THEATRE FOR A CHANGE

Summary Report on one-week Interactive Theatre refresher training with VSO Swaziland

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1. 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 interactive theatre techniques for advocacy and behaviour change in support of VSO's work on adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights (AYSRHR).

In February 2018, TfaC travelled to Manzini, Swaziland and trained 18 peer educators from Red Cross and Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS) in Interactive Theatre for Behaviour Change. After the training, the peer educators went back to their communities in all four regions of Swaziland and facilitated workshops and Interactive Theatre performances that impacted hundreds of their peers and community members.

In October 2018, TfaC returned to Swaziland and held a refresher training with the 10 original participants from FLAS with the aim of further developing the breadth and depth of their Interactive Theatre performance, facilitation and leadership skills.

2. Planning

Planning for the refresher training had two main areas:

1. The first was content planning, ensuring that we integrated the needs of the group into the delivery of the refresher training, and that training content would directly support VSO's AYSRHR strategy in country. We did this by consulting with VSO and FLAS staff, and asking each of the participants to complete a needs assessment survey before the training began. A five-day training curriculum was developed with these needs in mind, mainly focused on increasing the group's Interactive Theatre performance and facilitation skills.
2. The second involved logistical planning, including venue hire, stationery procurement, travel/accommodation for the participants and TfaC trainer, and organising the community performance.

3. The group

The 10 participants were all Volunteer Youth and Peer Educators with FLAS.

There were 2 women and 8 men in the group, all between the ages of 19-24.

5 are based in Manzini, 2 in Mbabane, 1 in Big Bend, 1 in Kukhanyeni, and 1 in Nhlangano.

2 female VSO volunteers and 1 female FLAS member of staff also took part in the training.

The group reflecting on the implementation of the work in their communities so far.

4. Needs Assessment findings

All participants completed a Needs Assessment at the start of the training. Results of this assessment were as follows:

- All participants reported implementing the initial training over the past eight months. Many of the participants reported cascading the training onto their peers, with one participant saying her group "fell in love with Touch Tag" - the part of Interactive Theatre whereby the audience is invited to change the behaviour of the main character - "because they were part of what was happening and it's something they see in their everyday life".
- Successes while delivering the initial training over the past eight months include:
    - High interest and involvement among young people in activities;
    - Improved self-confidence, positive attitude about improving SRH and facilitation skills;
    - Participants "discovering their talents" through the training;
    - Participants being able to overcome their shyness to facilitate in big crowds;
    - Increased motivation among young women and men wanting change in their communities;
    - Parents' involvement and engagement in activities; and
    - Invitations from other communities/churches to host SRHR-themed open day events including Interactive Theatre performances.
- Challenges while delivering the initial training over the past eight months include:
    - Lack of SRHR knowledge among youth;
    - Irregular attendance in workshops due to participants' busy schedules;
    - Participants wanting money and food to participate;
    - Some feeling facilitators should "be more discreet" when discussing SRHR issues;
    - Barriers to disabled youth participating due to transport and lack of available support on site;
    - Drug addiction among "huge number of youth" making it difficult to change SRH-related behaviour;
    - Working with different age groups in one session; and
    - Overall group management.

- Participants said they wanted to develop their skills in the following areas during this refresher training:
    - How to engage more young people in Touch Tag;
    - How to manage/facilitate with different age groups;
    - How to more effectively engage with disabled participants and parents;
    - How to develop resilience among young people;
    - How to facilitate body sculpting;
    - How to improve their public speaking skills; and
    - How to generate more community support for SRHR activities.

One participant also requested that the trainer "help us more especially on concentration by putting a lot of pressure on us as this is a very serious matter," referring to SRHR in Swaziland.

