

THEATRE
FOR A **CHANGE**



Interactive Radio Drama Training Summary Report for VSO Mozambique - September 2019



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Introduction

In June 2017, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and Theatre for a Change (TfaC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together in partnership, with TfaC providing training and technical support to VSO volunteers and staff in the use of TfaC's methodology in support of VSO's work on adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (AYSRHR).

In September 2019, two TfaC trainers travelled to Maputo, Mozambique and trained 11 participants as Interactive Radio Drama (IRD) producers, with the goal of equipping with the knowledge and skills to produce IRD that challenges toxic masculinity - and promotes healthy and balanced perceptions and expressions of masculinity - among 13 to 15-year-old boys in select Maputo schools.

The Training

The 15-day training was held at Hotel Avenida in Maputo from 2nd September to 20th September 2019. The training involved six VSO National Volunteers and five volunteers from the Associação Socio Cultural Horizonte Azul (ASCHA), one of VSO's local partners who work on gender and SRHR issues in Maputo schools.

The training began with a series of team building activities designed to develop trust and co-operation in the group. These activities introduced key themes like self-awareness and equal participation which would run throughout the training period.

The training then focused on gender expectations in a Mozambican context. The group explored how they are expected to use their voices, bodies and space as young women and men, where these influences come from, and how this leads to risk in relation to their sexual and reproductive health. They also explored their perceptions of what it means to 'be a real man' or to 'be a real woman', how these deeply cultured and ingrained perceptions get acted out in daily life, and how these perceptions influence decision-making and behaviour related to relationships and sex. Gender-based violence was an issue that kept arising during this exploratory process. The group also explored ways to challenge these expectations, and experimented with ways of changing their own perceptions of gender, and using their voices, bodies and space differently - for example, using your voice assertively and confidently as women, and using non-dominating body language as men. Many participants remarked how "eye-opening" and "life-changing" this experience was for them.

A visit to a target school was conducted on the second training day. This gave the group the chance to conduct focus group discussions with 13 to 17-year-old boys and girls, to learn more first-hand about their relationships and behaviours that are putting their sexual and reproductive health at risk. The group then learned how to turn these real stories and experiences into a 10-episode narrative arc radio drama series, with one central protagonist and three secondary protagonists.



After developing the narrative arc, the group learned how to develop stories and characters for each episode, and how to perform these for radio. During this process, the group went back to the school and performing episode one live for the same group of students who were interviewed, along with VSO global and country office staff, to receive feedback on the stories and characters, and to make sure they were speaking to the reality of the students' lives.

The group also learned how to record IRD on-location, and edit IRD using Hindenburg editing software. Training was also given to select group members in how to develop magazine broadcast scripts, and how to present those scripts and facilitate interactive touch tag on radio, where the audience is invited to call into the radio station and change the behaviour of the main character in the radio drama live on air.

Near the end of the training, the group delivered a 'mock broadcast' which saw them simulate the exact conditions of a live broadcast at Maxaquene Community Radio Station.



The core radio team with focus group discussion participants at Maxaquene Secondary School.



Key successes

- Excellent planning, coordination and communication between VSO and TfaC before and during the training period.
- Smooth integration of VSO and ASCHA volunteers as part of the core radio team.
- Excellent attendance, participation, energy and commitment from the group throughout the training period.
- Demonstrable development of key skill sets among group, including both creative and technical aspects of IRD production and presentation.
- Existing skill sets already within group, which can be utilized and further developed for this project – e.g. Elvino’s music mixing skills, Lucia’s radio news-reading skills.
- Transitioning from water bottles to refillable water tank - saving hundreds of plastic bottles over the course of the training period.
- Swift response from VSO management team when challenges did arise (see below).

