

Ke batla go itse: A Sexual Violence Prevention Program

Botswana

St. Lawrence University

Tumo A. Koontse, Botswana, St. Lawrence University '19; Pearson College UWC

This project involves working with a Botswana-based organization to develop a curriculum, train volunteers, and provide prevention education about sex and sexual assault to high school students.

Project background: Botswana is a small country situated in the heart of southern Africa. Despite being one of Africa's most democratic countries, Botswana faces rising rates of sexual assault and rape of women, a chronic problem that threatens to erode society. From young girls to elderly women, streets, schools, offices, and even homes have become spaces where sexual assaults and rape incidents are taking place. According to police statistics, in a 2 week span in December 2018-January 2019, 109 rape cases were recorded¹. Many cases go unreported, making it difficult to know exactly how many rape incidents are actually taking place in our communities². Overwhelmed and lacking resources, law enforcement agencies are reaching the point where sexual assault survivors are turned away without evidence being collected or a statement taken. This has resulted in many sexual assault perpetrators walking free and survivors never getting justice³.

Botswana has numerous national policies on gender and development, but these have failed to materialize because the responsibility to address and prevent issues of rape and sexual assault is left entirely to women. Botswana has a culture that victimizes and tries to justify rape incidents by pointing fingers at women; she is blamed for wearing a short skirt, for having been drunk or being home alone⁴. Such narratives in society have become normalized, in the process preventing women from sharing their stories and seeking justice. The rising numbers of rape cases and the persistence of such a culture reveal the lack of education around affirmative consent and sex practices in the country.

Project partners: Women Against Rape (W.A.R.), an organization that supports abused women and advocates for gender equality, focuses on creating long-term behavioral change through community education⁵. Similarly, Kagisano Society is an organization that aims to raise awareness about gender-based violence in Botswana and provide community education, outreach, and advocacy services⁶.

Tebogo Ramatebele will serve as assistant project director and my point of contact in Botswana. She is a recent graduate from the Botswana Accountancy College who had her own experiences of childhood abuse and now wants to become the voice for the voiceless and empower them to fight this problem collectively. Lesego Nchunga is a lawyer who has written numerous newspaper articles calling for the public to engage in discourse about sex education and why rape is becoming a national problem. She will play the role of supervisor and provide insights about the procedure of seeking justice after reporting an incident to law enforcement agencies. Although Lesego and Tebogo are not affiliated with WAR and Kagisano, I recruited them for this project because of the knowledge and passion they possess on the issue of sexual assault.

Proposed Project Activities and Timeline: *Ke batla go itse* (meaning "I want to know") is an outreach program seeking to educate high school students about sex and sexual assault, promote a safe space for survivors and encourage them to report perpetrators and seek counseling. Another aim of our project outreach is to redefine the existing rape culture in the country. The goal is to target youth who are still forming their belief systems but also starting to consider engaging in sexual activities.

-Week 1 will be dedicated to recruiting for volunteers. Paid project personnel vacancies e.g., social media chair, website manager) will be advertised, and 4 unpaid sexual assault prevention educator positions will be posted on Facebook and other social media platforms. Our aim is to target undergraduate students from the University of Botswana who will be on break and who are part of a women's rights advocacy

¹ Kelepong Pamela D. "It's Time to Act Against Rape" *Mmegi* 14 January 2019: 1. *Mmegi.bw*. Web. 16 January 16, 2019.

² Patriot newspaper <https://allafrica.com/stories/201809280260.html>

³ Nchunga, Lesego N. "Re-Writing Rape (V)-Changing Our Attitudes On Sexual Violence and Rape" *Mmegi* 27 August 2018: 1. *Mmegi.bw*. Web. 24 December 2018.

⁴ Nchunga, Lesego N. "Re-Writing Rape (IV)- why is Rape Becoming a National Problem" *Mmegi* 20 August 2018: 1. *Mmegi.bw*. Web. 24 December 2018.

⁵ "About us." *Women Against Rape*. <http://www.womenagainstrape.co.bw/aboutus.html>

⁶ "About us." *Kagisano Society Women's Shelter*. <http://www.kagisanowomenshelter.org.bw/index.php/about-us>

group. Candidates will be expected to submit an online application during Week 1, which is also the time frame when students in the respective schools will be required to sign up for the training sessions.