These needs were addressed throughout the refresher training in the following ways:

1. The group devised two new Interactive Theatre pieces focused on two SRHR issues that they felt were of immediate relevance in their communities: women's inability to negotiate condom use with men, and older men who bribe girls with money and gifts in exchange for sex. During this process, the group further developed their facilitation and devising skills, including the facilitation of key devising activities like body sculpting, come alive, hot seating, mapping, and power/status activities. Every participant also had the chance to design, deliver and receive feedback on one learning energiser of their choice throughout the week. The group also filmed and watched themselves rehearsing their performances, which gave them the opportunity to observe and critique themselves and each other using a Performance Skills Checklist. The group also practised their performance and facilitation skills in the community at the end of the week, which allowed them to experiment with ways to engage audiences in Touch Tag. The practical nature of the refresher training gave participants the chance to further develop key skills like facilitation, public speaking and engaging with audiences/building community support for SRHR activities and behaviour change.
2. On the last day of the training, we spent some time developing work plans with each participant for the next four months (November 2018 - February 2019). The participants are now clear about how many workshops and performances they are expected to organise in their communities, and how to report on numbers of people reached, and successes and challenges along the way. We also formed a WhatsApp group which is already alive and buzzing with updates from their communities. The work plans and WhatsApp group should help the group organise and manage themselves, and work in a more independent and sustainable way.

3. During the training week, we also explored ways to overcome many group management issues they were facing, like irregular attendance, participants not following basic ground rules, and how to develop equal participation in group activities. The participants reported feeling much more confident and prepared to deliver this work in the community by the end of the week.

5. The training

The refresher training was held at the Bethel Court Hotel in Ezulwini over five days, from 22nd October to 26th October 2018. VSO, FLAS and TfaC agreed on the following aim and indicators in advance of the training:

Aim: 10 FLAS peer educators increase their ability to plan, perform and facilitate Interactive Theatre for SRHR behaviour change in their communities.

Indicators:

1. No. of facilitators demonstrating knowledge of how to devise, perform and facilitate Interactive Theatre for Behaviour Change.
2. No. of facilitators demonstrating increased confidence as leaders of the methodology in their communities.
3. No. of facilitators demonstrating increased performance, facilitation and leadership skills.

The first day focused on developing equal participation in the group, and taking stock of where the work was at in their communities – including the successes and challenges they have faced, reviewing how to design and facilitate learning energisers, and exploring attacking, avoiding and assertive behaviours.

On day two, participants shared stories related to SRH risk that either they or their peers have experienced in the past eight months. The group then created sculptures showing the 'crisis' moment in those stories, as well as sculptures showing what happened before and after that moment. The day ended with the group sharing their sculptures and role plays with each other, and receiving feedback on the 5 w's of their story - i.e. who, what, when, where, why.

The third day focused on developing characters using activities like hot seating, character objectives, power/status and mapping. We also reviewed the steps for facilitating Touch Tag, and began to practise changing the stories that the group devised.

On day four, the group recorded and watched themselves performing. Participants used a performance skills checklist to give feedback to each other on how believable and powerful their performances were, and how they could use their voices, bodies and space differently

to have even more of an impact on audiences. In the afternoon, the group performed in a community north of Manzini. Around 20 people attended the performance - a mix of women and men, mostly in their 30s and 40s.

The last day focused on developing participant work plans, which asked the group to decide on the dates, times and locations of their workshops and performances over the next four months. All participants have committed to delivering the following activities:

1. Forming a peer group of 20 participants (facilitators in Manzini and Mbabane will combine groups);
2. Facilitating four story devising workshops in November that will result in at least two new Interactive Theatre pieces focused on SRHR issues relevant to their group members;
3. A dress rehearsal and two community performances at the end of November;
4. Six community performances in December;
5. Four new story devising workshops in January 2019;
6. A dress rehearsal and two community performances at the end of January; and
7. Six community performances in February, followed by an activities summary report.

The idea was also floated to have a conference at the halfway point, perhaps in early January 2019, to evaluate 'phase one' of the project and plan for 'phase two'.

Participants were given certificates at the end of the training, which served to boost their confidence and motivation to implement the work in their communities. A WhatsApp group was also formed.

A participant facilitates Touch Tag during a community performance.