Key challenges

- Radio equipment was confiscated at airport and held until customs duty was paid. VSO staff acted swiftly and negotiated release of equipment in time for its use.
- One ASCHA volunteer dropped out of the training halfway through due to a misunderstanding over the time commitment involved in the project. Again, VSO acted swiftly and replaced them immediately, which minimized the impact of this disruption on the group.
- Some safeguarding issues arose from some of the girls we spoke with during the school visit - initially the team was unsure how to respond to them, but after some support from TfaC and VSO central, a clear and manageable action plan was developed for how to support these girls and mitigate these risks to the project.
- The project implementation period has been reduced from 10 weeks to five weeks due to circumstances beyond the project’s control. As a result, the team will need to work extra hard to achieve impact during these crucial five weeks, which can be helped by frontloading the production of IRD before broadcasts begin in mid-October.
- During one of the recording sessions, a female participant was recording and made a mistake. A male participant remarked that “she should just let a man do it”. Khensani, the team lead, immediately challenged this comment, and a constructive discussion ensued. This incident revealed that even attitudes among some core radio team members are not gender sensitive or equal, and still need attention and support.

Feedback from participants

Having read the Evaluation Forms which the group completed on the final day of the training, feedback is mostly very positive, with the average score for each section as follows (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree):

Statement	Average score
1. The objectives of the training were clearly defined.	4.82
2. Participation and interaction were encouraged.	4.91
3. The topics covered were relevant to me.	4.70
4. The content was organized and easy to follow.	4.73
5. The materials distributed were helpful.	4.64
6. This training experience will be useful in my work.	4.90
7. The trainers were knowledgeable about the training topics.	4.82
8. The trainers were well prepared.	5.00
9. The training objectives were met.	4.64

When asked how this training impacted them personally and professionally, participants responded in the following ways:

“This training was undoubtedly important - it developed skills that I had never imagined would be so important to the existence of any human being. To listen attentively and allow others the space and time to share their thoughts was a particularly spectacular aspect of the training. During some of the activities we learnt, I developed the skill to place myself in the shoes of others - particularly in relation to their felt and lived emotions. I was also able to improve my own sense of this. The calm and attentive approach adopted by the trainers proved essential in developing this spirit of interaction and equal participation. Thank you TFAC.”



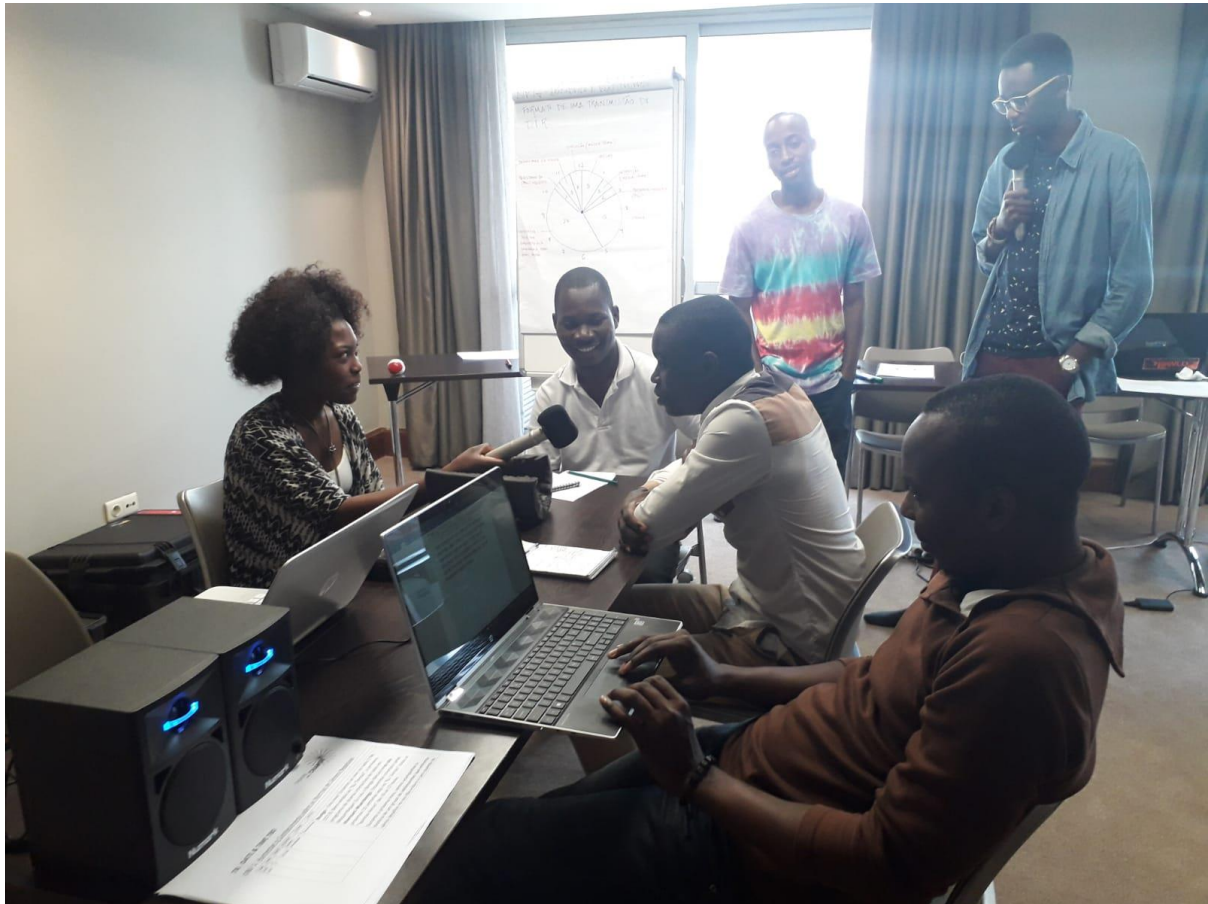
“The training had important impact - during the 3-week process, my knowledge regarding gender and communication increased significantly. I began the training with knowledge and skills related to the televisual medium and communication. This training has added another string to that bow by adding skills required for radio, particularly interactive radio. I have never devised or performed. During this training, I picked up many skills and tips.”

