

Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) Swaziland

The organization was established in 1990 by a group of Swazi women who were concerned about the increasing rate of abuse against women in the country, and the lack of services to support them. The main objective was to provide counseling support to women experiencing violence. Originally, the organization operated through volunteers and as the number of people seeking counseling services increased, there was a need to set up offices. The organization started with one counseling site and has now expanded to eleven counseling sites through out the country.

Objectives

1. To empower survivors of abuse through counseling.
2. To bring about positive change in behaviour and attitudes through education and thereby preventing and equipping people to deal with abuse.
3. To bring about change in social, cultural norms.

Programme Description

SWAGAA provides extensive training to various community institutions in order to strengthen their capacity to respond to women and children experiencing violence as well as contribute to a climate that is supportive of women's right to live free of violence.

Health Care Providers. Nurses have constant and direct contact with survivors of abuse and as such, SWAGAA is committed to strengthening their capacity to provide quality care for women experiencing violence. A core group of nurses have been extensively trained on gender-based violence.

Teachers. An intense training was conducted with teachers to deepen their understanding about gender-based violence. They are now able to identify children affected by abuse as both primary and secondary survivors. They provide referrals to SWAGAA and support those students experiencing violence at home. In a collaboration with the Strategic Education Committee, teachers were also equipped with information on HIV/AIDS and how they can best support the girl child in HIV prevention.

Police, Prosecutors and Social Workers. SWAGAA has created links with the police who are now strong stakeholders in the referral system and SWAGAA's programmes. They depend on SWAGAA to assist in training workshops within their institution. A core group of police officers, prosecutors and social workers have also been trained to handle sexual violence cases effectively with an emphasis on decreasing secondary victimization.

Traditional Healers. Leaders of the two major traditional healer associations are working with SWAGAA to prepare a training process for their colleagues. The training will include gender, HIV/AIDS and violence.

Notable Innovation

Working with a cross-section of stakeholder agencies

SWAGAA approaches community institutions holistically, recognizing that the experiences and skills of one, can build on and support others. They offer the following suggestions for other organizations working with multiple stakeholder institutions.

- Each organization brings its unique strengths and skills that can strengthen different community institutions. Choosing sectors based on an organization's unique skills will produce more meaningful partnerships.
- Each organization has its perspective and identity, which may differ from how others perceive them. It is important to be aware of how this affects an organization's reputation with the community institutions.
- View the community as the 'whole picture' with each institution and agency making up a 'part' of the community. For the whole to function, the 'parts' must come together and that each 'part' has a specific role to play.
- Strategic thinking involves each organization to become aware of what role a given institution can play in preventing GBV and then working with the institution to strengthen its capacity to play that role.
- Recognize that community members need multiple services and that societal change can occur only when many groups are involved. Reach out to other groups and help them understand GBV.