



NACCW LWANDILE AND LIBODE ISIBINDI SAFE PARKS CASE STUDY

As part of their work to promote healthy child and youth development and improve standards of care for vulnerable children, the National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) was one of the large national sub-recipients of the Global Fund OVC Programme from 2013 – 2016. The Isibindi model is a community-based care and protection intervention option for children. This case study looks at the services implemented as part of the Isibindi Safe Parks at Lwandile and Libode in the Eastern Cape under this programme.

The National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW) was founded just over 40 years ago. From humble beginnings in 1975 when child care work was under-valued and members of the Association had sporadic communication and interaction with each other, the NACCW has grown to a well-respected, independent non-profit organisation (NPO) in South Africa, and has international recognition.

The Association’s mission is to provide “professional training and infrastructure to promote healthy child and youth development and improve standards of care and treatment for orphaned, vulnerable and at-risk children and youth in family, community and residential group care settings.”

Currently it has 12 regional bodies throughout the nine South African provinces. It is made up of almost 4,000 child and youth care workers (CYCWs) – including workers in institutional centres and those in community-based initiatives in urban and marginalised rural areas – as well as 20 non-governmental organisations caring for children and youth. Members and organisations are connected to each other, learn from each other, and support each other to achieve their collective vision for every child in South Africa.

“Even those who were not happy when we got there to introduce the programme, now when they see the service delivery to other families...they come to us and say ‘I have this problem, can you come to my house and help me’. They seek us out to help them.”

NACCW's key operational themes are networking; model-building; capacitating; professionalising; internationalising; and advocacy.

The NACCW annual report for 2014/2015 summarises these operational themes as follows:

Networking: The Association maintains a national membership network that connects the child and youth care sector (including governmental and non-governmental role-players) to professional reference groups; facilitates skills-sharing and information exchange; and establishes regional and national agenda of action.

Model-building: The Association has developed and replicated rights-based models of child and youth care based on the developmental approach and an ethos of positive discipline to facilitate effective and appropriate wide-scale implementation of children's legislation and policies. One such model is Isibindi (described in more detail below), which was developed early in the 2000s, and continually refined and adapted to address the changing circumstances of and legislation with respect to children in South Africa.

Capacitating: The Association develops skills, provides consultancy and mentoring services, generates and disseminates knowledge, and enables organisational development to build capacity of systems and practitioners to deliver services to children. Notable among the training initiatives undertaken by NACCW, is the FETC, accredited training for CYCW reaching into remote rural areas that previously had not had training.

Professionalising: The Association has worked tirelessly for child and youth care work to be recognised as an accredited profession. Having achieved this milestone, the welfare of CYCW has been advanced; the rights of children youth and their families are protected; and the accountability of CYCW has been established through professional recognition and statutory regulation.

Internationalising: The Association develops strategic partnerships with national and international individuals, groups and institutions to build strategic partnerships, benefit from cross-learning, and promote the growing pan-African relevance of its work. In so doing, its position as an

agent of change in social services to children is solidified.

Advocacy: The Association conducts child-rights advocacy at community, provincial and national levels to promote change in attitudes, behaviours, practices, policies and programmes in relation to vulnerable children and youth.

The activity largely responsible for NACCW's more recent growth in membership and influence is ISIBINDI - a community-based care and protection intervention option for children.

ISIBINDI

The Isibindi model aims to create safe and caring families and communities, which are responsive to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Community members are trained as professional CYCWs to deliver social services in line with South Africa's children's legislation. They all live within easy distance of their clients. Their primary goal is to provide daily practical and therapeutic assistance to children and youth in their life-space, within their homes and proximal communities. The model equips CYCWs with structured methods for dealing with the multitude of issues they are likely to encounter in practice: hardships that range from orphanhood, unemployment and sexual abuse to family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, AIDS-related illnesses and physical and cognitive disabilities.

Isibindi is modular in design, and its core components – standard across all projects – can be augmented with other programmes as required. By using the principles of social franchising, the Isibindi model can be replicated on scale and implemented by local communities and organisations. It enables poorly resourced communities to adopt an evidence-based approach to the provision of integrated welfare services, and rapidly develop effective and informed local care and protection services for children. CYCW life-space support and Safe Parks are core Isibindi projects.

Isibindi Life-Space Support

CYCW life-support encompasses practical and therapeutic assistance and support

(www.naccw.org.za/isibindi). Practical assistance includes:

- Helping with the preparation of meals
- Cleaning the house with the children and caregivers
- Accompanying family members to the clinic and overseeing the taking of medication
- Assisting the family with application for birth certificates
- Helping the family to budget
- The therapeutic elements include:
- Teaching life skills – relationship building, problem solving, conflict resolution, dealing with stress
- Assessing and referral of children and families – health, trauma, education, need for material assistance relating to severe food insecurity and crises
- Transferral of knowledge and skills - HIV/AIDS awareness, testing and management, safety, nutrition and educational assistance
- Life-space counselling – in the moment assistance with difficult situations of conflict, crisis, stress and grief

Services are planned around each child and her/his family/caregivers within the context of a multi-disciplinary team. Professionals such as child and youth care workers, social workers, probation officers, doctors/clinic staff, NACCW mentors as well as family members and the young person her/himself can make up this team.

