings I selected. I can take satisfaction in that."

In our experience, it was not just the external elements of the location and the cultural differences that challenged the students (and us), but equally influential were the internal group dynamics. In some respects, I (Sharon) was blind-sided by the tensions that emerged among the students and the angst they had about their ability to meet their own and others' expectations. The students had met on a regular basis throughout the previous academic year and had discussed their previous travel experiences, their apprehensions and enthusiasm for an experience in Africa, and preliminary ideas for matching their academic areas and interests with the local communities. I assumed the students were prepared and I neglected to account for the relatively wide range of age and experience, as well as personalities among the group. Nancy, on the other hand, observed that the intra-group relationships, an important forum for learning, evolved in a somewhat predictable pattern of group process with conflict emerging about midway through the experience. The compelling impact of the group's dynamics were undoubtedly heightened by the stresses of living in an unfamiliar global setting, but provided grist for self-reflection and intra-personal growth.

Nancy's Reflections

While I have an understanding of group process, some of my objectivity blurred as I

became a part of it. Also, I did not have a designated leadership role impacting my ability to effectively facilitate it. I was not the group's therapist, nor was I even the group's leader. As the days wore on, frictions began to predictably mount within the group of students, some of which was not completely revealed to the faculty. Fissures appeared among subgroups and the younger students appeared to yield to peer pressure. Developmental issues emerged. For example, not being given freedom to roam after dark was taken as a sign of lack of trust on the part of the younger students and a reasonable security measure by the older ones. In-group issues, such as triangulation, power struggles toward perceived authority figures and ineptness in communication skills on all levels, fed the divisions.

I was well aware that this group dynamic was far from unusual. In fact, it is an expected result of stress and fatigue as well as being a normal evolutionary process in a group. But it also is made more difficult when there is no clear understanding and agreement among the group about dealing with group conflict. We ended up facilitating five focus groups over the course of the month. However, they were part of the data collection process for our qualitative research project and *not* meant to be anything other than an opportunity to learn about the students' perception of their learning experiences. As such, they were inherently inadequate for dealing with group process issues.

Resolution Happens

What did happen, though, was also a part of the bigger picture and important to note when faculty's morale is faltering and fatigue has taken root. The latter part of the program went by in a whirl of activity. Grants were written, chicken coops built, skits were presented, official documents frantically obtained and an unexpected trip was undertaken to attend a traditional party associated with an upcoming wedding. With everyone settling in and projects going more smoothly, the students relaxed and began to enjoy the groups they were serving and our days took on some of the rhythms of Africa itself. While intra group issues

continued to ferment among the students, so too the normal evolutionary working phase of the subgroups kicked in, evidencing more cooperation to join together to complete tasks. In the final days of service, projects were completed, relationships with community partners were deepened and a greater receptivity to the experience seemed to occur for the students. They also appeared to work more autonomously away from faculty and with more shared teamwork among themselves; just as any faculty would ultimately hope for in an experience such as this. I noted:

"The women's group. Such a difference! Such progress! After a difficult start, I felt that wall that so often deflates me with students, well, we have finally broken through. I feel especially fulfilled because 'my' students are working closely as a team but yet I feel that I, too, have a solid role. While my pesky ego still rears up all too often, perhaps it's not all bad. I do have skills both to teach through example as well as offer and I think that is ok. Students have worked hard on the grant writing and assembling important data, and I have been involved in editing and polishing."

And what about our MSW student? The one who struggled so mightily? She worked it through, stayed stuck for a while, and then mobilized her significant strengths and got to work as she richly describes:

"I had a moment when we were sitting with the women today – all of a sudden I thought to myself, 'this is it – this is what I'm going to be doing.' We were sitting in a circle talking about their cooperative. They're such a powerful, dynamic group of women. They always amaze me whenever we talk to them. And I knew sitting there that I could sit in a circle with them, or with another group, or with a hundred other groups, and discuss

empowerment in one form or another, forever. There are so many things [to talk] to these women about – there are so many things they could teach me and I feel like there are so many ideas I could bring to them for discussion. I belong more to Africa than anywhere else. This is where my heart and mind work out their issues. This is where I find my peace⁴.”

About a week before the end of our journey, all the students enthusiastically embraced the idea of shadowing the women in the women's group as they went about their typical morning chores. Many of the students noted in their journals that this one activity was the high point for them in the entire experience. Having a shared experience of the reality of an African woman's daily life proved to be profound for every student. One of our students poignantly described this experience that appeared to integrate a significant piece of learning for her:

“We worked for about 1½ hours and we were tired by the time we were finished. My back ached but I was actually surprised it didn't hurt more. I was getting several blisters and one blister burst, which made it harder to hoe. We found out that Modestar is only 52 – I thought she was in her 60's. She has six children and two are married, two are away fishing, and two are still in school. She reached Standard 7 in her schooling and married at the age of 16. She didn't have children for many years. She's probably been going to the shamba every day since she was five. Forty-seven years of walking every morning to fetch water, walking every morning to shamba to hoe for many hours, walking back with whatever you've harvested in your head. Day after day, year after year, until you die. That really depresses me. I really

wish I could have asked Modestar⁵ about it. I would have liked to ask her if she ever wishes her life was different, or what she wanted to do when she was a child. Or even what she hopes for her own children.”

What to learn from this? Maybe more action is needed and less process. Maybe expansion of direct cultural engagement, such as home stays, should be part of an international service learning experience. And then again, maybe nothing other than the time was right for this event. That is the always challenging yet exciting part of this work: one never really knows.