6. What went well and what was challenging?

Successes include:

- *Good planning and organisation despite fast turnaround time.* Venue, accommodation, training materials and transport were all organised within a few weeks' time due to good coordination and communication between VSO, FLAS and Theatre for a Change.
- *Excellent attendance and participation throughout the week.* All participants came every day to the workshops and participation was consistently high.
- *Demonstrable behaviour change among participants throughout the week.* At the start of the week, some participants arrived late for the morning session and after lunch. By Wednesday, those same participants were arriving as much as 30 minutes before the scheduled start time. After the morning break on Thursday, the participant assigned to facilitate a learning energiser started the activity exactly on time. Another participant joked "that's unlike you to be on time!" - demonstrating a recognition and awareness within the group that individual behaviours were changing.
- *Demonstrable improvement in participants' ability to perform and facilitate Interactive Theatre, and reflect on their development of these skills.* Many participants commented during Friday's reflection that they felt more knowledgeable and confident about devising, performing and facilitating Interactive Theatre than they did at the start of the week. This increase in knowledge and confidence was evident throughout the week as the group devised and critically analysed their stories, and gave each other feedback on ways to have an even greater impact on audiences, and get them to want to get involved in Touch Tag. This ability to critically reflect and analyse their work, and make changes accordingly, will serve them greatly as they continue to develop as leaders of this work in their communities.
- *Motivation, excitement and energy created to implement training in communities.* As a result of the refresher training, the group now feels more motivated, excited and energised about implementing the second phase of this work in their community over the next four months.

Challenges include:

- *Gender imbalance of group.* The mix of eight male and only two female participants meant that it was a constant challenge to balance the group's participation along gender lines, and especially support the female participants in participating actively. It was also challenging to explore sensitive issues like patriarchy and gender-based violence with so many male participants in the group, who wanted to focus instead on

ways in which men and boys are being oppressed in society. The trainer brought attention to how gender was playing out in the group as the week unfolded, but the numbers made this a challenging situation to overcome.

- *Keeping the dramatic tension and energy in performances high.* The group found it challenging to devise stories with high levels of dramatic tension, which are necessary to capture and sustain an audience's attention, and compel them to act during Touch Tag. Similarly, the group struggled to facilitate Touch Tag with a sense of urgency required to engage with audiences and support them in getting involved in changing the story. These challenges seemed largely due to the group's age and gender - i.e. the challenge of a group of young men feeling outrage at what is happening to their female peers - and will likely change as they mature and develop greater empathy and understanding of injustice and rights. The trainer tried to develop this sense of urgency with the group throughout the week through demonstration and open discussion, but this will take some time for the group to internalise and truly find their collective use of 'voice'.
- *Need for more child protection and rights-based training for the group.* The group performed two stories in the community on Thursday afternoon. One story was about a 16-year-old girl who was responsible for supporting her two younger brothers financially, and turns to a "blesser" - an older, wealthier man in her community - for help. The "blesser" invites her with him on a business trip to Durban, and while they are in his hotel room, he rapes her. At the end of the story, the facilitator asked the audience "Who could the girl go to for help in this situation?" A male audience member responded by saying "Why does she need help? She got herself into this situation in the first place. She knew that's what the guy wanted when she agreed to accept money from him. If she wanted to avoid this situation, she should drop out of school and find a job so she doesn't have to trade money for sex." The rest of the audience agreed. Another man chimed in: "The blesser is helping her out by giving her money that she needs. He should be thanked for this." The facilitators were unsure how to challenge these perceptions, and turned to the FLAS project officer for support. She reminded the audience that the girl has the right to education, and that she also has the right to be free from all forms of sexual violence and abuse, including coerced sex. With this in mind, the audience Touch Tagged the girl and experimented with going to her teacher and other trusted adults in the community for help.

7. Impact evaluation results

Theatre for a Change conducted a survey before and after the refresher training to measure the achievement of the training aim and related indicators. Results from the survey are as follows:

Indicator	% of participants achieving indicator at Baseline	% of participants achieving indicator at Endline	% change
1. Knowledge of how a facilitator can encourage equal participation in a group.	50	58	+8
2. Detailed knowledge of the steps involved in designing a learning energiser.	8	50	+42
3. Comprehensive knowledge of the differences between assertive, attacking and avoiding behaviours.	25	75	+50
4. Comprehensive knowledge of activities a facilitator can use to create stories/characters for an Interactive Theatre performance.	17	91	+74
5. Comprehensive knowledge of at least 3 key questions to ask when facilitating audience Touch Tag.	17	50	+33
6. Knowledge of skills that make a good Interactive Theatre facilitator.	75	100	+25

The areas of biggest growth include an increase in comprehensive knowledge of activities a facilitator can use to create stories/characters for Interactive Theatre (75% increase), and comprehensive knowledge of the differences between assertive, attacking and avoiding behaviours (50% increase). These results make sense, given that the training was intending to refresh and expand participants' knowledge and skills in story devising and character development activities, and that a significant part of the training week was spent developing assertive skills as a response to attacking and avoiding behaviours.