Isibindi Safe Parks

Of particular relevance to this case study is the Safe Parks programme, which is a key aspect of the Isibindi model and the model that was funded under the Global Fund Phase II Grant OVC Programme. The Isibindi Safe Park model provides a range of services in a community – a place for children to be – to play under the supervision of CYCWs, receive educational support, hear traditional stories and celebrate national calendar days. Currently being replicated in Zambia, the Isibindi model is adapted by grassroots implementers to suit local conditions and cultural contexts – within the framework of the overarching commitment to the realisation of children’s rights, and the building of a children’s workforce to give

effect to such rights – even in the most remote and poorly resourced communities.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL SAFE PARKS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Province	Formal safe parks	Informal safe parks	Total safe parks	Children reached	No. of visits	Ave no. visits
Eastern Cape	13	79	92	7271	147669	20
Free State	4	14	18	3636	69 479	19
Gauteng	0	22	22	7 770	625 936	81
Kwa-Zulu Natal	49	112	161	7 429	197 898	27
Limpopo	6	30	36	11 460	496 406	43
Mpumalanga	6	27	33	5 964	120 056	20
North West	12	24	36	516	6 120	12
Northern Cape	5	6	11	3 107	73 900	24
Western Cape	3	12	15	3 888	132 703	34
TOTAL	98	326	424	51 041	1 870 167	37

Adapted, with permission, from The NACCW annual report for 2014/2015

Additional components of the Isibindi model include a Young Women’s Empowerment Program, a Young Men’s Empowerment Program, a non-centre based early education and development (ECD) model, a Disability model, residential therapeutic programmes for child victims of sexual abuse and children who have exhibited inappropriate sexual behaviour.

In 2011 the National Minister of Social Development decided to adopt and scale up the model as well as allocate funding for this purpose. A year later, in October 2012, the National Department of Social Development (NDSD) and NACCW entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in terms of which the Association gives technical assistance to the NDSD and provincial DSDs (PDSDs) in implementing the roll-out. The aim is to service 1.4 million children in need of care and protection by training 10,000 CYCWs over a period of five years and deploying them in the same time-frame to 400 Isibindi project sites throughout South Africa. In terms of the MOU, the NACCW is required to facilitate the successful national roll-out and implementation of community child and youth care services through the Isibindi model in the nine provinces of South Africa.

“When there is a meeting in the family, we make sure the children are involved so that they will share... not only focus on the older people. Even with the family budgeting, we involve the children with everything.” – Project Manager

ISIBINDI PROJECTS AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS, AND CHILDREN REACHED

Province	Districts	Isibindi projects	Partners	Children reached 12 months ending March 2015
Eastern Cape	7	17	11	15 970
Free State	5	18	16	11 323
Gauteng	5	55	53	24 594
Kwa-Zulu Natal	11	110	100	45 492
Limpopo	5	43	42	18 859
Mpumalanga	3	32	32	19 494
North West	4	10	10	1 243
Northern Cape	5	13	9	7 513
Western Cape	4	5	5	5 960
TOTAL	49	303	278	150 448

Adapted, with permission, from The NACCW annual report for 2014/2015

A total of 135,318 children received Isibindi services in the period 2014/2015 through home visits or by accessing programmes at Safe Parks. Of that total, 33,335 (25%) were community children who visited Safe Parks and participated in their activities, while 101,982 (75%) were children on CYCW caseloads who received services via home visits.

METHOD

Information for this case study came from a variety of key informants. Their perspectives about services provided, challenges experienced, achievements realised, and future directions were sought. Telephonic interviews were conducted with the Deputy Director of NACCW and the National Isibindi Administrator. Visits to the 2 safe park sites included:

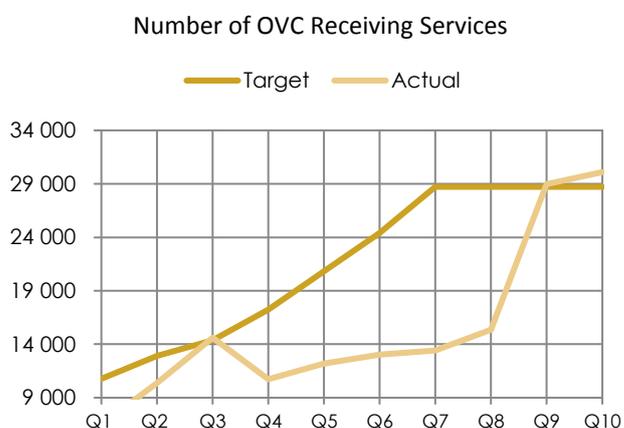
- Face-to-face interviews with the Provincial Coordinator
- The Director of the implementing partner
- A Mentor and the Mentor Supervisor for the 2 sites
- The Libode programme/project manager.
- Focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews were held with Child and Youth Care Workers at Isibindi Lwandile and Libode sites.

All face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Extensive notes were generated from the telephonic interviews. Relevant NACCW-generated reports and documents were consulted and appropriate data extracted for inclusion in the case study.