Implications

In this narrative, two very different faculty members from different disciplines, personality styles, and even learning and teaching perspectives, joined forces to tell the story of our experiences in a pilot international service-learning program in Tanzania. Drawing from our numerous conversations, student journals as well as our own personal reflections, we attempted to piece together perceptions of this experience that might be useful for others. Some of our conversations, as well as journal reflections, drifted into the area of teaching philosophies, and in this area we respectfully somewhat disagreed.

I (Sharon) was enthusiastic (and still am) about service-learning, especially its relevance for applied professional areas within family and consumer sciences (and of course social work). However, I was disappointed in the amount of time—thus the lack of depth—during this program in achieving synthesis between the scholarly body of knowledge related to women and development, and more broadly community development, which were the foci of the seminars in which some of the students were enrolled with me. Due to the crowded service schedule and cultural experiences that were a vital part of the program, students had virtually no time to read or become familiar with previous work that might have provided a conceptual framework for cognitive understanding of what they were

observing, and perhaps an understanding of their emotional responses.

I (Nancy) suspect that there are many faculty who would share Sharon's concerns. My perspective, perhaps forged in my strong practitioner background, is a strong, abiding belief in the powerful learning potential that comes from a lived experience of this sort and that the learning can become as much—if not more—integrated because it is experienced viscerally. Leaving the controlled environment of a classroom is a risk for faculty as we are challenged to trust that experiential learning can be equal to—or is as significant as—learning that is obtained through traditional forms of evidence-based scholarship. Can we trust that the process of experience can be enough of a formidable teacher?

Perhaps a more basic question, one that theorists and philosophers such as John Dewey, Paolo Friere and Parker Palmer have tackled, is what are the elemental processes that facilitate, activate and result in transformative learning? One point on which Sharon and I are in complete agreement is the absolute necessity to punctuate the experience with reflective learning activities that will facilitate integration of the student's learning. Timing it well, though, is a challenge.

In this narrative, we focused on our personal reflections to tell the story of our time in Tanzania and highlight insights and observations we gathered along this sometimes bumpy educational road. This experience brought up many emotions for both of us. It was also a bit uncomfortable to put the spotlight on our own reflections in public, as some of our struggles were not flattering or image enhancing. However, that is part and parcel of the process of being a learner. It is messy and imperfect by definition, and our hope is that by sharing our experiences it will open the door for other faculty-learners as well as validate the emotional ups and downs of our students. For example: our anxious MSW student struggled in frustration, tight and limited vision, angry with herself, uncommunicative, and unsure. But by the end of the month she emerged as a true leader with the women's group, and was able to affirm herself and her potential in the process. Isn't that the essence

of a good learning experience: to cultivate the fertile soil of learning and plant some seeds of mastery?

Service-learning is a fascinating, hard, challenging process for faculty, particularly for those who are accompanying students internationally. Is it for everyone? Probably not. Was it worth the hours of investment, the time spent away from family, friends and other work? For me (Nancy), I would now say (two years later) yes, a resounding yes, even though at the end of the experience I doubted whether I was physically or emotionally prepared to do it again. My last journal passage reflects my ambivalence:

"Feelings about leaving? A little scared. I guess I like feeling a part of a bustling community, feeling a sense of belonging and purpose. I really love it here on this island and will miss it. It has become a part of me. It was not an easy trip, lots of emotion, mine and others: discomfort, confusion, and role ambiguity. But, in the end, so much to process, so much grist for reflection. I feel confident that the students got a lot from this experience and I will be interested in hearing their stories when the time is right."

Authors' Note:

The authors would like to express their deep gratitude to the African people who so graciously opened their community in welcome to us so that we could all learn; we would also like to thank Dr. Lioba Moshi and Ambassador Gertrude Mongella, two visionary women of distinction who are paving the way for other Tanzanian women to reach for the stars; and to honor the memory of Modestar Mnale, a woman of true valor. Lastly, we pay tribute to each other for the courage it took to claim our humanness.

References

- Bernacki, M.L., & Jaeger, E. (2008). Exploring the impact of service-learning on moral development and moral orientation. *Michigan Journal of Community Service*, 14, (2) 5-15.
- Bringle, R.G., & Hatcher, J.A. (1995). A service-learning curriculum for faculty, *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, 2, 112-122.
- Eyler, J., & Giles, D.E. (1999) *Where's the Learning in Service-learning?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Friere, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Gallini, S.M., & Moely, B.E. (2003). Service-learning and engagement, academic challenge, and retention. *Michigan Journal of Community Service*, 10, (1), 5-14.
- Johnson, P.D., Johnson, P.W., & Shaney, N. (2008). Developing contemporary engineering skills through service learning in Peru. *Journal of Community Engagement and Scholarship*, 1, (1). 81-90.
- Moely, B.E., McFarland, M., Miron, D., Mercer, S.H., & Ilustre, V. (2002). Changes in college students' attitudes and intentions for civic involvement as a function of service-learning experiences. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 9 (1), 18-26.
- Palmer, P. (1998). *The Courage to Teach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Parker, B., & Dautoff, D.A. (2007). Service-learning and study abroad: Synergistic learning opportunities. *Michigan Journal of Community Service*. 13, (2), 40-52.
- Sedlak, C.A., Doheny, M.O., Panthofer, N., & Anaya, E. (2003). Critical thinking in students' service-learning experiences, *College Teaching*, 51, (3), 99-104.
- Simons, L., & Cleary, B. (2006). The influence of service-learning on students' personal and social development. *College Teaching*, 54, (4), 307 -319.
- Sternberger, L.G., Ford, K.A., & Hale, D.C. (2005). International service-learning: Integrating academics and active learning in the world, *The Journal of Public Affairs*, 8, 75-96.
- Vogelgesang, L.J., & Astin, A.W. (2000). Comparing the effects of community service and service-learning, *Michigan Journal of Community Service*, 7, 25-34.
- Warner, B., & Esposito, J. (2009). What's not in the syllabus: Faculty transformation, role modeling, and role conflict in immersion service-learning courses. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*. 20, (3), 510-517.
- Williams, N.R., & Lindsay, E.W. (2002) Developing social work values through experiential learning: Service-learning & study Abroad. International Schools of Social Work International Conference. Retrieved from: http://www.aforts.com/colloquesouvrages/colloques/actes/interventions/Williams_Nancy.doc
- Williams, N.R., & Reeves, P.M. (2004). Going to burn camp: Exploring social work values through service learning. *Social Work Education*, 23, (4), 383 – 398.

