

**REPORT**

**TAKING CHARGE!**

*Empowering GBV survivors through life and applied entrepreneurship*

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**Country:** Mauritius  
**District:** Beau Bassin – Rose Hill  
**Date:** Monday 18 August 2014 to Friday 22 August 2014  
**Venue:** Conference Room Edouard Northon – Municipality of Beau Bassin – Rose Hill  
**Facilitator:** Sabrina Puddoo



***Fig1: Participants of the Entrepreneurship Training  
District Council Beau Bassin – Rose Hill***

## **TABLE**

- I. Mauritian situation
- II. Background
- III. Objectives
- IV. Key component of the training – Phase One
- V. The participants
- VI. The venue
- VII. The workshop
- VIII. Methodology
- IX. Training process
- X. Conclusion and recommendations

## **Annexes**

- A. Participant's list
- B. Evaluation

## I. MAURITIAN SITUATION

The Republic of Mauritius is an island nation in the Indian Ocean about 2,000 km off the southeast coast of the African continent. The country includes the island of Mauritius, Rodrigues, the islands of Agalega and the archipelago of Saint Brandon. The area of the country is 2040 km<sup>2</sup> for a population of 1.2 million.

At the economic level, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in the development of the Mauritian. According to the recent census of economic activities (CEA) 2013, published by Statistic Mauritius (official statistic organization in the country), the number of small enterprises is estimated at around 122,600 in Mauritius and 2900 in Rodrigues. The total number of persons engaged in those enterprises is estimated at 283,000. Mauritius counts a hundred co-operative societies including those by women who are engaged in diversified activities such as handicrafts, interior decoration, savings and credit, jewelry, apiculture (beekeeping), catering services, textile, agriculture and food. Furthermore, statistics show that, from 2005 to 2011, the number of women entrepreneurs registered at the National Women Entrepreneurship Council has gone up by 80 %, from 1,900 to 3,500; and at June 2014, the total number of registered members was 4,957.

Nevertheless, many enterprises that are set up with lots of enthusiasm, finally cannot survive, as they are not able to manage their capital. To help them, several institutions, especially the Small and Medium Development Authority (SMEDA), offer to new entrepreneur business facilitation, counselling and training. But those trainings are not designed and fully appropriated to vulnerable women, especially women victim of gender-based violence (GBV).

In this context, the entrepreneurship-training program for women victim of GBV elaborated by Gender Links is a considerable value for their economic empowerment. The integrative approach contributes to start a healing process through the identification and the expression of the abuses and the group dynamic, to encourage the identification of strengths, values and talents among the participants and to help them to reduce and progressively arrest dependence syndrome on their violent partners.



## II. BACKGROUND

Gender Links (GL) is a Southern African NGO founded in March 2001 with offices in Johannesburg, Mauritius (Francophone base), Mozambique (Lusophone base) and Botswana (Headquarters of the Southern African Development Community) as well as six other countries (Lesotho, Madagascar, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe) with South Africa also a location of all GL programs. GL has four program areas: the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development; media; governance and justice.

GL is working with 100 councils in ten SADC countries to mainstream gender in local government based on the 28 targets of the SADC Gender Protocol. Local economic development is an integral of the gender action plan that each council or Centre of Excellence (COE) adopts as part of the gender mainstreaming initiative.

The training contributes to the targets the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. It specifically addresses the following targets:

- Adopt integrated approaches, including institutional cross sector structures, with the aim of reducing current levels of gender-based violence by half by 2015.
- Introduce measures to ensure that women benefit equally from economic opportunities, including those created through public procurement processes.

In addition, over the last 12 years GL worked with GBV survivors to document their personal testimonies or "I" stories.

Gender Based Violence included: emotional violence, physical violence, sexual abuse, financial abuse from a partner, husband, children, parents, in-laws, pimp, etc.

The project entitled Healing through writing provided insights into some of the drivers of GBV particularly of intimate partner violence. Many women write about economic dependence both as a cause for violence and as a reason for returning to abusive relationships.

GL will train GBV survivors on entrepreneurship in the 100 councils in ten countries and link them to local economic development. Through the entrepreneurship training GL will test the hypothesis that economic empowerment will increase women's agency and self-realization thereby increasing their ability to negotiate safe relationships or to leave abusive relationships.

The training will focus on a combination of:

- Life skills including confidence building; writing; public speaking; decision-making.
- Business skills such as IT; developing business plans and applying for tenders.
- Networking such as developing joint proposals; working as collective to access tenders from local government.

