



young *voices*

[THE INSIDE OUT APPROACH]

Young People Should Be Seen and Heard

By giving young people the space to express themselves through media ranging from paint to digital video, Young Voices challenges the notion – held by many cultures- that children should be seen and not heard. In doing so the project also provides adults with the opportunity to better understand and respond to the needs and rights of children.

Positive Vibes has worked with young people since 2005. Although PV's work with children and youth often focuses on health outcomes, it is essentially a rights-based approach that allows the youth to speak for themselves about the issues that affect them in their lives. The initial Young Voices pilot project outline, which was written by Dr. Gabriel Urgoiti, described the concept in the following terms:

“The right of the child to participate and communicate in issues that affect their own lives continues to be a rare privilege for many children in the world... In the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, participation entails the act of encouraging and enabling children to make their views known on the issues that affect them. Authentic and meaningful participation require a radical shift in adult thinking and behaviour; from a world define by adults to one in which children are allow to contribute to building the kind of world they want to live in. To achieve authentic child participation, the process must start from children themselves, on their own terms, with their own realities and in pursuit of their own visions, dreams, hopes and concerns. It is important to realize that child participation will differ in form and style according to the child age.”

This project contained four interlinked phases:

1. Personalisation: we use art, games and discussion activities to help young people to explore their personal feelings, concerns and situations. They decide what is important in their lives and what they would like to change.

2. Support Structure: having built trust and managed to articulate some of their concerns and problems, they are in a position to explore these issues with their peers and to decide what they can do about their situation. Young people become very motivated by the idea that they can learn and talk about their rights and needs with their friends. This is the dialogue stage.

3. Media Creation: Young people gain the confidence to make a drama, video, radio programme or some other form of media to use to help them to create a discussion with parents, carers or other adults who make decisions about their lives.

4. Parent/Caregiver involvement: Parents and caregivers' understanding and appreciation of the youth is central to their well-being. Therefore we ensure that the adults are involved throughout the process.

Before we started it was important to involve parents and carers. 299 parents and carers came to learn about the project and to discuss issues of children's rights and parent roles. Almost all felt that the project was useful for their children.

At the end of the project, the youth engage in a facilitated dialogue with the adults using their media as a means of kicking off the discussion.

The process always produces changes in the way young people feel about themselves and their lives, and often encourages adults to talk with them in a more open and thoughtful way.

THE PROJECT TOOK PLACE BECAUSE OF SUPPORT FROM PARTNERS

We are grateful that the Embassy of Finland and Breadline Africa both believed in the ideas of improving communication between young people and adults and supporting young people to speak for themselves.



5 Radio advocacy interviews were produced

326

Attended the initial 'what are our concerns' workshops



THE PROJECT REACHED A LOT OF PEOPLE



283

Used their media to discuss the issues with adults



253

Were engaged in producing advocacy media

531

Young people took part in activities

138

Parents at discussion days with 689 more at community events



134

Leaders and officials discussed young people's issues with them

24 media journalists attended workshops

23 Videos were produced

THE PROJECT

Personalisation & Dialogue Stage

Young people make the decisions about what they want to tell adults and how they want to do it.

253 young people from 23 Groups in Oshana, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshikoto, Khomas and //Karas spent three days together in their local meeting places exploring what was concerning them in their lives, building trust with each other and the adults who were helping them.

Many of the young action groups had already worked with Positive Vibes in the past and had experienced activities that had helped them to form groups and find psycho social support. In Khomas new groups came together for the first time.

They did a mixture of games, art activities and discussions to help them to decide what they wanted to tell their stories about and how best to tell them.

This process helped us to develop trust, teamwork and support, especially in those groups that came together for the first time.

Lots of concerns and stories came from people in the groups, but each group had to select one story to represent them. Then came the task of deciding what medium to use to tell the story. Some wanted to use drama, others painting, one group wanted to produce a radio programme and some wanted to talk straight to a video camera. All wanted to see their efforts recorded on video.

TELLING OUR STORY

Media Creation Stage

Once the group had decided what their story or issue was, it was time to turn it into communication media.

289 young people learnt how to use the cameras, explored ways they could present their messages and concerns and practiced and rehearsed. Where possible we asked media professionals to help. Sometimes they interviewed officials or members of the public.