Footnotes

¹ Bringle & Hatcher (1995) define service-learning as “a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service-activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of (their) discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.”

² Mama N is a pseudonym. “Mama” is a common term of respect for a woman of wisdom and stature in many parts of Africa.

³ This student has continued to demonstrate her passionate commitment to this project by returning to Ukerewe each summer since 2008, despite daunting budgetary obstacles, to continue her work with the girls group, bringing a sustainability to the project that we had only hoped for. She plans to return again in the summer of 2011.

⁴ This student is currently working as a project director focusing on women’s issues in Liberia for the Carter Center, a job she obtained after serving at the Carter Center in Atlanta for her internship. She is making plans to return to the U.S. to enter a joint Ph.D./J.D. program in international justice and the law.

⁵ Modestar Mnale was a favorite among all of us, warm and engaging, smart and so very wise. She provided strong leadership for the women’s group and demonstrated that language differences don’t have to be barriers. Sadly, she fell ill and died last year, a great loss. Our heartfelt condolences to her family and community.

Nancy R. Williams, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Social Work at the University of Georgia. Sharon Y. Nickols, Ph.D., is a Professor of Consumer Economics, University of Georgia College of Family and Consumer Sciences. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: nwilliam@uga.edu

SCHOLARLY WRITING AS A TOOL FOR EMPOWERING CHANGE AGENTS IN ETHIOPIA

Margaret E. Adamek, Ph.D., Indiana University School of Social Work

This narrative describes the experiences and insights of an American professor who was invited to teach a scholarly writing course to doctoral social work students in Ethiopia. The professor recounts her initial decision to accept the offer to teach in Ethiopia, the incredible opportunities to learn about social problems and injustices from her students, her amazement at students' eagerness to learn and their appreciation of learning resources, and her willingness to return to Ethiopia. The author's Social Work students are indeed the change agents in Ethiopia, whose work will bring attention to pressing social needs, push forward policy changes, and promote social justice. Although the decision to travel to Ethiopia was life-changing for the professor, the real gain is being realized as more students earn degrees in Social Work and become leaders in changing the social welfare landscape in Africa.

"The written word endures." - Latin phrase

Invitation and Decision to Go to Ethiopia

My involvement with Ethiopia began when I went to the GADE (*Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education*) meeting in Calgary, Canada in October 2006. The focus of the 2006 conference was internationalizing Ph.D. curricula for social work students in the U.S. To be most effective at internationalizing our curricula, we need to internationalize ourselves as educators.

The keynote speaker at the GADE conference was Dr. Alice Johnson Butterfield, the co-director of the *Social Work Education in Ethiopia Partnership* (www.aboutsweep.org). As Dr. Alice (*I am using the first name basis that is common in Ethiopia*) shared passionately about the doctoral program at Addis Ababa University (AAU) in Ethiopia, I thought: "There's a university in Ethiopia? With a doctoral program? In Social Work? Wow." My limited impression of Ethiopia was that it was a severely impoverished African nation known for drought and starvation. I mistakenly thought that such a nation, where so many people could starve to death, would not have a system of higher education. I had much to learn. I was so impressed with the engaging way Dr. Alice shared about her work in Ethiopia that I decided to invite her to Indiana University to speak at our doctoral symposium

the following spring. Her visit led to an invitation to my colleague, Dr. Valerie Chang, to travel to Ethiopia to teach the doctoral pedagogy course that she developed for PhD students in Social Work at Indiana University. Soon after, I was invited to teach the scholarly writing course.

I have to admit, one of my first reactions when I was asked to teach a course in Ethiopia was uncertainty, even fear. I was excited about the prospect of going to Africa, but worried about the potential dangers. I had never been to any other continent outside of North America, never been across the ocean, never been away from my family for an extended period of time. Would I have anything to offer? Would I be able to connect with the students? Would my style of teaching work? What about language differences? And what about those "dangers" Americans tend to hear about....political unrest, tribal wars, malaria and other scary diseases? What about the incredibly long flight? I was somewhat aware of the issues of HIV/AIDS and orphans in Africa, but beyond that my knowledge of social issues in Africa was minimal. Would my course on scholarly writing be helpful? Would it be culturally relevant? Dr. Chang went to Ethiopia before I did and came back with reports of her wonderful experiences teaching at AAU.

I agreed to go to teach the scholarly writing course for the first time in May of 2008.

All of my fears and uncertainties crumbled based on the experiences during my first two and a half week stay in Addis Ababa. I readily agreed to teach the course again to the next cohort of Ph.D. students in the summer of 2009 and again in the summer of 2010. Each trip brought new insights and new understanding about life in a developing country. Before describing some of my personal insights, I would like to review the current context of higher education in Ethiopia.