NACCW OUTPUTS

As part of the grant terms, NACCW regularly submitted monitoring data to NACOSA which tracked progress in terms of the number of OVC receiving support through the programme, the number of OVC tested for HIV and receiving their results and the number of OVC referred for and HIV test and receiving the results. These were the three key programmatic performance indicators which NACOSA, as PRs and grant managers, reported to the Global Fund against predetermined targets.

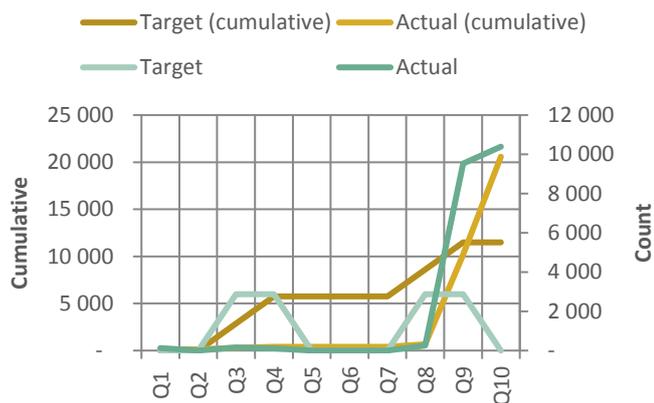
The number of OVC receiving services against predetermined targets are presented in Figure 6 below. As evident in the figure, NACCW met and exceed their target on this indicator by the end of the grant term.



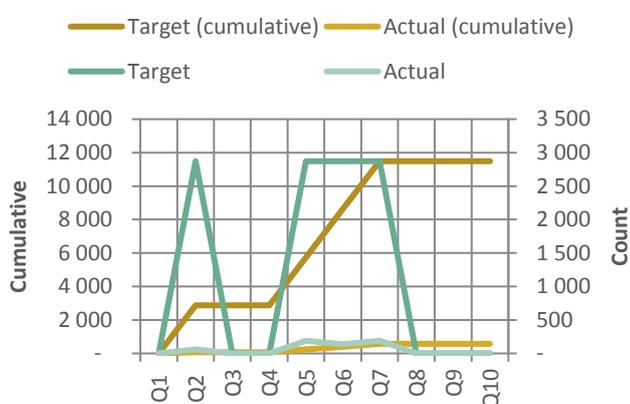
The Figures that follow plot the target numbers against the actual numbers for the number of OVC tested for HIV and referred for HIV testing under the NACCW programme activities. Both count per quarter and cumulative counts across quarters have been included in the Figures (the left vertical axis provides the cumulative figures while the right vertical axis provides the count per quarter where relevant). While testing was slow to be implemented in the initial stages of the grant, NACCW surpassed their targets on this indicator by the end of Quarter 10 testing a total of 20 582 children (see Figure 2).

In addition, a further 574 children were referred for HIV tests at a clinic or alternative service provider.

Number of OVC Tested for HIV and Received the Result



Number of OVC Referred for an HIV Test and Know Result



While the above figures represent NACCW’s and their implementing partners’ activities on a national level under the Phase II Grant OVC Programme, the remainder of this case study focuses on two specific Isibindi sites that were implemented under the grant, Libode and Lwandile.

LIBODE AND LWANDILE ISIBINDI SITES

The two Isibindi sites (Libode and Lwandile) were established with funding from the Global Fund Phase II Grant in 2014. The Libode and Lwandile Isibindi sites are both situated in the local municipal area of Nyandeni¹, one of the smallest municipalities in the Eastern Cape Province, with a population of 290 390 people. Low-density rural, traditional or village-type settlements are scattered throughout the municipal area. There is little in the way of economic activity within the area. It is also one of the poorest municipalities in

the Eastern Cape where the unemployment rate of close to 45% and 77% of residents have access to either no income or incomes of less than R800 per month.

Many of the families in the region relied on financial support from men who work as migrant labourers in local mines. The recent tragedy at Marikana and subsequent retrenchment of 5 000 miners from Lonmin mines has impacted severely on the families in the area

“...also they [the men] were providing labour to mines and they come back as sick people so they’ve got parents who are sick, they’ve got parents who are unemployed now with labour retrenching.” “...mainly source of income for all of this is government grants.” – Director, Catholic D C; implementing partner

HIV prevalence among pregnant women was between 50% and 60% in 2009, and close to 58% of households are female-headed. The Director of the implementing partner for the two sites described the area as “forgotten communities”. He also explained that drug abuse and rape was high, mostly as a result of so little to occupy the youth in the area. The Isibindi mentor mentioned that high school dropout is prevalent in the area largely due to the inaccessibility of high schools.

“...[they] dropout at an early age because the schools are far – more especially high schools they are far and then the young people used to travel, walk long distances. Sometimes cross the rivers sometimes cross the dangerous forests with the snakes.”