There were many different issues and ways of presenting them:

“We made our choices. We choose the topic for our drama. In our case we chose alcohol abuse and child abuse because these are problems that we experience in our community.” (focus group – North)

“I am good at using the video camera and I improved my public speaking skills” (Focus group – Windhoek)

Shebeens – Noise & Nuisance | //Karas | Paintings

Bullying | Khomas | Drama/interviews

Child Abuse & Mistreatment | Many groups | Drama/interviews

Child protection law | Khomas | Video interviews

Parents – our needs | Khomas / //Karas | Video interviews

Drugs & Alcohol | Khomas / //Karas | Drama/interviews

Life Choices | Khomas | RAP/drawing/video

Disabled childrens' rights | Khomas | Video interviews

Cultural Voices | Oshikoto | Song/ dance



“Every time I came in the house all of them run away like chickens because I used to beat them, even for things they haven’t done and I don’t expect any answer back from any of them.”

Grandmother – Ohangwena



“I am able to communicate very well with my child now, I’m thankful to this project”

Parent- Okongo.



Talking With Adults – Parents & Caregivers

The main reason for our work with young people is to give them the opportunity to have useful dialogue with adults that can change and strengthen the way that adults and young people communicate with each other.

The most important people in a young person’s life are their parents or carers. Nearly 150 parents and carers came to special workshops where young people showed their media and then opened a discussion with the adults. They led the discussions. This often helped adults to think about how they brought up their children. Many realised for the first time that the old ways were not always the best.

“When I watched your video it really touched me because I have just come to realize that whatever we do to you one day it will come out and turn back to us”. Parent - Ohangwena

In all workshops many parents wanted to change how they listened to and talked with their children. It was common for parents to become emotional and even cry when they talked about bringing up children.

“Every time I came in the house all of them run away like chickens because I used to beat them, even for things they haven’t done and I don’t expect any answer back from any of them.” She starts to cry as she realises the hurt. Grandmother – Ohangwena.

Young people also went out to community events, churches, village meeting places, shopping malls, parks and children’s hospitals etc. To use their media to start dialogues with adults. 689 parents, leaders and community members came to 35 events with similar sympathetic responses.

“I am able to communicate very well with my child now, I’m thankful to this project” parent- Okongo.

Talking With the Media, Officials & Leaders

Young people also used their media and their voices to take their messages and concerns beyond their local communities.

24 media people from the newspapers, radio and television came to workshops led by young people and agreed a number of steps that they would take to represent children's issues more fairly and more often.

During the Outreach sessions 53 local traditional leaders and Councillors joined in the discussions, often pledging to support and encouraging young people's rights.

Young people also managed to get the attention of adults from Government Ministries, Schools, and NGOs. Some attended workshop groups, whilst others came to our final public events.

These events were held in each region. In //Karas celebrations were held on the Day of The African Child.

In the North two events were held across the four regions where videos were shown. One of the highlights was the holding of Question and Answer sessions with representatives of Ministries. Young people asked questions to officials who responded in public.

In Khomas, young people introduced and led the Day of the African Child commemoration in partnership with other youth groups in Windhoek in front of more than 300 young people and guests including the First Lady, Madam Penhupifo Pohamba and the Minister of Gender and Child Welfare Rosalia Nghidinwa who gave speeches in support of child rights. Youth led activities also happened in the week leading up to the day.



Khomas young people also went right to the top. The Prime Minister, Hage Geingob, invited them through the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare to ask questions at Prime Minister's Question Time on national television.

During the course of the project young people also had the experience of appearing on radio and television. They were interviewed on 'Off the Hook' and NBC and gave interviews on four radio stations.

"Before it was very difficult for me to talk to elders, professionals and famous people such as ministers. Now I feel confident and I know I can do it."



“The children you abuse are also human – think of how they feel”.

Oshana



YOUNG VOICES

Child Abuse and Mistreatment

ONE OF THE MAIN ISSUES RAISED BY YOUNG PEOPLE WAS THE ISSUE OF ABUSE AND MISTREATMENT ESPECIALLY AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE, SUCH AS ORPHANS. SEVERAL YOUTH ACTION GROUP MEMBERS HAD PERSONAL STORIES TO TELL ABOUT BEING MISTREATED THEMSELVES OR SEEING FRIENDS BEING MISTREATED. THE STORIES ARE OFTEN ABOUT GUARDIANS, ESPECIALLY IN THE NORTH-CENTRAL REGIONS.