Higher Education in Ethiopia

Higher education is undergoing a major expansion throughout Ethiopia. To combat the problem of "brain drain," the government has instituted a plan to build several universities to effect a "brain gain" (Tessema, 2009). Noting the widespread political and economic insecurity over the past 30 years in Ethiopia, Haile-Mariam (n.d.) refers to Ethiopia as "a nation of aspiring emigrants" (para 3). The exodus of professionals has drained the nation of expertise needed to combat the entrenched social problems such as widespread poverty, unemployment, and poor health. According to Kyambalesa (n.d.), "The brain drain is, no doubt, one of the major constraints on contemporary Africa's quest for heightened socioeconomic development" (p. 52). As one example of brain drain, Berger (2010) points out that there are more Ethiopian physicians in Washington, D.C. than in all of Ethiopia. While it is recognized that professional human resources are "a critical element for successful economic development," the government's recent efforts at capacity building to accomplish a brain gain have been questioned (Haile-Mariam, n.d.; Wala, 2006). Academic dishonesty is widespread (Teferra, 2001), and academic workloads have become burdensome as more and more students enroll (Wala, 2006). During my most recent visit to Addis Ababa, I attended the commencement ceremony of Addis Ababa University (July, 2010) where there were over 10,000 graduates.

Despite major investments in building physical space for higher education, there is

little support for the non-tangible capacity-building to equip students with the skills needed to advance in higher education. Writing and computing resources are scarce in Ethiopian universities (Tibebu, Bandyopadhyay, & Negash, 2009). In general, there is very poor language performance among university students in Ethiopia. For example, among 3,000 Ph.D. applicants in 2009, only 400 earned above the passing score of 6.00 in the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam. The majority were recommended for additional English language training (Gezie, 8/11/10 email).

The program at the AAU *School of Social Work and Social Development* is the first Ph.D. Program in Social Work in Ethiopia. The program enrolled its first cohort of eight Ph.D. students in 2007. I was invited to teach a Scholarly Writing course to the second cohort of 10 Ph.D. students in 2008, and have returned to teach the third and fourth cohorts. The doctoral level Scholarly Writing course I taught at AAU is based on a similar course I developed and taught at Indiana University for the past ten years. As of July 2010, one of the 40 doctoral students, Dr. Wassie Kebede, has completed all of his degree requirements and successfully defended his dissertation. He graduated on July 24, 2010. Dr. Kebede is already making an impact—soon after he graduated he was voted to the post of Secretary of the Association of Schools of Social Work in Africa (ASSWA).

Given the newness of social work as a profession in Ethiopia, the school has had to rely on visiting professors from other countries to provide instruction and mentoring of Ph.D. students. Most often, the courses are offered on a condensed schedule and the visiting professors are in Ethiopia for a relatively short time. Recently, the school has decided to delay recruiting and admitting a fifth cohort of doctoral students until they are able to support the current students in moving towards degree completion. Despite great progress in enrolling Ph.D. students and advancing them through their coursework, the School has not had full-time faculty available to support students in completing their degree requirements including assembling and defending a comprehensive

research portfolio, writing and defending their dissertation proposals, carrying out their dissertation research, and writing and defending their final dissertations. My future plans include playing a support role in helping students complete their degrees. Opportunities to learn from students about social issues and social justice in Africa

As I have read my students' papers about current social issues and needs in Ethiopia, I could not help thinking that I was learning more than I was teaching. The students' research interests and paper topics were varied and intriguing: obstetric fistula, child begging, informal adoption, HIV/AIDS discrimination, double orphans, early marriage, abuse of housemaids, female circumcision, leprosy, migration, human trafficking, blindness and other disabilities caused by a lack of medical care for common childhood ailments, lack of social welfare programs to assist vulnerable populations such as older adults, discrimination against those with physical impairments, displacement-induced resettlement, food insecurity, child-headed households...the list goes on.

Some issues I had never heard of, e.g., obstetric fistula...a childbirth injury that leaves young mothers impaired and coping with a constant stream of urine resulting in social ostracism and severely limiting employment opportunities. Since the Ph.D. students in social work at Addis Ababa University come from various disciplines, e.g., law, anthropology, educational psychology, and sociology, my learning was further enhanced. In social work we advocate to bring attention and resources to social issues and human suffering. In the U.S., the struggle is often related to the amelioration of burden and stress. In Ethiopia, the struggle is more often for basic survival.

Amazement at Students' Eagerness to Learn

The first time I went to Ethiopia, I did not know what to expect in terms of my new students' English language skills, their writing ability, or their knowledge of social issues. Would I be able to relate to them and them to me? I was pleasantly surprised and somewhat

relieved to discover that the Ph.D. students in Ethiopia were more like my students in the U.S. than they were different. Like my U.S. students, the students in Ethiopia each had particular research interests they were passionate about; they similarly struggled with developing clear scholarly prose and using correct APA format. Both groups are critical thinkers who are able to analyze and dissect social issues in their respective countries.

One difference I noticed is that the Ethiopian students seem to be especially eager to learn and to put forth whatever effort is necessary to access learning materials and accomplish their research. The Ethiopian students are very appreciative of learning materials and any resources that can support their research projects. While the U.S. students are accustomed to active participation in the classroom as well as online learning, the Ethiopian students have typically been in lecture-based courses. I found them eager to learn about and engage in more student-centered pedagogical approaches. Though student-centered and active learning strategies are not customary in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian students have responded very well to such approaches and appreciate the opportunity to actively participate in various classroom exercises.

Another difference that stood out to me was the flexibility and resourcefulness of the students in Ethiopia. Despite the lack of university and personal resources, the students in Ethiopia were amazingly resourceful. They shared resources readily with one another. If I had only one copy of an article or some other document, someone in the class took responsibility for making sure everyone received a copy. In the U.S., I sometimes find it helpful or even necessary to devise an assignment to ensure that students do the readings. In Ethiopia, the students were eager to have their own copy of all of the resource materials, even when it was not assigned reading for the course. In a nation of limited resources, the Ph.D. students in Ethiopia are eager to gobble up whatever academic resources they can access. I was impressed that all of my students figured out a way to have their own laptop computers. Students

shared that they sacrificed in other areas in order to acquire this important tool for their education.

