**Freedom from Fear & Violence**

1. **Project Overview**

**Freedom from Fear”** focuses on freeing children from the fear of violence in the family, and freeing families from fear of reporting child abuse; freedom from fear of attending court as a child, freedom from fear for children and youth to stand up for their rights and speak their minds to leaders; and freedom from fear of parents to speak about positive parenting. There is an increase in child abuse and gender-based violence in the family to a pandemic level in Botswana. SSI provides counselling, legal services, identifies opportunities for women to become independent and separate from a dependent perpetrator, provides training to service providers in handling child sexual abuse incidents.

**Rationale for the project**

***Child abuse and children’s rights in Botswana:***There are no reliable national figures of the number of abused, abandoned, and neglected children because some cases are not reported (discussion with representatives from Childline, Botswana). Researchers suggest the problem is underreported. Seloilwe & Thupayagale-Tshweneagae (2009) observed that the extent of the problem of child abuse in Botswana is far larger than currently reflected in police and other government statistics. Police data are often incomplete and limited; and many cases go unreported for fear of stigmatization. Most are ‘hidden’ in an attempt to preserve the family’s social status and integrity (Botswana Police, 2001). Botswana has been ranked number two in the world for most rape cases per capita (92.4 per 100,000).

Research shows the highest prevalence of child sexual abuse in the world is in South Africa where 42% had experienced some form of maltreatment, whether sexual, physical, or emotional and neglect. A lot of abuse takes place in the home (Pereda et al., 2009). Children in Botswana expressed that it is common for them to witness domestic violence, be subjected to violence, and experience angry adults shouting and beating. Children noted that some parents, guardians and caregivers at the household level are negligent, sexually, emotionally and/or physical abusive to children (UNICEF, 2011). Recent research showed that among 13- to 19-year-olds; 22% of students say their sexual debut was forced; 13% of girls reported having been pregnant (Botswana Youth Risk Behavioral and Biological Surveillance Survey, BYRBSS II, 2016).

***Gender equality and GBV***: The Botswana National Relationship Study (2018) indicates slightly over a third of women in Botswana (37%) reported experiencing some form of GBV in their lifetime including partner and non-partner violence. Slightly less than a third (30%) of men reported perpetrating GBV. Likewise, 21% of men interviewed reported experiencing some form of violence, while 12% of women reported ever perpetrating violence in their lifetime. This shows a need to target both boys and girls to address issues of sexual abuse. Few cases of gender-based violence are reported to police. The successful conviction rate of GBV cases is less than 1% of GBV experienced.

***Child-friendly services:***Botswana has inadequate child-friendly health, counselling and police services and child-friendly process in courts. Service providers are not sufficiently trained, thus inadequate service delivery creates high barriers to report or access services. Few child abuse cases make it to court, nor are perpetrators often convicted. In 2000, only 16 cases of criminal abuse and neglect of children were convicted in Botswana. Recent data are lacking, but there are no signs that this number has changed. In the 2016, the Violence Against Children preliminary results, the service uptake and disclosure for children who experienced physical violence and reported seeking help was 10.9% of females and 11.5% of males. This demonstrates the low use of services for any child abuse.

1. **Beneficiaries and Support to be Provided to Overcome Barriers**

The following table highlights the services that will be provided during the state of emergency in Botswana and after the period while returning to a sense of normalcy.

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| **Beneficiaries** | **Barriers** | **Freedom from Fear Solutions** |
| 1. Children and youth ages 10-19
 | Lack of support from service providers and rarely youth friendly. Not conventionally given a voice in public service situations. Some experience violence or other forms of abuse in the family.  | Provide counselling, educational support and accompany children to service providers for support. Establish a line for children to call in case of emergency. SSI has 12 staff in the communities physically visiting families and responding to calls.  |
| 1. Parents / Caregivers
 | Minimal services for parents to tap into for support. Their understanding of what their children access on social media and internet inhibits their ability to understand their children’s world. Parents are often not proactive. Understanding and meaning in parents’ lives of the Children’s Act and their responsibilities in protecting children is limited  | Conduct home visits to provide parents with parenting tips, support family counselling both by phone and in person. Provide food packs for those who did not receive government services.  |
| 1. Service Providers (health, social welfare, guidance teachers, Dikgosi (chiefs), police)
 | A need for further education and support on the Children’s Act, improving services for children so that they are more likely to report abuse and referral processes.  | SSI has developed strong relationships with service providers in the stipulated districts and through discussion, they requested support. SSI will provide online GBV training support through a Gender based violence Therapist and Specialist. |
| 1. Media
 | Tendency to sensationalize acts of violence and treat them as isolated acts. Need correct information  | SSI will be on radio with parenting tips, importance of reporting and air the infomercial on BTV and radio which focuses on the importance of reporting child sexual abuse. SSI will also distribute through social media – Freedom from Fear posters which were designed and tested with communities.  |

1. **OUTCOMES**

SSI will double the following services:

* Psychosocial support for victims of abuse, neglect and violence (1300+ served to date)
* Provision of legal services for those in need (450+ served to date)
* Safe shelter & advocacy for victims fleeing extreme violence (15+ served to date)
* Continuous education on identifying signs of GBV, ensuring children understand their rights and parents speak out for children through the provision of educational materials from WHO and MoHW
* Provider Training on Trauma-Informed Counselling

**Potential Long-Term Impact**

 “Freedom from Fear” focuses on freeing children from the fear of violence in the family over the long term. Parents will have skills to handle stress as well as anger management. Children will have access to help and learn new coping skills. Furthermore, SSI will link the child to legal services, safe shelter and assist mothers with income generation where needed to be self-sufficient. The trauma counseling training and resource support to other service providers will ensure service providers are equipped to meet the needs of impacted families now and well-into the future.