Participants will write their personal accounts or "I" stories at the inception and conclusion of the project as one way of documenting the changes in their lives through the training and related activities.



### III. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the training is as follows:

- To increase women's agency and independence empowering them to participate fully in all aspects of their personal and public lives.
- To explore and document the link between economic empowerment and GBV.
- To link women in the communities with local economic opportunities in the COE councils in ten Southern African countries.
- Create agency and improve GBV survivor's economic status.

### IV. KEY COMPONENT OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM – PHASE ONE

The training program is designed on five days to facilitate a continuous process of understanding of the present situation of survivors of GBV (psychological, social and financial) to their possibility of being financially independent through the integration of basic business knowledge.

<b>PHASE ONE: GROWING AGENCY AND BUSINESS BASICS (FIVE DAYS)</b>
<p><b>Day one: Key gender and GBV concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the concepts of sex and gender, and sex and gender roles.</li> <li>• Understand the different forms of GBV.</li> <li>• Understanding the impact of GBV and the link with gender equality.</li> <li>• Exploring the link between GBV and economic development</li> </ul>
<p><b>Day two: Growing agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List methods for building positive self-image</li> <li>• Explain ways that self-concepts are destroyed and constructed</li> <li>• Understand personal values</li> <li>• Identify and evaluate personal strengths</li> </ul>
<p><b>Day three: Business basics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand different types of businesses and how they work.</li> <li>• Be familiar with basic business concepts and apply these in the local business context.</li> <li>• Recognize personal strengths and weaknesses as an entrepreneur.</li> <li>• Identify business ideas and apply the use of IT in business operations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Day four: Markets and money</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand market research</li> <li>• Recognize the importance of business planning</li> <li>• Understand business planning basics</li> <li>• Recognize important aspects of costing for a small business</li> </ul>
<p><b>Day five: Basics of business planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the importance of business planning.</li> <li>• Understand business-planning basics.</li> <li>• Be able to do market research and gather data to develop a business in phase two.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Day four and five: IT for entrepreneurship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer basics</li> <li>• Microsoft Word</li> <li>• Microsoft Excel</li> <li>• Internet and email</li> </ul>

## **V. PARTICIPANTS**

Sixteen women survivors of GBV, aged thirty-one to sixty-seven, have been recruited from the District Council of Beau Bassin – Rose Hill and NGO in the locality to participate in the training.

Ten participants were not fully literate but received the support of the GL team present and the other participants.

One participant dropped out during the training after the first day due the death of her husband.

## **VI. VENUE**

The Municipality of Beau Bassin – Rose Hill provided the Edouard Northon Conference Room to deliver the course, including all facilities for the lunch.

## **VII. THE WORKSHOP**

The workshop started on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August with the participation of sixteen ladies and ended on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August with fifteen participants as one of them dropout due to the death of her husband. All the participants are GBV survivors undergoing mainly physical/psychological violence.

Through the workshop participants engaged with all the materials and were encouraged to stop the facilitator if they had questions, queries or needed further information and help.

Prior to the start of the workshop, the group was reassured of the conditions of the training based on confidentiality, respect and non-judgment. All participants were encouraged to feel free to express their opinions and to share their life experiences. Due the sensitivity of the topics (violence, rejection, etc.), a few participants chose to express their feelings and emotions in a secure space created by the group, with the support of the facilitator.

Sabrina Puddoo, clinical psychologist and facilitator introduced herself and talked about the project and the objectives. Participants were then asked to introduce themselves: name, age and reasons that encouraged them to participate in the training. Among the various reasons; a strong desire to get out of their isolation, to learn, to open their mind and meet new people sharing the same reality were expressed.

## VIII. METHODOLOGY

### 1. Participant materials



- Each participant had a bag with their manual Phase 1 and their IT manual, (a file with punched documents) a pen, a writing pad and a name tag
- Colouring pencil were also used

*Fig.2: Participant material*

### 2. Facilitating methodologies

Five Power Point presentations were designed according to the five modules delivered for Phase One. The presentations were in French and creole, and based on the content of the manual. The emphasis has been on the simplification of the language, pictures representing the different concepts learnt instead of writing, in order to stimulate the creativity and the visual memory of the participants and to improve the assimilation of the concepts.

Group discussions, individual and group works were used to facilitate the understanding and the participation of the ladies.