Another example of the Ethiopian students' eagerness to learn was their appreciation of instructor and peer feedback on their writing. Though they were mostly new to peer review, and though my comments on their papers were sometimes extensive, they expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to enhance their writing based on feedback from both their peers and me as the instructor.

Another example of their eagerness for learning was the way they responded to the "Article Highlights" assignment. For this assignment, students were expected to read two articles and construct a 2-3 page structured summary of each article. The summaries were then copied and distributed to all class members. In addition, the student who wrote the summaries was expected to briefly share key points from each article in class. What started out as an assignment to ensure that my students in the U.S. completed the readings became a source of prolonged and interesting class discussion and debate among my students in Ethiopia. The students in Ethiopia went beyond the expectations for the assignment and challenged each other in regards to the content and meaning of the article summaries they had written and presented in class. This made for interesting and spirited class discussions that I had not anticipated. The Ethiopian students were appreciative of the opportunity to actively engage in class discussions. Since most of the Ph.D. students are lecturers in various universities throughout Ethiopia, my hope is that they will replicate the active learning strategies I tried to model, as well as the many new pedagogical approaches introduced in Dr. Chang's course.

Learning in any Context

Learning—including at the doctoral level—can occur in just about any context, even without electricity and hot running water to accommodate daily showers. Those were a few lessons learned on my first trip to Ethiopia in May 2008. At that time there was a power

shortage that led the government to shut down the electrical power in various quadrants of the city according to a rotating schedule that was supposed to be predictable, but sometimes was not. Roughly every other day, the electrical power turned off at about 7a.m. and stayed off until about 7p.m. Nevertheless, we held class every weekday and were grateful for daylight and windows. Of course, it became necessary to plan ahead in terms of making handouts and scheduling Powerpoint presentations. When the electrical power went out in the middle of a student's Powerpoint presentation during our last class session, the student simply proceeded without the projected images of his presentation. The students were able to adapt.

In the apartment where I was staying, the electrical power being out also meant no hot running water. While adjustments to shower schedules were needed, in comparison to the majority of residents of Addis Ababa who had no indoor plumbing, I was living well. I noticed that students simply rolled with the punches; the lack of power and hot running water were simply a fact of life. An urgent need for internet services could be met by going to a cybercafé and paying a small fee. I returned to Indiana pledging to forever appreciate continuous electrical power and fast internet. Imagine my surprise when on the first night home, there was a powerful thunderstorm that knocked out the power for three days. Alas, I felt prepared. Life would go on. Teaching and learning could proceed, even in Indiana, without electrical power.

On my second trip to Ethiopia, in addition to students' papers, I read Greg Mortenson's book *Three Cups of Tea* (Mortenson & Relin, 2006). I highly recommend it! The author shares about his many adventures—sometimes life-threatening—in the process of setting up schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The thirst for knowledge and learning was so strong that children learned without a school building, without textbooks, and sometimes without the benefit of teachers. I began to wonder if there was an indirect correlation between educational opportunities and eagerness to sacrifice for the sake of learning. It seemed to me that students with limited

opportunities for educational advancement are more motivated to make sacrifices to obtain such opportunities while those of us with endless opportunities are too often oblivious to the advantages we enjoy. In any case, those of us working and learning in resource-rich university environments have little room for complaint (even in a down-sizing economy).

Eagerness to Return to Ethiopia

My first teaching experience in Ethiopia was so positive and enriching that I did not hesitate to agree when I was asked to return in the summer of 2009. I am grateful to Lyceum Press in Chicago who agreed to donate multiple copies of a textbook I had selected (Furman, 2007) so that all of my students at AAU could have their own copy. By this time, I had modified the course so that the students' first draft of their manuscript, based on their masters' thesis, was due before I arrived in Addis Ababa. The students sent their first drafts by email, which enabled me to arrive to the first class session with written feedback on their papers. The first two drafts of their paper were ungraded, "low stakes" assignments (Elbow, 1997). Both peer and instructor review was incorporated into the course. The final "high stakes" versions of their final papers were due about a month after I returned to the U.S. This approach seemed to work well since my stays in Ethiopia were only about two weeks.

A major highlight of my third trip was being able to share the experience of visiting Ethiopia with my husband and our 11 year old son. I found my first two trips so enriching that I convinced them to come along. They too, found the visit enjoyable and educational and want to return if another opportunity presents itself. Looking ahead, I would like to find a way for my U.S. students and my Ethiopian students to learn directly from each other; perhaps through online peer review. Currently, the courses in the U.S. and in Ethiopia are offered asynchronously, so I will have to consider how to accomplish this goal. While the decision to travel to Ethiopia ended up being life-changing for me, the real gain is being realized as more students in Ethiopia earn degrees in Social Work and become leaders

in changing the social welfare landscape in Africa.

Social Work Students as Change Agents

As I have taught scholarly writing over the past ten years, I have gained a greater appreciation for the power of the written word. My initial apprehensions about travelling to Africa on my own were attenuated by the realization that I could indeed make a contribution by facilitating students' scholarly publication. It is their expertise and advocacy on behalf of vulnerable populations that will have a meaningful impact on scholarly discourse and eventually on practice and policy efforts. A first cohort student, Serkalem Bekele, who also serves as the School's Acting Dean, is involved in a community partnership with organizations that serve children in conflict with the law (known elsewhere as "juvenile delinquents"). Her efforts and leadership are changing the way such children are viewed and the services they receive.

