

Participating University: Brown University

Project Title: Omena Peer Education Bootcamp Training: An initiative to break the cycle of emotional abuse in Madagascar.

Designated Project Leader Name: Francesca Raoelison

Date Range of Project Execution: July- August 2022

Country where Project will be Performed: Madagascar

Mission

Omena Madagascar's mission is to equip children with social and emotional intelligence tools, in hopes to build a more self-loving, self-aware, and empathic generation who ultimately foster healthy relationships and prevent abuse and violence in Madagascar.

Background and Personal Qualification

When I grew up in Madagascar, my definition of abuse was limited: I only thought of abuse as physical and sexual abuse. When I joined the Peer Educator Leadership Team at The Northern Virginia Community College, where I studied prior to Brown, it was a turning point in my life — I learned about forms of hidden abuse, especially emotional abuse. I realized that during my childhood and early adulthood I grew up in an emotionally abusive household, but I didn't know it. I felt lonely. But I soon found out that I was not alone.

According to the WHO, 1 billion children worldwide have experienced some type of emotional and psychological abuse in their household. Unfortunately, this number only reflects households. Emotional abuse can be found in any context and can happen in all the relationships and settings in our lives: in friendships, in romantic relationships, at work, in our community at large, from acquaintances on social media. Emotional abuse is a systemic problem that touches upon basic human rights, public health, and our economy by degrading our human capital. By not giving it a name, we allow it to continue through the generations.

According to UNICEF, in 2019, 80% of children in Madagascar, experienced emotional abuse growing up which made it more challenging for them to recognize, prevent or mitigate certain abusive behaviors when they appear, and establish healthy relationships with their families and peers. Emotional abuse can lead to issues with self-esteem and mental health and thwart the affected individual's ability to succeed and thrive in many areas. Studies also show that emotional abuse is the foundation of physical or even sexual abuse, both of which can lead to mental health, cognitive decline, and generational trauma.

Over the past two years, my interaction with other groups and individuals confirmed that emotional abuse is a widespread issue with impact in other countries. I was amazed to see people from the USA, China, India, Brazil—Zimbabwe, all over the globe—respond. They wanted to share their experience and, like me, they wanted to make a difference. That's when I knew I was not alone. I knew that there was a solution, and that's why I created Omena.

Project Details

Omena exists to break the cycle of emotional abuse worldwide, starting in Madagascar. We envision a world with a more empathetic generation of young people, with greater self-esteem and inner strength who embrace others' uniqueness and stand against abuse.

We do this by engaging young adults as community educators in schools to train students on emotional awareness — how to recognize and name their emotions, set boundaries, advocate for others, facilitate hard conversations and build healthy relationships.

Project Progress:

Since 2019, in partnership with NGO Youth First and the Ministry of education in Madagascar, we've provided this life-changing program to over 700 students in underserved communities both in-person and online starting in Madagascar where 9/10 students report experiencing emotional abuse.

Our impact started since then — driven by volunteerism and community engagement. We've been recognized by Forbes Under 30, TEDx, the Davis Project for Peace in 2019, The Clinton Foundation, MTV, and many more. Now, we're ready to reach even more students, and that's where you come in! With your help, we can reach an additional 2,500 at-risk students and train 60 educators, to expand the impact of our program beyond Madagascar.

A healthy future means embracing one's self, to better accept each other. In the words of Fanja, a 16-year-old in our program:

"I didn't know that there was such a thing as self-love. I would have never thought of looking at the mirror one day and telling myself that I was worthy of love. Even thinking about doing that was crazy before I did it. Thank you, Omena for helping me start accepting and appreciating who I am."

Timeline for the proposed training activity:

In Summer 2019, due to COVID, I not able to be on the ground, so I adjusted and held our bootcamp training online and trained 50 peer educators.

For the past years, I've incorporated the learning I got from the past pilot project and I iterated our approach. The three-day bootcamp training for the 60 peer educators will be held on July 15th, 16th, and 17th 2022. Here is the timeline for the proposed activity.

| TASK | PROGRESS | START | END |
|--|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Training Program Tasks | | | |
| OMENA Project (Training) Plan | 100% | 7/6/2021 | 8/28/2022 |
| Planning | 93% | 11/30/2021 | 12/17/2021 |
| Develop Project Management Plan | 100% | 06/01/2021 | 12/3/2021 |
| Executing | 23% | 06/06/2021 | 12/30/2022 |
| Training Materials | 100% | 06/16/2021 | 08/31/2021 |
| Recruitment plan / processes | 100% | 01/15/2022 | 03/15/2022 |
| Volunteer recruitment announcement | 0% | 02/27/2021 | 03/15/2022 |
| Preparation | 45% | 06/06/2021 | 12/30/2022 |
| Materials distribution | 0% | 06/01/2022 | 06/01/2022 |
| On the ground bootcamp training | 2% | 07/15/2022 | 12/20/2022 |
| Cohort 1 (60) | 5% | 07/15/2022 | 12/20/2022 |
| Logistics | 17% | 06/15/2022 | 12/20/2022 |
| Materials to print | 50% | 05/30/2022 | 05/30/2022 |
| Reserve venue | 0% | 05/15/2022 | 05/15/2022 |
| Book transportation | 0% | 05/15/2022 | 05/15/2022 |
| Travel preparation | 0% | 01/05/2022 | 01/05/2022 |
| Book caterer for food | 0% | 05/15/2022 | 05/15/2022 |
| Event coverage (pictures) | 0% | 07/15/2022 | 07/15/2022 |
| Review/evaluate preparedness | 0% | 06/10/2022 | 06/10/2022 |
| Pre-surveys | 0% | 06/01/2022 | 06/01/2022 |
| Training (3-days) | 0% | 07/15/2022 | 07/17/2022 |
| Evaluation | 0% | 07/17/2022 | 12/20/2022 |

Omena is beginning to embark on an ambitious journey, to begin bolstering our organizational sustainability, to create a cultural shift and change of mentality. For us to make all of this possible, we need you.