Knowledge of how a facilitator can encourage equal participation in a group showed the least amount of growth (8% increase). This could be due to a misinterpretation of the assessment question, which asked participants to "name 3 ways a facilitator can encourage equal participation in a group." In response to this question, most participants identified indicators of equal participation – e.g. "participants take turns speaking" – instead of identifying strategies that facilitators can use to encourage participants to take turns speaking – e.g. using a focus ball, doing activities in pairs or small groups, etc.

To measure indicator 7, participants were asked to rate how confident they felt performing certain tasks on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all confident and 10 being extremely confident. The average score for each task at Baseline and Endline follow:

7. Increase confidence performing the following tasks:	Average score at Baseline	Average score at Endline	Change
a. Speaking in public	8.75	8.83	+0.08
b. Saying how you feel	8.25	8.52	+0.27
c. Saying 'no' to something you don't want to do	8.29	8.33	+0.04
d. Asserting your right to speak/have your voice heard	9.17	8.83	-0.34
e. Asserting other people's right to speak/have their voices heard	8.33	7.92	-0.41
f. Devising Interactive Theatre as a participant	7.80	9.00	+1.20
g. Leading the Interactive Theatre devising process as a facilitator	7.55	8.92	+1.37
h. Performing Interactive Theatre	7.60	8.83	+1.23
i. Facilitating Touch Tag	7.40	8.08	+0.68

The areas where participants improved their confidence the most were leading the Interactive Theatre devising process as a facilitator (1.37 point increase), performing Interactive Theatre (1.23 point increase), and devising Interactive Theatre as a participant (1.20 point increase). These results make sense given that these were the main areas of focus throughout the training week.

Two areas – asserting your right to speak/have your voice heard, and asserting other people's right to speak/have their voices heard – saw slight decreases in confidence among the group (-0.34 point and -0.41 point decrease respectively). One possible explanation for this is the emphasis placed on equal participation throughout the week – as a result, one or two participants ended up speaking less throughout the week because they realised they were dominating discussions, so this could possibly have led them to incorrectly conclude that they do not have a right to speak or have their voice heard. It is worth noting, however, that despite the decrease, overall scores are still high, with asserting your right to speak/have your voice heard receiving an 8.83 at the Endline, and asserting other people's right to speak/have their voices heard receiving a 7.92 at the Endline.

An audience member using her voice during the community performance.

8. Feedback from Participants taken from Evaluation Forms

Having read the Evaluation Forms which the participants completed on the final morning of the weeklong 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.	4.92
2. Participation and interaction were encouraged.	4.92
3. The topics covered were relevant to me.	4.75
4. The content was organized and easy to follow.	4.83
5. The materials distributed were helpful.	4.91
6. This training experience will be useful in my work.	5.00
7. The trainer was knowledgeable about the training topics.	4.92
8. The trainer was well prepared.	4.92
9. The training objectives were met.	4.82

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

"I've learnt a lot in this training all information helped me to develop my skills in facilitating now I know what exactly I have to say and questions I have to ask the audience so to make it easy for them to do touch tag. In story devising again I've learnt a lot, my skill was developed a lot now I can devise a story without any problem. I am even able to teach other people in my community."

"Personally: I have learnt the importance of assertiveness and respect other peoples' views. Professionally: I have learnt to be always punctual, explain things clearly, be confident and use the space around me and my voice."

"As an individual the training has helped me to gain more confidence in body expression and movement. Now I am self-aware of my behaviour when working with a group. This will be great knowledge to apply in my work and in achieving behaviour change among peers and community/ies."

"The train was very useful to me as it got impact in my life. It develop my character and improve my facilitation skills. It also changed my attitude in my aspect of life. It also gain knowledge, this will help me to facilitate interactive theatre in my community."