Scholarly writing is at the heart of the learning process in higher education and is the primary means of communicating disciplinary discoveries that contribute to the knowledge base of the professions. As Ethiopia and other African nations struggle to stem the tide of "human capital flight," (Tucho, 2009), universities need to support the development of scholars who are equipped to make significant contributions to social and economic development. According to Tucho (2009), "...social, political, and economic advancement of any nation cannot be achieved without active participation of educated and skilled citizens in the nation-building" (p.23). I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to that development by supporting social work students in Ethiopia in their scholarly writing endeavors. Scholarly writing can be a powerful tool for change in addressing the pressing social issues affecting various at-risk populations in Ethiopia as well as in other African nations. I look forward to the advancements that are sure to come as the Ethiopian social work graduates step into their future as scholars and change agents.

References

- Berger, M. (2010). *This is a Soul: The Mission of Rick Hodes*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Elbow, P. (1997). High stakes and low stakes in assigning and responding to writing. In M.D. Sorcinelli & P. Elbow (Eds.), *Writing to Learn: Strategies for Assigning and Responding to Writing Across the Disciplines* (pp. 5-13). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Furman, R. (2007). *Practical Tips for Publishing Scholarly Articles: Writing and Publishing in the Helping Professions*. Chicago: Lyceum.
- Haile-Mariam, T. (n.d.). The brain drain from Ethiopia: What to do. Accessed on the world wide web on 8/13/2010 at <http://chora.virtualave.net/brain-drain6.htm>
- Kyambalesa, H. (n.d.). The brain drain: Causes, effects and remedies. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/9695389/the-brain-drain-causes-effects-and-remedies>
- Mortenson, G., & Relin, D.O. (2006). *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time*. New York: Viking.
- Teferra, D. (2001). Academic dishonesty in African universities—trends, challenges, and repercussions—An Ethiopian case study. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 21 (2), 163-178.
- Tessema, K. A. (2009). The unfolding trends and consequences of expanding higher education in Ethiopia: Massive universities, massive challenges. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 63 (1), 29-45.
- Tibebu, D., Bandyopadhyay, S., & Negash, S. (2009). ICT integration efforts in higher education in developing economies: The case of Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia. *International Journal of Information and Communication Technology Education*, 5 (3), 34-58.
- Tucho, A. (2009). Factors influencing the successful retention of skilled manpower in developing nations: The case of Ethiopia and people of Ethiopian origin in North America. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 33 (1), 23-28.
- Wala, D. (2006, October 6). Paradox of Ethiopia's effort to brain gain. Accessed on the web 9/13/2010 <http://www.kilil5.com/node/3808&print>

Margaret E. Adamek, Ph.D., is Director of the Ph.D. Program at Indiana University School of Social Work. Comments regarding this article can be sent to: madamek@iupui.edu

BOOK REVIEW - THE PRICE OF STONES: BUILDING A SCHOOL FOR MY VILLAGE

By Twesigye Jackson Kaguri, with Susan Urbanek Linville (Viking Adult, 2010)

Reviewed by Dianne Rush Woods, Ph.D., California State University, East Bay

The Price of Stones: Building a School for My Village answers the question, "Can one individual make a difference?" Authored by Twesigye Jackson Kaguri, the director of development at Michigan State University, and a son of Uganda, this autobiography chronicles his passionate and creative response to the catastrophic effect of HIV/AIDS on AIDS orphans.

Kaguri, born in poverty, moves out of poverty through education and does what many cannot do. He takes minimal resources and leverages them bit by bit, stone by stone, into education, social service and community-building programs for the region surrounding his home village of Nyakagyezi. This is the account of the founding of the Nyaka AIDS Orphan School in the Harlem Zone of Uganda, by Kaguri and his wife, Beronda.

Following the loss of his brother and sister to AIDS (an illness nicknamed "slim" in Uganda), Kaguri vows to do something for AIDS orphans in the region. This task is all the more compelling because there is no extensive social welfare system for children in Uganda. In Ugandan culture, the family takes care of the children of deceased family members. This basic social welfare system was compromised when whole families died and left children to the care of their grandparents or, worse yet, to the streets. Kaguri started a day school for AIDS orphans in Nyakagyezi with \$5,000 of his own money. However, starting the school was complicated because there were so many unmet needs.

Students needed clean water, so Kaguri developed a gravity-fed water system, which not only helped the school, but also the village and the surrounding region. Because children were hungry and falling asleep in class, the school began a nutrition program and a community garden. Nurses, hired to support

student health, soon moved into the community to work with families. They also helped pregnant mothers with childbirth. Children who needed a place to live were provided foster care. Scholarships were provided to those students who moved on to secondary school and the University. An increasingly literate community required and eventually received a library. The unmet and unanticipated needs of the children and their community were assessed and met when possible.

This is the story of an individual who, like pioneering social worker Jane Addams, stood at the nexus of change and was brave enough to start putting the pieces together, stone by stone. In 1911, Addams used her resourceful nature to open Hull House to recently arrived European immigrants. In January 2003, Kaguri used his resourcefulness to start a school that has grown into a life-supporting institution for 200 AIDS orphans.

Like Addams, Kaguri made speeches about the needs of the children, the village, and the region; raised money; convinced foundations and government agencies to help; convinced young people to volunteer at the school as interns; addressed public health issues plaguing the community; listened to concerns of troubled community members; and helped the grannies who had buried their children and were now raising their grandchildren.

Can one person make a difference? Yes, he can!