Libode and Lwandile communities were chosen as Isibindi sites at the request of the National Minister of Social Development due to the high incidence of child abuse cases and also because these communities had been greatly affected by the Marikina tragedy. At about the same time, members of the communities had approached NACCW to provide assistance to the large number of vulnerable children in their communities. Through the Minister’s influence, a series of meetings were held with NACCW, National,

¹<http://www.localgovernment.co.za/locals/view/37/nyandeni-local-municipality>

Provincial and District Departments of Social Development, and other key stakeholders to consider implementing Isibindi projects in these areas.

Libode and Lwandile Isibindi sites are fully funded by Global Fund and the focus of this case study.



The Lwandile community

ISIBINDI ACTIVITIES IN LEBODE AND LWANDILE

Contracting an Implementing Partner

Given the need to facilitate speedy results within the 2½ years allocated for the setting up and implementation of Isibindi in the two sites, NACCW sought the services of an implementing partner – Catholic Development Centre (CDC) – which is headquartered in Mthatha. The CDC is a non-profit organisation that, through various programmes, works to restore “human dignity, social and economic justice in disadvantaged rural and urban communities”. They achieve this goal through initiatives such as youth empowerment and support groups; and food security and environmental awareness programmes.



Trained Child and Youth Care Workers - Lwandile

CYCW training

In order to service the two Isibindi sites, 50 CYCW commenced the accredited training during 2014 and 2015. Of these, 39 completed the full training and the others completed some, but not all of the required training modules. Ultimately there were twenty-one CYCW per site, amongst whom were a Safe Park co-ordinator, a Project Manager, two team leaders, and disability co-ordinators. A detailed description of the CYCW training is provided elsewhere in a case study describing the training. In summary, the FETC: CYC qualification comprises 14 Core Unit standards, all the relevant unit standards for Literacy and Numeracy and one elective unit standard. The NACCW delivers these unit standards in 16 modules, each trained over a week at a time. CYCW from the local area were selected for training because they had intimate knowledge of the families within the communities and were able to communicate in the local language.



Trained Child and Youth Care Workers - Libode

ISIBINDI TRAINEES AND COMPETENCY STATUS

Sites	Trainees	Found Competent as at end March 2016				
		Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Literacy	Numeracy
Lwandile	25	22	22	22	22	22
Libode	25	16	15	15	17	17
Total	50	38	37	37	39	39

Engaging with Gatekeepers

An initial stage of community awareness was undertaken through a series of meetings that included National Government, Provincial and district stakeholders, and community members. During these meetings, the Isibindi model was explained and the need for designated land for the Safe Parks was introduced. In 2014, the Chiefs of the Libode and Lwandile communities provided large areas of traditional land for the establishment of the two Safe Parks.

Isibindi Activities in the Life-spaces of Children and Families

With supervision and support from the Project Manager, a mentor and mentor supervisor, CYCWs began to conduct more focused awareness-raising among community members. Once families in need were identified, CYCWs assisted with relevant services and activities to support vulnerable families. These ranged from home visits in the early mornings to assist with preparing children for school; afternoon visits to assist children with homework and household chores; encouraging school attendance; ensuring adherence to medication where necessary; assisting any ailing family members; aiding with household budgeting; and liaising with children's schools to ensure that they are progressing well.

"We wake up every morning to ensure the children are prepared and go to school. To make sure they are clean and neat and eat food before they go to school. We assist the families, for example those that are on treatment we assist them to adhere to that treatment. We do school visits to check their school performance. After school, we go back to the family to help them with their chores and their homework. We are trying to develop them holistically." – Project Manager

CYCWs promoted the idea of children's rights and were instrumental in supporting families through the reporting processes for abuse, sexual abuse and harassment; ensuring the accountability of absent/ignorant fathers; and gaining greater visibility and acceptance of children with disabilities. Where family members had died, they helped the families and children to create memory boxes. They assisted families with the procurement of the necessary documentation, for example, birth certificates and identity documents, so that they could successfully apply for Government grants to which they were entitled. They promoted awareness around HIV and AIDS, and encouraged caregivers and children to access HCT at nearby clinics.

"...the child and youth care worker are trained to understand about test counselling and post-test counselling and then ... before the families

go to the clinic they prepare them to understand what will happen ... and also after they come back they also talk again about to change their lifestyle, what supposed to do if the child is HIV positive or negative but they educate them to understand" - CYCW Mentor

When the CYCWs identify particularly vulnerable children and youth, for example, youth abusing drugs or having dropped out of school, they encourage them to attend discussion groups held at the Safe Parks and the specialised Young Men's and Women's Empowerment Groups. Sexually abused children and children displaying inappropriate sexual behaviour are referred to the Isibindi residential therapeutic programme, usually conducted in nearby King William's Town.

Young Men's and Young Women's Empowerment Groups

These groups are held in camp-like settings, outside of the Safe Park environment. The Young Men's Empowerment Programme teaches young men "...about manhood, how to behave as men, initiation schools... the dangers of going there at an early stage, gender-based violence and all such things" (Isibindi Provincial Co-ordinator). It included activities to address concerns around smoking, drug and substance abuse, and involvement in criminal activities such as housebreaking and theft. The Young Women's Empowerment sessions were conceived in response to the needs of young women who are heading households or living in granny-headed households were held at both Safe Parks. CYCWs facilitated individual sessions and group sessions with the young women, involving on average 10 young women. "...but afterwards ... They are encouraged to come back and have some... groups at the safe park to teach others about what they have learnt there [at the camp]. [The camp] is for the children who we are servicing for the site" (Isibindi Provincial Co-ordinator).