"In terms of my personally I was so much touched as the topics were covered were relevant to me and its what I have been facing with ever since I was a child. Now I've learned to face whatever challenge in my life as I am a soldier into my life. Professionally I can say am now a professional in terms of theatre for behaviour change in Eswatini. Am hoping to be good more than I am rite now."

9. Next Steps and Recommendations

Theatre for a Change would recommend the following:

1. The work plans that the group have developed are closely monitored and supported as needed, including site visits and/or telephone monitoring calls on a regular basis.
2. The WhatsApp group is utilised as a monitoring tool as well as a platform for sharing best practises, videos and photos of the work.
3. The group receives additional child protection and rights-based training to support them in their peer education and community-based advocacy work.
4. A midway conference is organised if possible to reconvene the group and provide them with an opportunity to share best practises and learning from phase one, and to plan together for phase two of delivery.
5. Relationship building continues with key SRHR stakeholders in country, who can be invited to help organise and take part in workshops and performances, and strengthen their response to promoting AYSRHR in their communities.
6. Plans are developed for how to embed and integrate the knowledge and skills that the group has developed through these trainings into future VSO/FLAS programming.
7. Gender balancing the group for future SRHR trainings and activities, if not deliberately recruiting more women than men.
8. Supporting and nurturing individual participants who have shown exceptional promise as facilitators and leaders of the work.

10. Conclusion

This refresher training served as an important opportunity for the group to come together, reflect on the implementation of the work so far, further refine their peer facilitation skills, and generate fresh energy and momentum for taking the work into a new and exciting phase of its implementation.

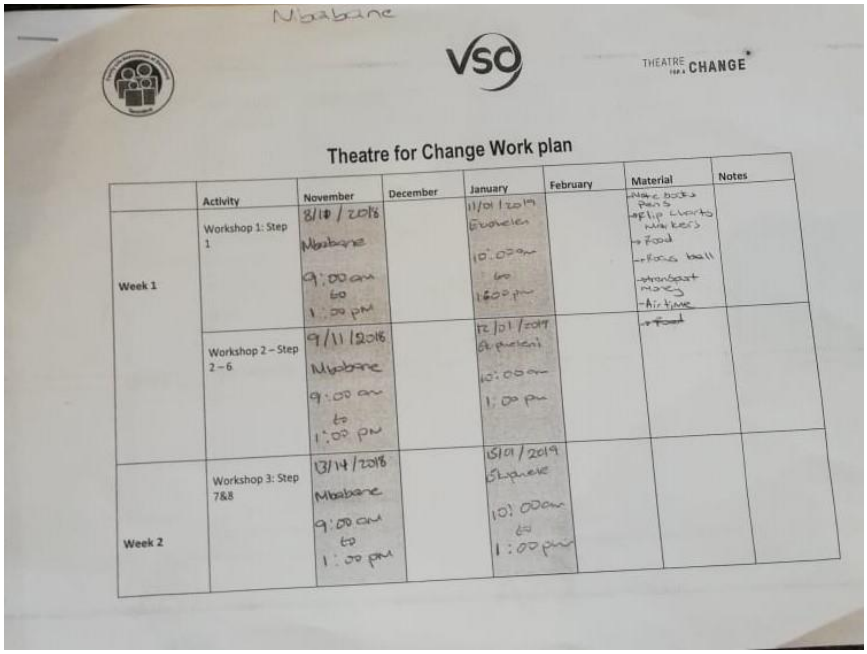
The participants' recollection of knowledge and skills from the previous training was strong, although it was clear that certain areas - like facilitating Touch Tag - still needed more practise and support. The group is still maturing themselves as SRHR activists and leaders, so continuing to invest in their development and growth will be important moving forwards, in order to maximise their impact and reach on the communities they serve.

It is clear that the group has already had a tremendous impact in their communities - and with the right monitoring and support, they have the potential to make an even bigger difference as this new phase of work begins.

We look forward to following them on this journey, and supporting them however we can.