Dianne Rush Woods, Ph.D., is an Academic Senate Chair and Associate Professor at the Department of Social Work, California State University, East Bay. Comments regarding this article can be sent to:
dianne.woods@csueastbay.edu

CALL FOR SPECIAL ISSUE GUEST EDITORS AND PAPERS

Reflections is seeking guest editors (individually or in teams), as well as manuscripts, on the following topics:

- **Military troops and their families, including our veterans of 20th century wars, Iraq, and Afghanistan;**
- **School violence and bullying (all ages);**
- **Social group work;**
- **Field education—from the perspective of students, field instructors, field liaisons, and/or field directors;**
- **Kinship care;**
- **Social justice on any level and in any country.**

If you are interested in being a guest editor or guest-editing team, please contact:

Prof. Eileen Mayers Pasztor, DSW
Editor, *Reflections*
epasztor@csulb.edu

Please send manuscript submissions to:

Wendi McLendon-Covey
Assistant Editor, *Reflections*
CSULB School of Social Work,
1250 Bellflower Blvd., SSPA-161
Long Beach, CA 90840-4602

For subscription information, please visit our Web site at:
www.csulb.edu/depts/socialwk/reflections

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Special Issue

“Playing to Win in Ghana”

This special issue focuses on personal lessons learned by professional helpers through a variety of collaborative experiences from the perspectives of practitioners, researchers, students, volunteers, performing artists, NGOs and policy-makers in the West African country of Ghana. There has been an explosion of affirmative actions that ensure ongoing relationships of non-Ghanaians, especially Americans, with various entities in Ghana, including social and economic development. Recent program schedules at Annual Program Meetings for national conferences sponsored by National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), for example, reflect papers, posters, and workshops addressing collaborative projects in Ghana. Through narratives, this issue will offer professional helpers winning methods to help enhance their global awareness, advocacy, practice, knowledge, and skills regarding traditional and contemporary indigenous issues, and contextual and multi-faceted problem-solving strategies to work effectively in Ghana.

Narratives may address, but are not limited to:

- Path to Ghana, what led you there?
- Oral histories about Ghana's minority (and often discriminated against) ethnic groups
- Rural and urban divides in relation to gender advocacy (cultural inhibitions)
- Homelessness and health and mental health issues
- Traditional beliefs about indigenous practices (i.e. witchcraft, female genital mutilation)
- Income generating projects: evidence of the human spirit, survival, and entrepreneurship
- Preparing U.S. faculty and students, volunteers, researchers, practitioners, and/or NGO's for effective work in Ghana
- Encounters with individuals of all ages who have special challenges: leprosy survivors, albinos, orphans, the disabled, HIV/AIDS and STDs, refugees, displaced persons, and gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered persons
- Issues with reproductive health, midwifery, fistula, and rape
- Using arts to facilitate advocacy, awareness, storytelling, and healing of the vulnerable
- Sakawa girls and boys: “the new economy in Ghana” and the relationship to prostitution, child trafficking, child labor, Internet fraud.

Submission Deadline: March 31, 2011

(Follow submission guidelines on page 105)

Send to:

Brenda McGadney, Ph.D., *Reflections* – Ghana Special Issue Editor

Associate Professor and Chair, Social Work Program

1247 E. Siena Heights Drive, Siena Heights University

Adrian, MI 49221 USA

bmcgadne@sienaheights.edu

Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping

Submission Guidelines: FAQs

What is a narrative?

Narratives are personal stories that give readers a first-person perspective about the practice of change. Using a thematic structure, narratives recount the helping process as the writer experienced it. Narratives take into account time, place, action, persons, behavior, and interactions. Narratives explain and describe events, results, conflicts, complicating actions, and the who, how, why, and what that took place. The writer evaluates the experience, whether or not there is a resolution, and explores the meaning of the experience. Some narratives end with a perspective on what occurred. Writers are encouraged to read several *Reflections* articles and/or entire issues before submitting their manuscripts. Research papers are not accepted.

What are the submission requirements?

- Provide a cover or title page with the following information for each author: name, highest degree, title, affiliation, mail and email addresses, and phone number;
- Include an abstract of no more than 150 words and put this on a separate page without identifying information;
- Use APA 6th edition publications style for references;
- Use Times New Roman style, 12-point font, and Microsoft Word;
- Do not exceed 30 double-spaced pages in length, exclusive of the cover page, abstract and references; no figures, graphs or tables are accepted;
- Mail three (3) hard copies of your manuscript to the editor listed on the call for papers, or to the Assistant Editor below.

How long does the review process take and what are the steps toward publication?

Manuscripts are peer reviewed anonymously by members of the Executive and Editorial Board (see any issue after Volume 16, Number 3 for a current list of board members). Publications decisions are typically made within four months. Authors will receive written review comments, with one of the following decisions: accept, accept with revisions, revise and resubmit, or reject. Once your article is accepted, you will need to email your final manuscript. Articles are copyedited before publication. Your publication release form will include a statement that you are responsible for any individual or agency/organization names that you mention. *Reflections* disclaims responsibility for references to individuals, organizations, facts, and opinions presented by published authors. For questions or discussion, please contact: Prof. Eileen Mayers Pasztor, DSW, *Reflections* Editor, epasztor@csulb.edu.

Submit manuscripts to: Wendi McLendon-Covey, Assistant Editor, *Reflections*
CSULB School of Social Work,
1250 Bellflower Blvd., SSPA-161
Long Beach, CA 90840-4602

SUBSCRIBE TO REFLECTIONS:

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

Read articles by leaders in the social work field as well as other helping professions. Published quarterly.