“One day I found a girl sleeping in the bushes.... I later learned she was sent away from her home by her guardian. I took her home to my mother to assist.” (Oshana)

“When we go to school she doesn’t eat... after cooking (and other work) she still doesn’t eat, she is told to go away. (Ohangwena)

“Sometimes she is told “your mother died of AIDS, I didn’t tell her to go look for infections.” (Ohangwena)

“I miss some school days to stay at home and herd the livestock.” (Oshikoto)

“The children you abuse are also human – think of how they feel”. (Oshana)

“I feel bad when I see fellow children being abused. I relate to it as if I am the victim. All children have rights and this is a violation of our rights.” (Ohangwena)

“What you do is something unacceptable”. (Oshana)

YOUNG VOICES

School Bullying and Discrimination

A KHOMAS GROUP USED THEIR OWN EXPERIENCE OF BEING BULLIED - AND ALSO OF BEING BULLIES THEMSELVES - TO CREATE A POWERFUL DRAMA FOR PEOPLE TO FEEL HOW DESPERATE BULLYING MAKES A PERSON FEEL.

They talked about their own experience:

“I was sent with a small amount of money – 5 cents. “I am giving you 5 cents, go and buy for me two hot dogs and bring me back the change””.

“I was also bullied, but mine was verbal. They called me names, but I was also a bully. I would send him (to get) something and if he doesn’t bring it I would beat him.”

“Children are not concentrating on their school work because they are just thinking about after school.”

“I spoke to no one because I was too scared. They promised me that if I spoke to someone they would beat me.”

“I just ignored them when they called me names. They set up a fight for me after school. They called me names and started to push me around. I just ignored and they stopped.”

“Teenagers against bullying” – they would like both bullies and those bullied to use the club to get information and resolve problems.

“Those that are bullied should never give up hope, because education is the key to success.”

“Teenagers against bullying” – they would like both bullies and those bullied to use the club to get information and resolve problems.



“I was sent with a small amount of money – 5 cents. “I am giving you 5 cents, go and buy for me two hot dogs and bring me back the change””.



YOUNG VOICES

Parents & Carers

Please talk to us and listen to our needs.

GROUPS IN //KARAS AND KHOMAS HAD A LOT TO SAY ABOUT HOW THEY WANTED PARENTS AND CARERS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM. ALTHOUGH THEY WERE A LONG WAY FROM EACH OTHER THEY CAME UP WITH THE SAME IDEAS. MOST OF ALL THEY WANTED THEIR PARENTS TO REALLY TAKE NOTICE OF THEM AND LISTEN.

“It’s so hard being a child, everything seems to go wrong in our lives. Who do you go to when you are angry. Who do I go to talk to?”

“We have so many things we would like to talk about with our parents, but it seems we can’t rely on them.”

“ I am not really comfortable talking to my mother. If my mother won’t listen to me, who will listen to me”?

“When she comes home from work she is always asking “how was school? How did you write today?” I am not even comfortable to talk to my mum about boyfriends and that stuff.”

“We should at least approach our parents and try to talk (to them) if you have problems.”

“Children should also try to understand their parents and give them respect as elders.”

“Although it is hard sometimes for you to express your love, we just sometimes need you to tell us you love us. It really means a lot. Then we can approach you in a more easy manner and talk to you about anything.”

“Parents have also rights. Children sometimes misunderstand their rights. Rights come with responsibilities and this is true for children as well as adults.”

“It’s all about communicating, sitting down and having a serious discussion with your child – getting to know each other.”



“If our elders keep doing these things it will make us do the same things when we are grown-ups.”.



YOUNG VOICES

Drugs, Alcohol, Sheenbeens

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED BY THE BEHAVIOUR OF PARENTS AND THE ADULTS AROUND THEM. IN //KARAS YOUNG PEOPLE WERE UPSET BY THE NOISE, RUBBISH AND INTIMIDATION CAUSED BY HAVING SHEBEENS CLOSE TO THEIR HOMES. PEOPLE DON'T REALISE IT BUT IT AFFECTS THEIR EDUCATION BY STOPPING THEIR SLEEP AND DISRUPTING HOMEWORK TIME. IN OHANGWENA A GROUP WAS UPSET BY THE BEHAVIOUR OF ADULTS AROUND THEM WHO THEY WANTED TO BE ROLE MODELS TO THEM.

In //Karas the young people talked to the Town Council about their complaints and found that local residents agreed with them.

“If our elders keep doing these things it will make us do the same things when we are grown-ups.”

“Our community elders, they are destroying themselves. We lost a lot of people already. Our elders are destroyed, especially because of this bottle.”

“I think the counsellor also needs to look into this matter.”

“There are too many shebeens near our houses. The bars must be separated from our houses.”

“You must have hours to work and days to work”

“We can't sleep, they are closed at almost 1.00”

“It doesn't give us time for studying and learning. It's just not fair.

“You must have hours to work and days to work.”

“[shebeen owners] Be serious about our future, don't just think about yourself.”