Annex 1 – Participant work plans (examples)

Work plan for Mbabane, November 2018 - February 2019



Mbabane

VSO

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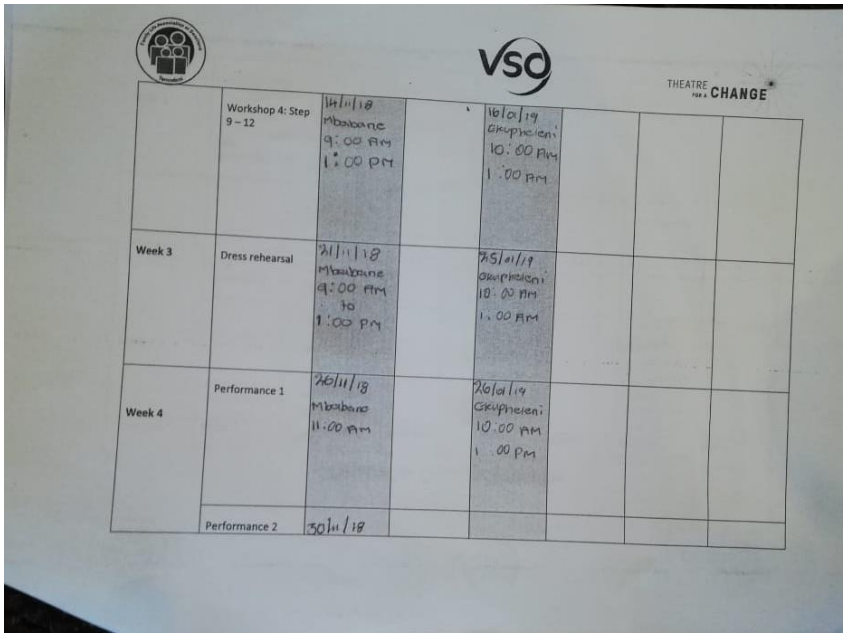
Theatre for Change Work plan

	Activity	November	December	January	February	Material	Notes
Week 1	Workshop 1: Step 1	8/10/2018 Mbabane 9:00 am to 1:00 pm		11/01/2019 Ekuheleni 10:00 am to 1:00 pm		Note books Pens → Flip charts Markers → Food → Focus ball → transport money → Air time	
	Workshop 2 – Step 2 – 6	9/11/2018 Mbabane 9:00 am to 1:00 pm		12/01/2019 Ekupheleni 10:00 am 1:00 pm		→ Food	
Week 2	Workshop 3: Step 7&8	13/14/2018 Mbabane 9:00 am to 1:00 pm		15/01/2019 Ekupheleni 10:00 am to 1:00 pm			



VSO

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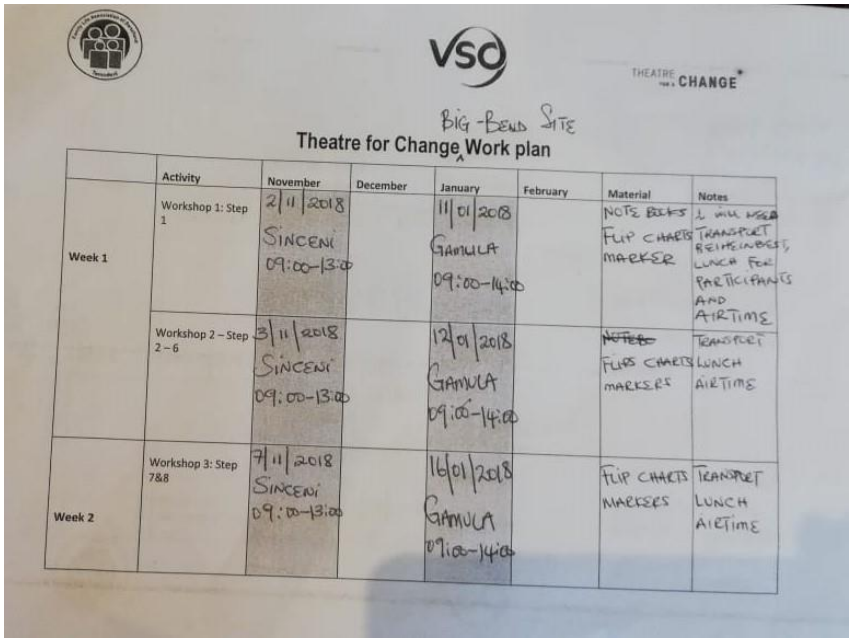
	Workshop 4: Step 9 – 12	14/11/18 Mbabane 9:00 AM 1:00 PM		16/01/19 Ekupheleni 10:00 AM 1:00 AM			
Week 3	Dress rehearsal	21/11/18 Mbabane 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM		25/01/19 Ekupheleni 10:00 AM 1:00 AM			
Week 4	Performance 1	26/11/18 Mbabane 11:00 AM		26/01/19 Ekupheleni 10:00 AM 1:00 PM			
	Performance 2	30/11/18					