**\$40 per year
or 2 years for
\$60***

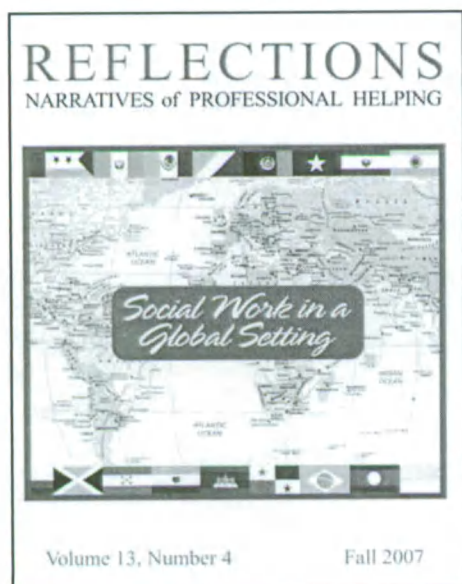
Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Check or Money Order Enclosed

Credit Card Number & Expiration Date _____



Make checks payable to REFLECTIONS

Mail to:

REFLECTIONS
CSULB School of Social Work
1250 Bellflower Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90840

Manuscript Inquiries:
Wendi McLendon-Covey,
Assistant Editor
wendi@smashco.com

*Individual subscriptions within the U.S.: \$40 per year. Libraries and institutions: \$65 per year. Outside the U.S.: Add \$15.

REFLECTIONS

NARRATIVES OF PROFESSIONAL HELPING

COPYRIGHT 2011 REFLECTIONS—ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping (ISSN 1080-0220) is published quarterly by the University Print Shop at California State University, Long Beach under the auspices of the School of Social Work. Annual Subscription Rate: individuals, \$40.00; libraries and institutions, \$65.00; outside USA, add \$15.00. Single copies: \$10.00. Payment: check, money order, or credit card (Visa or MasterCard, please include number and expiration date). Please send to REFLECTIONS: CSULB School of Social Work; 1250 Bellflower Blvd., SSPA 161; Long Beach, CA 90840-4602. We remind subscribers to please immediately notify *Reflections* of address changes, providing both new and old addresses. Please allow six weeks for address changes to take effect.

Purpose:

Reflections aims to publish narratives, personal accounts that describe and explain the process of helping others and shaping social change over time. The journal seeks to build a literary tradition for critical study. It encourages stories that convey a sense of immediacy, portray practice across diverse populations, and capture the range and variety of strategies and systems within the helping professions. The journal publishes stories of professional helpers, such as: ethicists, psychotherapists, community organizers, case and group workers, policy makers, family and child practitioners, health and mental healthcare providers, educators, researchers, administrators, and all social workers. Historical and contemporary narratives are encouraged.

Narratives should give readers a first-person perspective about the practice of change. Narratives explain and describe events, results, conflicts, complicating actions, and how, why, and what took place. The writer evaluates the experience, whether or not there is a resolution, and explores the meaning of the experience. Writers are encouraged to read several *Reflections* articles and/or issues before submitting your own manuscript. Research papers are not accepted.

Writing Instructions and Submission Process:

Thank you for your interest in being published by *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*. Here are the writing requirements:

- Provide a cover or title page with the following information for each author: name, highest degree, title, affiliation, mail and email addresses, phone number;
- Include an abstract of no more than 150 words and put this on a separate page without identifying information;
- Use APA 6th edition publications style for references;
- Use Times New Roman style, 12-point font, and Microsoft Word;
- Do not exceed 30 double-spaced pages in length, exclusive of the cover page, abstract, and references; No figures, graphs, or tables are accepted;
- Send three (3) hard copies of your manuscript to:

Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping
School of Social Work
California State University, Long Beach
1250 Bellflower Blvd., SSPA 161
Long Beach, CA 90840-4602

Manuscripts are peer-reviewed anonymously by members of the Executive and Editorial Boards. Publication decisions are made within four months. Authors will receive written review comments with the outcome decision: accept; accept with revisions; revise and resubmit; or reject. Once your article is accepted, you will need to email your final manuscript. Articles are copy-edited before publication. Note that your publication release form will include a statement that you are responsible for any individual or organizational names that you mention. *Reflections* disclaims responsibility for references to individuals, organizations, facts, and opinions presented by published authors.

For questions or discussion, please contact:

Professor Eileen Mayers Pasztor, DSW
Editor, *Reflections*
562.985.4984
epasztor@csulb.edu

Please visit our website:

www.csulb.edu/depts/socialwk/reflections



01 EP 0000923390

aid at Long Beach, CA.

Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
 School of Social Work - 111194
 1250 Bellflower Boulevard, SSPA 161
 Long Beach, CA 90840-4602

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

EP Ipswich 4/11
 Editorial Dept.
 10 Estes St.
 Ipswich MA 01938



MID:RB9 DT: 01/01/2011 ShelfID:LD2952

Name: Reflections (10800220)

Rec: 03/22/2011 Abxcnt: 14 BookRev: 0

DateTxt: Winter2011 Priority:

FTFile:

Source:	Vendor: ININE	CkInit: SKE
TOC: N/A	A&I: ININE	Special: IDSE
TOCsrc: H	Scan: BOS	Ship: Y Hold: N
FT: N/A	Authabx: N	AbxTyp:
PDF: N/A	Imtype:	CDOC: N
MDScan: N	EmbDue:	Rights: N

CSULB, in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, or practices; nor does CSULB discriminate on the basis of sex or gender. CSULB covers all CSULB programs and activities, including employment.

In addition to meeting fully its obligations of nondiscrimination, CSULB is committed to creating a community in which a diverse population can live and work, and to respecting the rights and sensibilities of each individual, without regard to economic status or other personal characteristics or beliefs.



Copyright of Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping is the property of Cleveland State University and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.