“The impact of this training has been significant – I have been able to increase my knowledge about communication, theatre, gender norms and other matters in a short space of time. I came to the training with prior knowledge about communication via radio, but I now realise how much I did not know. I look forward to exploring this new-found knowledge further.”

Recommendations and next steps

Theatre for a Change would recommend the following:

1. Developing and implementing a safeguarding policy for this project specific to sexual harassment reporting procedures within target schools. Broadcasts can be used to promote these procedures and also provide information about specific support services and resources available in the communities surrounding target schools where survivors of sexual harassment and abuse can go to get help.
2. As a scaling up strategy, exploring the possibility of using the methodology to train teachers as life skills facilitators in schools. Embedding the methodology within the national teaching curriculum will enable greater access to students and resources for listening clubs and behaviour change among adolescents.
3. Further developing relationship with Ministry of Education officials, to gain broader support for working within the curriculum with teachers on male engagement and adolescent SRHR.
4. Linked to recommendation 3, involving MoE and other key stakeholders/potential funders as much as possible in pilot – e.g. by inviting them to the studio or listening clubs for live broadcasts.
5. After the pilot, seeing whether a larger national broadcaster might be interested in broadcasting the series and potentially funding it – thereby increasing reach and impact of programme.
6. Exploring corporate partners as a scaling-up funding strategy.
7. Investing in the professional development of the core radio team, and utilizing their WhatsApp group as a monitoring tool and platform for sharing best practises regularly.



The core radio team rehearsing for their first live broadcast.

Conclusion

It is clear that the group responded very positively to this training, both in terms of the participatory nature of the methodology, and their ability to develop IRD skills quickly. Group trust and identity formed quickly and easily, and the group worked very well together - they have a natural instinct for openness, inclusivity and equal participation, and these will be some of their key strengths moving forwards.

As the production cycle continues and pressure increases to produce radio content on time, it will become increasingly important for the group not to skip over steps in the process of devising – like character development and rehearsing – that will help them keep the quality of their output high. Enabling different participants to lead on areas of the work they are most interested and skilled in, while at the same time maintaining a sense of collective ownership over the content they produce, will be an ongoing, but very manageable, challenge.



The group has already started thinking about the next series of IRD they want to produce, which shows great interest and enthusiasm about using the approach in the long-term. We would encourage VSO to invest in their professional development - individually and collectively – and begin to identify opportunities now, with TfaC's involvement and support, for scaling up and sustaining the work over time.

We are already proud of what this group has achieved, and very much look forward to following them on this exciting journey, and supporting them however we can.



The core radio team with TfaC trainers.