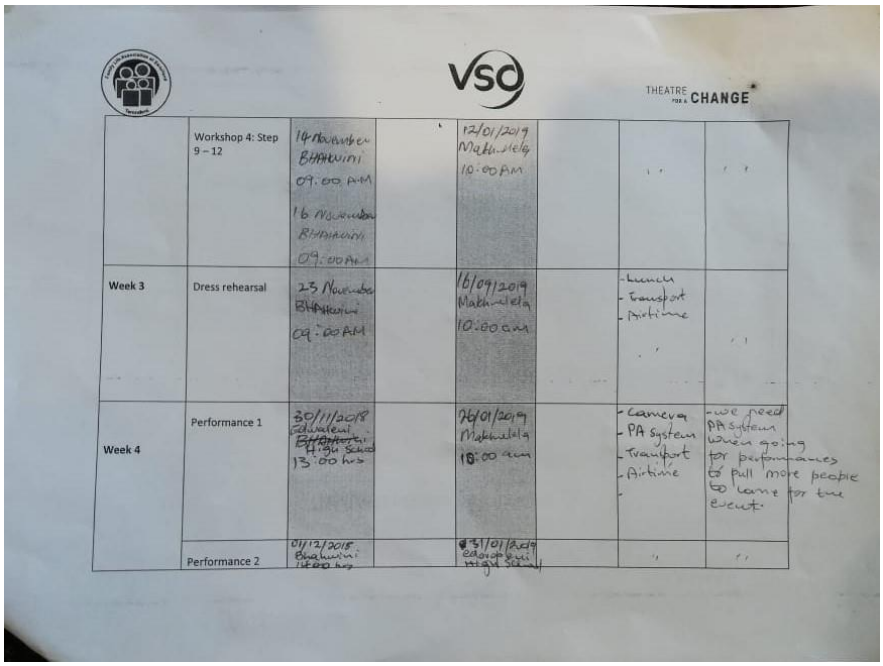
Work plan for Big Bend, November 2018 - February 2019



Theatre for Change Work plan

Big-Bend Site

	Activity	November	December	January	February	Material	Notes
Week 1	Workshop 1: Step 1	2/11/2018 Sinceni 09:00-13:00		11/01/2018 Gamula 09:00-14:00		Note books Flip charts marker	1 will need transport reimbest, lunch for participants and airtime
	Workshop 2 – Step 2 – 6	3/11/2018 Sinceni 09:00-13:00		12/01/2018 Gamula 09:00-14:00		~~Notebo~~ Flips charts markers	Transport lunch airtime
Week 2	Workshop 3: Step 7&8	7/11/2018 Sinceni 09:00-13:00		16/01/2018 Gamula 09:00-14:00		Flip charts markers	Transport lunch airtime



	Workshop 4: Step 9 – 12	14 November Bhahwini 09:00 AM 16 November Bhahwini 09:00 AM		12/01/2019 Makhulela 10:00 AM		"	"
Week 3	Dress rehearsal	23 November Bhahwini 09:00 AM		16/09/2019 Makhulela 10:00 am		- Lunch - Transport - Airtime	"
Week 4	Performance 1	30/11/2018 Edwaleni ~~Bhahwini~~ High School 13:00 hrs		26/01/2019 Makhulela 10:00 am		- Camera - PA System - Transport - Airtime	- we need PA system when going for performances to pull more people to come for the event.
	Performance 2	01/12/2018 Bhahwini 14:00 hrs		31/01/2019 Edwaleni High School		"	"