## IX. TRAINING PROCESS

### 1. Day one: Key gender and GBV concepts

- **Objectives of the day**

1. Understand the concepts of sex and gender, and sex and gender roles.
2. Understand the different forms of GBV.
3. Understanding the impact of GBV and the link with gender equality.
4. Exploring the link between GBV and economic development

- **Facilitator's observations**

The group dynamic was very good as the majority of the ladies knew each other from previous activities. The exercise 'Defining Gender and Sex' was very lively as the participants were very comfortable with the pictures, they appreciated the exercise; participants contributed actively and were very engaged in the learning process.

They quickly understood the difference between sex and gender, the concept of gender roles and were able to provide multiple examples to explain them.

They became aware of their valuable contribution to their family and the society through the concept of reproductive work.

The story of Mary was translated in creole and red to the participants who were very interested, as they were able to relate to it through their own experiences. They identified all the different forms of GBV and share their own stories to illustrate them.

## 2. Day two: Growing agency

- **Objectives of the day**

1. Understand the concept of self-concept, self-esteem and self-ideal
2. Explain ways that self-concepts are destroyed and constructed
3. Understand their impact on their life

- **Facilitator's observations**

This session introduced the concepts of self-being and was very effective in terms of insight development.

In the first exercise, the participants were divided in three groups, for each one a participant volunteered to present the group work in the plenary session. For the majority of the survivors, it was the very first time that they were allowed and encouraged to think about themselves as valuable human beings. They easily connected with their basic needs of self-recognition through the images used in the power presentation to illustrate the concepts.

### *Activity one – self-concept, self-esteem and self-ideal*



**Fig.3: Group Work**



**Fig.4: Presentation**

The tree of life exercise was very crucial in terms of representation of their life. It was a very emotional moment for all women present.

Pictures of their trees were taken and projected on a screen in real-time, which helped the participants to present their work to the group in a professional manner, standing up in front of the audience.





**Fig.5: Activity two - Tree of Life**

**Fig.6: Tree of Life Presentation**

However, two participants showed clear symptoms of major depression needing a psychiatric treatment. They were referred to appropriate psychiatrists and NGO. It seems crucial that they took care of their mental state at first place to be able to follow the training. Furthermore, one of the lady lived at her mother's place with her daughter but it is a temporary residence which means that there is an emergency for her to find a residential place.

Three participants needed a legal assistance.

Even if this presentation exercise was difficult, all the survivors were able to face the group, to talk openly and overcome their fears. One of the ladies disclosed for the very first time that she was sexually abused by a member of her family and that she lived with this secret since nearly twenty years. The facilitator reminded all participants that the information disclosed in the training are strictly confidential.

### **3. Day three: Business basics**

- **Objectives of the day**

1. Understand different types of businesses and how they work.
2. Be familiar with basic business concepts and apply these in the local business context.
3. Recognize personal strengths and weaknesses as an entrepreneur.
4. Identify business ideas and apply the use of IT in business operations

- **Facilitator's observations**

The introduction of new business concepts, which were very unfamiliar to the participants, was a real challenge. Through the exercises in small groups and role-play, they were able to understand gradually the meaning of the terms used and the importance of getting familiar with them in order to design their future business plans.



**Fig.7: Role Play**

They were able to identify the qualities of an entrepreneur and to give examples of success stories they knew in their localities.

In the social entrepreneurship exercise, participants were divided in two groups with a reporter in each one. It was quite easy for them to identify social issues in their communities, especially lack of leisure activities for women, pollution and security due to drug trafficking but they found it very difficult to propose potential businesses to address

those problems as they never thought of solving them through an enterprise, they are used to rely on the district council or existent local NGO to initiate actions. The facilitator helped the participants to understand the opportunities laying under those issues by sharing community projects and businesses implemented in others regions of the country, for example the community garden, second hand shops, etc.

A member of the SMEDA (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Association), Mrs Bhundoo, was invited to present this public institution to the participants, introducing all services and facilities offered to new entrepreneurs, and explaining the tender process. The participants interacted with Mrs Bhundoo and a few of them talked about their previous attempts of business creation and their future projects, and two ladies, about the way to improve her actual business.



*Fig. 7: Mrs Bhundoo from SMEDA*

#### **4. Day four: Markets and money**

- **Objectives of the day**

1. Understand market research
2. Recognize the importance of business planning
3. Understand business-planning basics
4. Recognize important aspects of costing for a small business

- **Facilitator's observations**

This session confronted the participants to the reality of market research, as most of them were not aware of its importance.