-During **Week 2**, Tebogo and I will conduct 1-on-1 interviews with short-listed candidates. The volunteers will be selected through a rigorous process to ensure they meet the minimum criteria (i.e., experience in advocacy, demonstrated capacity/willingness to engage students, ability to work collaboratively with others). We are hoping to get equal numbers of energetic men and women volunteers on the team.

-**Weeks 3 and 4** will focus on working closely with Lesego Nchunga, Kagisano, WAR, and the target high schools' guidance and counselling teachers to develop age-appropriate and user-friendly training materials to be used in the 3 schools selected to be visited. Three hundred small booklets on sexual assault will be compiled and sent out for printing; these will be handed out to students during the school visits. Additionally, I will be working on the training presentation material for the newly-hired volunteers. Parental consent letters for student participation will be prepared and delivered to the schools, where guidance and counselling teachers will distribute and collect them within 3 days.

-**Weeks 5 and 6** will entail training the 4 volunteers, social media chair, website manager, and Tebogo Ramatebele. As a trained St. Lawrence University Sexual Assault Advocate, I will co-lead the training with a psychotherapist from the University of Botswana Psychology clinic. Session topics will include: what is sexual assault, how we unintentionally contribute to the existing rape culture, affirmative consent, understanding rape trauma syndrome, survivor support, and bystander intervention. The 3-day training will offer 2 daily sessions of 2 hours each and will complement the existing curriculum in biology and guidance/counseling. Team members will also take two Botswana Qualification Authority short courses on engaging communities in outreach campaigns to prevent gender-based violence (3 days) and on basic counselling skills (2 days). These sessions will occur in weeks 5 and 6, respectively. The objective will be to equip the volunteers with the necessary knowledge and skills needed to serve as assault prevention educators during the project period and, hopefully, beyond the end of the pilot period. The lessons will be in the form of lectures, group discussions, activities and presentations.

-**Week 7** will be dedicated to working on the presentations for the school visits. I will team with volunteers and Tebogo to create presentation slides and designate topics to present based on comfort levels.

-During **Weeks 8, 9 and 10** I will ensure that our sexual assault prevention educators have all the school workshop materials needed (the small booklets, projector, laptop, activity handouts). I will also be the point of contact for the 3 schools' guidance/counseling teachers and headmasters. At each school we seek a target audience of 50 students ages 16-19, inclusive of both boys and girls. The training will be offered as an extra-curricular activity running for 1.25 hours, 3 times/week, (Monday, Tuesday and Thursday) over a 3-week period. The school visit schedule is: **Week 8:** Gaborone Senior Secondary School; **Week 9:** Ledumang Senior Secondary School; and **Week 10:** Naledi Senior Secondary School. A guidance and counseling teacher will be present to provide extra support for the team and students.

Lesson Plan for Secondary School Trainings:

Day 1	I will lead 30-minute presentation on sexual assault terms and rape culture in Botswana. Volunteers lead 30-minute discussion with students about forms of sexual violence/how violence is perpetuated. Finish with self-care meditation exercises.
Day 2	20-minute presentation on affirmative consent and bystander intervention led by Tebogo and volunteers. Activities to help students identify sexual coercion and non-consensual interactions; best practices in intervening during potential sexual assault incidents. Aim to help students understand healthy behaviors with regard to sex.
Day 3	Reactions to sexual assault; survivor support; resources in school and in Gabarone. With volunteers, I will lead 30-minute presentation; remaining time used for small-group discussion.

The overall project goal is to promote healthy behaviors, change students' mindsets, and strengthen their ability to prevent sexual violence. This is my vision for a more peaceful Botswana.

Sustainability: After the summer project, the Botswana-based team will launch the 2nd phase, which will involve visiting and reaching more schools, as well as training teachers and organizing more community trainings in smaller villages surrounding the capital city. Additionally, we are hoping to work with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs in Botswana to develop a program for both students and members of the public to raise awareness about sexual assault.