YOUNG VOICES

The Child Care & Protection Bill

IN KHOMAS, ONE YOUNG WOMAN BEGAN HER OWN CAMPAIGN TO PERSUADE PARLIAMENT TO PASS THE CHILD CARE AND PROTECTION BILL THAT HAS BEEN DELAYED SINCE 2001. ONE OF THE FORGOTTEN GROUPS THAT WOULD BENEFIT FROM GREATER PROTECTION OF THEIR RIGHTS IS CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, THE SUBJECT OF ANOTHER KHOMAS GROUP.

The young person researched the history of the Bill found that most of Namibia's child protection laws are based upon law from the past apartheid era, based upon South African legislation. She is concerned at the amount of time it is taking to pass a new Bill.

“With so many professionals working on just one Bill, what is taking so long to make it a law after two decades of Independence.”

When she interviewed young people and a youth worker she found little knowledge about children's rights or the Bill in spite of work in schools.

“Very few people know about the Child Care & Protection Bill, It is very unfortunate that so few people know about the Bill.”

She is passionate about the need to strengthen the protection of children, especially when so many report neglect and abuse.

“I believe that when this becomes a reality we will have so many solutions to the issues that are being discussed in society already. (We want to deal with) the children's needs that are pending **now** and to the issues affecting them **now**.”

Another group picked out disabled young people as a group that often suffers from stigma and discrimination.

“I wouldn't say 'disabled person' I would rather use the term differently abled”

“These children have the same rights as everyone else.”

WE SHOULD NOT DISCRIMINATE.

What The Project Gave Me

Positive Vibes commissioned an external consultant to meet with young people from four of the groups involved in the project. We wanted to know how they perceived their involvement in the project. The groups were from Khomas and the North Central regions.

Although we finished with 23 media products, the real goal of the project was the development of young people and their ability to communicate their needs effectively to adults from parents to national leaders.

Some felt they had changed.

“I feel proud to be part of the group. It has helped me to change positively. I can communicate with other people better. I have also learned about children’s rights and how this rights are sometimes broken and I feel that I can speak more openly and freely.” (Focus group North)

Some were able to change things in their lives

“Being part of the group makes me feel happy. At home many times I have to do a lot of work on my own and it makes me feel unhappy. I learned about children rights, for example it is not fair that one child have to do all the housework at the homestead while others do nothing.” (Focus group North)

“I feel very lucky. I was exposed to new and different experiences. It was intense, we were pushed to deliver, and we learned to be efficient and to deal with adults.” (Focus group Windhoek)

“The project helped me to look inside me and to look forwards, not backwards.”

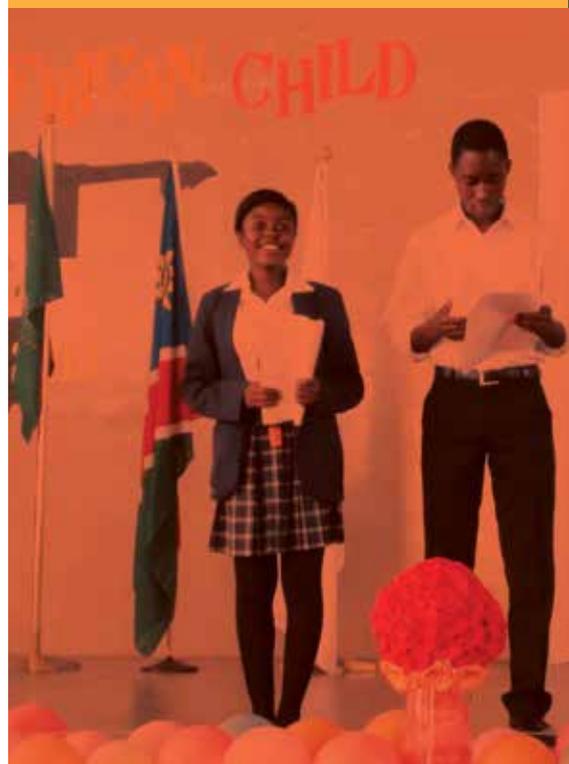
Many wanted the project to continue

“We feel sad that the project is coming to an end. If there is anything we could do as YV members to make the project to continue we are more than willing to do it (Focus group Windhoek)



“I feel very lucky. I was exposed to new and different experiences. It was intense, we were pushed to deliver, and we learned to be efficient and to deal with adults”

Focus Group Windhoek



“We feel sad that the project is coming to an end. If there is anything we could do as YV members to make the project to continue we are more than willing to do it “

Focus Group Windhoek





“Yes I have changed. If I am confronted with negative situations I will look at the positive. There is always light at the end of the tunnel.”