The use of many examples, situations and case studies have helped the participants to understand the concept of market and the process of survey, in relation with money. Most of them realized that their first business ideas were not sustainable due to saturation of the markets.

The last exercise of identification of the market gap was challenging because the participants were used to think about a business in terms of personal knowledge rather than needs of the community. The participants need a lot of examples and support to be able to complete the table. Unfortunately, a few participants had no ideas of the needs in their community and needed the support of the group to complete the mapping exercise.

## **5. Day five: Basics of business planning**

- **Objectives of the day**

1. Recognize the importance of business planning.
2. Understand business-planning basics.
3. Be able to do market research and gather data to develop a business in phase two.

- **Facilitator's observations**

The participants showed interest for this last session, especially for the case study of Puleng. They easily answered the questions in the manual and understood the need of doing a business plan before spending any money.

All steps of the business plan homework were explained several times until all participants understood them properly. Some participants expressed their apprehension of not being able to draft their plan, as they didn't feel confident enough, to do so. They were reassured by the facilitator that they will have full time to do it, that the GL team will be available to help them with the wording if needs be and that it will be only a draft at the first which will then be used as base for the phase two.

Despite the explanations, the level of understanding for approximately five participants was very low. They will need a strong and regular follow up and assistance to be able to complete their business plan before phase two. To do so, they planned two meetings, one in September and one in October, to create a support group among themselves to draft their business plan.

## **6. Day four and five: IT for entrepreneurship**

The National Computer Board offered the services of their Cyber Caravan to provide IT training for the participants.

Half of the group had no IT experience and felt very happy to be able to touch a computer and write a basic letter using Word.

## **X. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. Output**

- High motivation of the participants.
- Improvement of their knowledge, the quality of their interactions.
- Improvement of the communication skills: a few of them, who were very introvert, were able to open up to the group, to talk and share their ideas and opinions.
- Emergence of a real solidarity and synergy among the participants.
- Creation of a network between the participants: they decided to share contacts in order to support and help each other during the next few weeks, before phase two, in order to draft their business plan. They fixed the dates of their meetings (one in September and one in October).
- Improvement of the IT Skills.

### **2. Outcome**

- Participants have gained adequate knowledge and willing to start their own businesses.



- Participants have better understanding of business basics and GBV concepts.
- Sources for acquiring start-up capital have been identified.
- Needs of the communities and business ideas have been identified.
- Participants were linked to the SMEDA and the National Women Entrepreneur Council to get support.

### **3. Recommendations**

It will be crucial for the GL Team to maintain contact with the participants until the start of phase two in order to conduct monitoring and evaluation exercises to verify progress and impact of the training and continue providing possible assistance to the group.

Furthermore, in terms of IT, the time allocated to IT training is not enough to meet the targets of phase one. It will be necessary to propose continuous training to help the participants to get practice.

To conclude, GL Team will need to keep on-going consultations with the district council to ensure that the group receives full support.

***Annex A – Participant's list***

Surname	Name	Telephone	Age
Acharaz	Ameeta Devi	57722919	50
Davis	Marie Haydee	59719596	53
Egambal	Kristen (Nalinee)	59209327	32
Gangadoo	Vegamanee (sovida)	4646448/59157969	45
Ritta	Michelle Romina	57667947/59828756	50
Rasen	Sarojini (Jaya)	4659949/57352269	53
Martingale	Liliane	57126880	62
Volafite	Dorinne	54907795	57
Rene	Mirta	59492616	42
Bhautoo	Shirley	59289633	41
Oomajee	Radha	57761408	67
Aylou	Bernadette	59021899	38
Pierre	Cindy	6760044/54224640	41
Orange	Stephanie		31
Ragoo	Amrita		47

Fifteen participants.

**Annex B – Evaluation Batch – Rose Hill**

Please score the following 1-10 where 1= very poor; 10 = excellent

	SCORE OUT OF TEN
<b>1. PROGRAM DESIGN</b>	10
<b>2. PROGRAM CONTENT</b>	10
<b>3. DOCUMENTATION</b>	10
<b>4. FACILITATION</b>	10
<b>5. GROUP WORK</b>	10
<b>6. OUTPUTS</b>	9
<b>7. OUTCOMES AND FOLLOW UP PLANS</b>	10
<b>8. LEARNING OPPORTUNITY</b>	10
<b>9. NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY</b>	9
<b>10. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS</b>	9