Safe Parks infrastructure and Activities

The Safe Parks are fenced areas that contain playground equipment such as slides, swings, and jungle gyms. They also have a metal container and a smaller, wendy house-type structure, food gardens, and rudimentary football fields. It is in

these relatively safe spaces that children are invited and encouraged to play using the playground equipment and fields; attend discussion groups on issues that are important to them – sometimes facilitated by an invited speaker; and attend homework and study supervision offered by the CYCWs.



Isibindi Safe Park in Libode

The CYCWs also participate in reading, story-telling, and run early childhood development (ECD) programmes for younger children. ECD activities include purposeful stimulation of children aged 0 – 6 using available toys and equipment. The Nal’ibali reading programme was introduced in 2016 and reached 26 children under 6 years in Lwandile and 29 in Libode in 2016. CYCWs do different activities in the Nal’ibali programme such as reading out loud to the children and observing their listening skills by asking questions from the stories they have read. This has improved children’s love for reading.

Some young people received training in food gardening and established food gardens at the parks. They take care of these food gardens and monitor them on a daily basis. The main challenge is the absence of access to an on-site water supply and fencing to keep out the local goats.

“In Libode, 3 unemployed youth received training in catering services and they now cook meals for young people at the Safe Park when they are preparing for mid-year and final exams and during Youth Forum activities. They receive a small stipend for this work.” – Libode mentor report

Children often disclose abuse during interaction with CYCWs at these times. The CYCWs made use of a persona doll to encourage disclosure of abuse – a strategy they had been trained and used successfully previously. The smaller wendy house structures were used for more intimate disclosure and privacy.

“She has a doll... it has a name and then she talks to it perhaps about child abuse, sexual abuse. And children will identify with that doll and also tell their stories, disclose their abuse.”

– Isibindi Provincial Co-ordinator

While the community at large is not encouraged to use the Parks, the sites are used by Isibindi staff to conduct training, discussions and debriefing for CYCWs – often with their mentors; bring caregivers together to discuss relevant issues, for example “gogo groups”; and psychologists use the wendy house to conduct therapy with children accompanied by their CYCWs. Special events are also held at the parks, for example where district and Provincial DSD, members of the police force, and people involved in child protection come together with the community. Besides Safe Park co-ordinators, there are also Safe Park Committees. These Committees were established in both Safe Parks to ensure the active participation of children in the Safe Parks. Libode has 16 members and Lwandile has 17 members. The Committees meet at least once per quarter to discuss the overall management and maintenance of the parks. Committee members also discuss issues of advocacy, children’s rights and safety and security in the parks.



Play equipment at the Isibindi Safe Park, Lwandile

CHILDREN SERVED IN LIBODE & LWANDILE

Project	Age Group	2014	2015	2016	2014 - 2016
Libode	0 - 6	22	60	29	81
	7 - 13	103	153	89	234
	14 - 17	37	43	31	77
	18-24	2	23	2	24
Libode Total		164	279	151	416
Lwandile	0 - 6	56	47	20	77
	7 - 13	201	108	39	244
	14 - 17	93	46	16	109
	18-24	35	32	11	47
Lwandile Total		385	233	86	477
RAND TOTAL		549	512	237²	893

Access to the fenced Safe Parks from villages far away was very limited, yet the need for access for vulnerable children and youth was as important as it was for those who lived nearby. The Director of the Implementing Partner told of how they had established informal Safe Parks to meet this need. Informal Safe Parks were not fenced and had no infrastructure. They were set up on an ad hoc basis, merely demarking an area where specific activities could be done. He mentioned that "... I've got one formal safe park in Libode and about 6 informal safe parks. The same thing with Lwandile I've got one formal safe park and 6 to 8 informal safe parks".

None of these activities were without challenges in initiation and implementation. The challenges set out below are drawn from the transcripts and notes and reflect the most frequently mentioned challenges by the case study participants.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED

Distrust and rejection

The Libode and Lwandile sites are situated in rural communities where deeply entrenched traditional customs and ways of life are the norm. Traditionally children are expected to participate in household chores. Encouraging children to attend the parks after school when they would normally have had to attend to numerous household chores did not sit well with some of the household heads/caregivers. With opinions steeped in the strong belief in witchcraft and reliance on traditional

medicine, many family members were reluctant to accept, for example, that illness and HIV were amenable to medical intervention. Issues such as sexual abuse and illegitimate pregnancy were seen to be matters to be dealt with between the respective families and not the concern of outsiders. Death of a caregiver or other significant family member was often concealed from their children and not spoken about in their presence. Illegitimate children were not told about their fathers and in some cases the father was kept ignorant of his fatherhood and his child. Children with disabilities were hidden from public view and often keep indoors. Women and young people are not expected to hold any position of authority or have any significant say in how family life was conducted.



Safe Park facilities, Libode

All the interview and focus group discussants expressed dealing with these traditional customs and ways of living as a major challenge to them when accessing families and trying to get them to understand the Isibindi model, and accept assistance. For example, one CYCW explained how the issue of sexual abuse had traditionally been resolved between the families involved and never reported to the police and/or social workers "... but now the child care workers intervened and ... 'you are Isibindi child and youth care workers you take our things to those stakeholders' and they don't like that. And some of the families now, they don't want to work with the Isibindi" (Mentor). The female Project Manager explained: "A project manager has to be a male and someone who's old because they say that I don't have experiences of things that's going around so how am I going to talk with to them as the stakeholders so...I had that

² Data Note: For 2016, data for Libode and Lwandile excludes March data as data is captured 1 month retroactively, and so a decrease is seen in the fewer number of months reflected for 2016.

problem with the stakeholders”. One of the CYCWs also complained about the drug and alcohol using youth who were resistant to being drawn into Isibindi activities.

The CYCWs spoke at length about having to engage families continually, while showing respect for their customary ways before they could begin to work constructively with the children and families.

Location of the parks and infrastructure

Another challenge mentioned by those involved in the Lidobe site is that the Libode Safe Park was situated some distance from villages nearby, which created problems with accessing the park and was responsible for declines in attendance. It was felt that the distance for children to access the formal Safe Park was too great and also dangerous. This distance to the park also made it particularly difficult for children with disabilities to access the activities there. The Libode CYCWs also spoke about having to use a large portion of their small monthly stipend for transport to the Park on a daily basis.

“They say that no your safe park is far away and our children are not safe when they are going there alone because they are crossing the small rivers and there are a lot of trees we can’t even see them when they are getting trouble and they even mentioned that” – Programme Manager

The parks also did not have electricity or water and depended on the local community and nearby homes for assistance with water. The lack of electricity prevented the use of computers, which the CYCWs would have welcomed for record keeping. The Libode Project Manager spoke about how they were not able to give thirsty children water and how the closest water source was difficult to access.

A gap in the fence at the Libode Safe Park enabled livestock to enter the park and destroy the vegetable garden. The fence has not been repaired as NACCW is negotiating with the local traditional leaders to access a new piece of land for the relocation of the Safe Park. Rainy weather at Lwandile makes it difficult for the CYCWs to conduct outdoor activities at the Safe Park for

extended periods during the rainy season. The containers at the Safe Park do not provide sufficient space for the large numbers of children to be accommodated inside.

Despite these challenges, the interviewees and discussants spoke at length about the successes achieved in the two sites.

SUCSESSES

Gaining trust and acceptance

Working to change deeply entrenched traditions and customs requires a great deal of patience and handling with respect for the “old” ways. The interviewees and discussants all spoke at length and recounted incidents where, after initial distrust, members of the community began to understand the work they were doing with vulnerable families and children, and appreciate their efforts. Over time members of the community began to call on CYCW to assist them.

“The man said we wanted to embarrass their family and talk about their stuff....He was very upset and swore at me... I talked to them [the family] and explained that it was not to disrespect them but to help them. Because of this, they were the ones that talked on our behalf at the meeting.” – Provincial Co-ordinator

As rewarding as this gradual acceptance was, The Project Manager spoke about how, at times, it was difficult for the CYCWs to agree to help the increasing numbers of people asking for support. Having to prioritise families they were currently supporting and “ignore” others with similar need was challenging for them.



Homesteads in Lwandile

Educating the communities about parenting and children's rights

Interaction with the families and children in their communities allowed the CYCWs to impart knowledge about the changing environment of child development and children's rights. The opportunity to engage with parents about positive parenting skills and respecting the rights of children was a key feature of CYCWs work in the communities. A case in point was the work with one family where the child was not told about his biological father, and the father had no knowledge of the child's existence. After clarifying the right of the child to know his father, the father willingly provided very necessary material support to the child and his mother.

"...the child and youth care worker came and talk about the father of the child because the child and youth care worker educate the family about the children's right. 'Yes I understand I respect your culture I respect you but the child need to know about the biological father of the child'. And then thereafter ... the family understand that the child have a right ... Ja the father of the child support the child now every month. The school uniforms, whatever, the money for food." – Mentor

Greater access to Government grants

In quite a few instances, CYCWs found that parents and children did not have birth certificates and/or identity documents. Without these necessary documents families could not access the relevant Government grants, such as the child support grant, the foster care grant, the disability grant, and old age pension. A great deal of effort went into helping a number of families to procure the necessary documents and grants, which eased their dire economic situations.

"When I started in 2014 there were 3 children that did not have birth certificates. We don't their fathers whereabouts and the mother is in prison. The children did not have anything. I went with that family to home affairs and to the court in East London to get the ID document for the mother. These children now have birth certificates and get a child support grant. ... The grandmother and grandfather look after the

children now, who are aged 13 years, 10 years and 2 years. We advocated for these children to be able to benefit from the foster care grant." – CYCW and Programme Manager, Lwandile

"... he told me he was dropping out of school because he didn't have a school uniform. Other children were laughing at him because he had dirty and torn clothes and didn't have anything to wear at school....The child was registered for a birth certificate and also the child support grant and now we are on the process of changing the child support grant into a foster care grant. The child is schooling now and wearing a uniform just like any other child" – CYCW Lebode



The wendy house at Isibindi Libode

Disclosure and reporting of abuse and sexual harassment

The CYCWs spoke about how incidents of child abuse, sexual harassment and rape were being disclosed where they had previously been ignored or inappropriately resolved between families. Through their work and interaction with children and youth, incidents of abuse were being disclosed and appropriately handled. Through their work and interaction with parents and caregivers, and senior community members, the right of children to protection and freedom from harm were beginning to be accepted. As a result children who had been abused as well as children who had exhibited inappropriate sexual behaviour (the child and youth perpetrators) had access to support and

therapeutic interventions. The Director of the Implementing Partner summed up this neglected need for children and youth when he said: “When they had lost hope of ever telling their story they are now telling their story”. A number of discussants mentioned how the community chiefs – even those who had previously been “very difficult” and suspicious - were now approaching Isibindi staff to report cases of abuse.

“Then the chief said ‘can you please do follow up to report the [rape] case urgently. That is a big change because that chief was very difficult.” – Mentor

The interviewees and discussants felt that disclosure of abuse, the increased reporting and access to therapeutic interventions for victims and child/youth perpetrators was a major achievement for Isibindi.

Increased knowledge about HIV and AIDS and increases in HIV testing

Dispelling the myth that HIV and AIDS-related death was caused by witchcraft was another achievement mentioned by the Isibindi workers. They spoke about encouraging families (parents/caregivers and children) to go to the nearest clinic for HCT and how there was an increase in HCT uptake as a result. They also spoke about assisting those taking anti-retroviral medication with adherence. In an area where HIV prevalence is one of the highest in the country, this is a significant achievement.

The total number of children reached for HCT services in Eastern Cape for 2013 – 2016 is 4560. Isibindi Lwandile and Isibindi Libode, together contribute 886 (19.4%) towards this Provincial reach.

Better school attendance

Many of the interviewees and discussants spoke about their role in encouraging children to attend school. Through their help with study groups and homework supervision, and interacting with children’s schools, they felt that there was better school attendance among children and youth in the communities. They found it extremely rewarding to see children progressing well at school, completing high school, and in some cases going on to further education facilities. The Deputy Director of NACCW spoke with pride about the significant increase in

the number of matriculants in the areas, which she attributed to the assistance that Isibindi staff had offered children.

“In my community there were a lot of young children who had dropped out of school. Now we have the biggest number of children who have applied to tertiary institutions for education because of our work” – CYCW, Libode

ISIBINDI GRADE 12 SUPPORT PROGRAMME 2015

- A total of 2 802 Isibindi matriculants wrote the final exams in 2015 with 334 matriculants from the Eastern Cape – Isibindi Lwandile (22) Isibindi Libode (22). Of these 44 matriculants:
- 25 passed – with 19 registering at different Universities and FET Colleges;
- 19 did not pass and will be repeat their Grade 12 in 2016
- 10 will be searching for employment.

Fostering empowerment and creating leadership skills among youth

The positive impact of the youth empowerment camps, the youth forums, and the youth-focussed activities and discussions at the Safe Parks was mentioned repeatedly. Positive behaviour change among attendees of the camps was highlighted a number of times. Youth who “were drinking and smoking dagga and behaving badly” were referred to the youth camps and “When they come back, we see changes in their behaviour”. On returning from the camps, youth are motivated to promote awareness among peers who had not attended the camps. The youth are supported to “do sessions in the formal and informal safe parks or at school or during ADP classes ... wherever they gather together ... they use it as a platform for discussion with other children the dangers of behaving like this and why they have to change” (Programme Manager). Many of the interviewees and discussants attribute the declines in drug and alcohol use and other unacceptable behaviour to these peer-led activities, and to increased school attendance.

“Yes he agreed to go to the young man programme, then he came back he never touches alcohol again he never touches dagga again until now.” – CYCW, Libode

“Last year this child go to the program of...young men empowerment. Now at the school he was the prefect.” – CYCW, Libode

“And then we use those guys to facilitate the program to teach their peers and then they are able to go to the schools, to the communities to recruit other young people. To invite to the safe park and then at least we reduce the high number of young people staying in the street using drugs at the same time.” – Mentor

The positive impact of the youth empowerment camps, the youth forums, and the youth-focused activities and discussions at the Safe Parks was mentioned repeatedly. Positive behaviour change among attendees of the camps was highlighted a number of times. Youth who “were drinking and smoking dagga and behaving badly” were referred to the youth camps and “When they come back, we see changes in their behaviour”. On returning from the camps, youth are motivated to promote awareness among peers who had not attended the camps. The youth are supported to “do sessions in the formal and informal safe parks or at school or during ADP classes ... wherever they gather together ... they use it as a platform for discussion with other children the dangers of behaving like this and why they have to change” (Programme Manager). Many of the interviewees and discussants attribute the declines in drug and alcohol use and other unacceptable behaviour to these peer-led activities, and to increased school attendance.

Improvements for children with disabilities, and orphaned children

Having a designated disability co-ordinator, who is also a CYCW has led to children with disabilities being treated as any other child, rather than being isolated and neglected by their families. He spoke about identifying these children and providing them with medical and social support – taking them to the clinics or hospitals and assisting their families with access to the disability grant.

The positive effect of Isibindi for orphaned children was mentioned by the Programme Manager. She spoke about the exclusion and isolation of orphaned children from the community of children. By being part of the Safe Park activities

with other children and receiving support from the CYCWs, orphaned children were given the opportunity to feel included and belonging to the wider community of children.

Employment and improved quality of life for local CYCW

The Isibindi staff all spoke about the personal benefits they gained from the projects. The most important, to them, was the skills they had acquired during training and then were able to employ successfully in their work in the communities. In particular, communications skills were mentioned as enabling them to interact with community members (from senior members to families and children of all ages and developmental stages) in a way that won them over to the work they were doing. They were extremely proud of their professional standing and CYCW qualification, and the expertise they gained in working with children. The training and experience also provided the motivation and opportunities for them to further their qualifications, for example, re-enrolling in school, obtaining drivers’ licences, and registering at tertiary education facilities.

The stipend they were paid had a major impact for many of them in that they became the sole breadwinners in their families, were able to reunite their families, and in some instances, build their own homes. Bearing in mind that the CYCWs were drawn from the local communities, these employment opportunities have a positive impact not only on the individuals and their families, but the communities as a whole.

“Isibindi is a programme that takes us from the dustbin...now we have hope just because of the Isibindi programme, so we feel very proud of it.” – CYCW Lwandile

In concluding the interviews and discussions, we asked the interviewees and discussants to speculate on their and their communities’ futures and to suggest ways in which the Isibindi programme in their communities could be improved.

CONTEMPLATING THE FUTURE

The greatest fear expressed by the interviewees and discussants should the Isibindi programme

discontinue was around dissipation of the positive gains achieved to date. Having tirelessly worked to gain the trust and acceptance from the communities, they worried that things would revert to how they were before Isibindi came to their communities. Many of the CYCWs developed strong emotional ties with the children and families and are hoping that they can continue these relationships.

“If the CYCW are not working with them [the children and families] anymore.... I am worried that the families will lose hope and stop everything, stop budgeting, stop saving money, stop following the hygiene.” – CYCW , Libode

Because many of the Isibindi staff had come to rely on their stipends to support themselves and their families, they are very anxious about the impact that loss of earnings would have for them. They were unanimous in their hope that the Libode and Lwandile Isibindi sites will continue, and that the Safe Parks facilities could be extended to other villages in the area.

CONCLUSION

Despite the many challenges faced by the Isibindi staff, there is little doubt that great strides have been made towards upliftment of entire communities in a very short space of time. When asked to suggest the major successes of the Isibindi Libode and Lwandile sites, the Deputy Director of NACCW succinctly listed:

- Animation of a community that was previously steeped in out-dated ways of raising children
- Educating a community about children’s rights and creating a rights-friendly environment
- Providing respected qualifications and creating employment for local young people
- Creating spaces for children to behave like children
- Providing essential psychosocial services for children and families, particularly abused children
- Providing leadership skills to youth and giving them a voice.

She concluded by explaining the extensive efforts that she and others at NACCW are engaged in to

ensure that the Isibindi sites, including the Safe Parks, is funded in the future through the Provincial DSD. There is a great deal of hope that because of the interest shown by the National department in the Isibindi model and the Libode and Lwandile sites, that the Province will be assisted by them to include the initiatives in their budget. With the commitment of and extensive evidence-based advocacy done by senior staff at NACCW and the dedication of those employed in the Libode and Lwandile sites, there is a good chance that they will continue, if not grow in the future in these very needy communities.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Gaining the trust and acceptance of local families, communities, traditional authorities and stakeholders is vital for the successful implementation of any intervention with children and families.
- Working within the life-space of children, i.e. in their homes, and/or in the Safe Parks environments placed CYCW in the ideal position to render more than just physical and emotional support for vulnerable children and families.
- Safe Parks need to be easily accessible to children and families.
- Because local people have valuable, personal knowledge of the situation and families in their communities, they are well-placed to render Isibindi-related services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Safe Parks provide a unique environment for interaction with children outside of their homes. For this reason Safe Parks should be easily accessible to children. More Safe Parks should be established in communities that cannot or have difficulty accessing the current ones. A temporary solution might be to continue with the establishment of informal safe parks. However, informal safe parks do not have adequate infrastructure for the necessary privacy during counselling and/or disclosure of abuse. It is vital that trust and acceptance is gained from the local, traditional authorities, communities and families prior to the establishment of further Safe Parks

with accompanying child and youth-specific activities. Future plans to establish Safe Parks must include a period of time beforehand to establish this community acceptance.

This case study was compiled by Creative Consulting and Development Works (developmentworks.co.za) for NACOSA and NRASD, monitored by the Department for Social Development.



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