Focus Group Windhoek



How I Was Able To Develop

“We also change and got better in respecting each other and respecting adults more. We learn that it is not always about being right or wrong, we need to listen to each other and understand the different points of view.” (Focus group North)

“Now I can stand for my rights in the homestead. From all the children I was the only one doing all the work and sometimes because of this I could not come to school. I was very angry and frustrated. Now I have managed to talk to my granny and tell her that it is not fair for me to do all the work. We need to share it with the other children. She understood and now things are better.”(Focus group North)

“I am good at using the video camera. I improve my public speaking skills. Before I use to shiver if I had to talk to someone important. Now I feel confident and I can do it.” (Focus group Windhoek)

Often they learnt about themselves and developed new life skills

“I was a very self-centred person. I struggle to share things and kept everything inside myself. The project helped me to open and share with others my issues.” (Focus group Windhoek)

“I believe I changed and understand people better because I gained skills in listening and communicating with people effectively.” (Focus group Windhoek)

“I use to gossip a lot. I learned about the importance of confidentiality and privacy. I am much more aware and stop gossiping about other people.” (Focus group Windhoek)

“Yes I have changed. If I am confronted with negative situations I will look at the positive. There is always light at the end of the tunnel.” (Focus group Windhoek)

“I learn about commitment and thinking. If we were not committed and thought carefully about what we wanted to do the project would have not been a success.”

“I learn how to plan and how to listen to others. “



“Some of our parents go less to the Cuca shops. Even when they go they come back home earlier and talk to us, more than what use to happen before our drama.”

(Focus group North)



What Changed?

The youth who participated in the project generally felt that it had had an effect in their families and communities.

“These are real problems and we wanted to talk about and educate people about alcohol abuse and child abuse.”
(Focus group North)

“Some of our parents go less to the Cuca shops. Even when they go they come back home earlier and talk to us, more than what use to happen before our drama.”
(Focus group North)

They also reported changes in their relationships with adults.

“I think we managed to make a difference in how adults understand children’s rights. When we showed our videos to our parents and other adults during the Adult Communication Workshops there was an opportunity to talk to them and answer their questions. Both adults and children listen to each other. We dialogue.”(Focus group Windhoek)

“They felt that our drama was very touching because what we role-play are things that are really happening in the community.” (Focus group North)

“They felt that child abuse in our community is a big problem.” (Focus group North)



“You did a great job and chose a very relevant topic. You encourage adults to change and to lead by example” – parents (Focus group North)

“Parents and caregivers requested us that we should continue to show the role-play/video in the community so adults get educated about the problem of child abuse.”
(Focus group North)

“I feel proud to be part of the group. It has helped me to change positively. I can communicate with other people better. I have also learned about children’s rights and how this rights are sometimes broken and I feel that I can speak more openly and freely.”

What Could Be Improved

Not everything went smoothly. Co-ordinating activities over a large country like Namibia, often at the deep rural level is not without its logistical challenges. Generally the feedback from the youth was positive but they also made sure that they held us to task when they felt that we were not spending enough time with them or if we did not consult enough. Although mistakes were made, we are happy that the children were strong enough to keep us to task. This in itself is a positive outcome.

Overall there was a general feeling that the early workshops needed more time and some parents would like to have been more involved in the project as it went along.

What Happens Next?

In the four North-Central regions and //Karas, Young Action groups will continue to meet. In //Karas YAGs are already invited to represent young people on several bodies.

In Khomas, Tameca Goases the Project officer has put a great deal of work into helping the young people to link up with existing youth projects, where they can continue their work.

Positive Vibes will continue to support young people's development, growth and self-efficacy. In the next two years we will be paying special attention to developing support to young people affected by HIV.

We will also be trying to learn from both the good points and the bad points of the project and investing in further training of our staff with an expert in youth participation

Thank you to the Embassy of Finland and breadline Africa who made this project possible.



Positive Vibes Trust was launched in November 2008. The organisation works with PHDP, YPLHIV, Children's Rights and LGBT Rights, and is operational in more than 10 African countries.

Positive Vibes is a member of the International AIDS Alliance

If you would like to find out more about the work of Positive Vibes or the Inside-Out Approach, you can contact us at the following:

Head Office
49 Pasteur Street
PO Box 24236
Windhoek, Namibia
Tel: +264 61 245556
Fax: +264 61 262376
e-mail: info@positivevibes.org
www.positivevibes.org

Northern Office
Lommel Street
PO Box 613
Oshakati, Namibia
Phone +264 65 231 373
Fax +264 65 231 294
e-mail jm@positivevibes.org

This project was made possible by the generous support of the Embassy of Finland and Breadline Africa.



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND

