

# MAKING ACCESS REAL

**Have a Heart**

Health Empowerment Rights

(H.E.R)





**Title:** Have a Heart  
**Organisation:** Health Empowerment Rights (H.E.R)  
**Country:** Botswana  
**Date:** December 2017

### Who are we?

Health Empowerment Rights (H.E.R) is an organisation whose mandate is to amplify the voice of marginalised women, and therefore create an enabling environment for the versatility of women, introspection, self appreciation, and diversity in addressing issues affecting women. H.E.R does this through training and education, as well as partnership building and advocacy within Botswana and across the Southern Africa sub region. H.E.R. is based in Gaborone and works in the city and surrounding areas. Our members are young feminists, lesbian women, bisexual women, women who have sex with women (WSW), adolescents, HIV positive women and trans-women. We have twenty members and we communicate with them via WhatsApp, facebook, and phone calls. Each target group has a leader who represents them in board meetings, other processes, and events. Members pay a fee of P120 annually, which is our main source of funding. Four volunteers – Founder/Director, Finance Officer, Mobilising Officer, and a KP REACH REACTor– lead most of our work. As part of the KP REACH programme, we work on issues of access to health and other services.

### What was the issue?

Botswana has successfully implemented the UNESCO vision of an Education for All. Basic primary and secondary education are afforded to all citizens at little or no cost, and tertiary

education is supported by government initiatives such as education grants and loans. Yet, a large percentage of girls and boys have been forced out of school by systemic factors, such as poverty, that prevent them from fully enjoying these benefits. They face unplanned pregnancies; and they lack basic human needs like school uniforms and stationery. This exposes them to harsh weather conditions, as well as bullying and humiliation.

At the same time, women are often perceived as victims/oppressed, rather than as change makers. They tend to be invisible and their participation in their communities is not recognized.

### What change did we want to see?

- *Children remaining in school with dignity.* We wanted to raise funds for provision of new and warm school uniforms to under-privileged primary school children in rural areas of Botswana.
- *A spirit of giving back and charity work.* We wanted to raise awareness about these issues and promote a spirit of giving back among our members and in the general society.
- *Women being seen as change agents who can think for themselves and organise.* We wanted to increase recognition and appreciation of women as actors at the forefront of the implementation of the vision 2016 pillar of a compassionate, just and caring nation.

### What did we do?

We started a campaign called “Have a Heart” to collect uniforms for underprivileged children. After the success of a similar campaign with our members in 2015, we decided to run a bigger, better campaign in 2016.



We received funding from the American Embassy in Gaborone. We involved the media; we did an interview with GABZ FM radio station for publicity. We met with different human rights organisations to gain their support. Throughout the month of August 2016, we spread the word about the campaign and encouraged people to attend our family fun day where they could donate uniform items.

Thanks to the good working relationship we had with the Botswana Teachers' Union, the Vice President for Gender and Human Rights at the Union helped us identify schools to work with. We focused on children aged 5-15 in primary schools in Gaborone and surrounding areas. We invited the school children, NGOs, stakeholders, and the LGBTI community to the family fun day.

The event was held at Duranta near the Gaborone Dam's Bojanala Waterfront on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2016. We had artiste performances, DJs and free food. Instead of paying an entrance fee, attendees were asked to bring uniform donations.

### **What did we achieve?**

We managed to collect enough uniform items to reach nearly 400 students. According to reports from their teachers, and the feedback from a monitoring and evaluation meeting we had with all stakeholders, we brought dignity to these children. They no longer had to worry about being bullied and ridiculed due to their appearance, but could concentrate more on their studies. They felt a sense of belonging to the school and community. Additionally, we raised awareness about underprivileged children and the importance of education.

We brought people from different backgrounds together under the umbrella of diversity and humanity, thus promoting working relations with different organisations within and out of the government system.

With the high level of media engagement, we also increased the visibility of our organisation.

Most importantly, we achieved recognition for and appreciation of women in their diversity as change agents, and promoted a positive and inclusive narrative of LGBTI people.

### **What were the key lessons learned?**

- **Collaboration/Partnerships:** A lot of the success of the campaign was due to the good relationships and partnerships we were able to form.
- **Limited Reach:** Due to limited resources and time, we were unable to reach people outside Gaborone. In the future, we would like to give ourselves more time and partner with NGOs and stakeholders outside Gaborone in order to expand our reach.
- **Need/Relevance:** We tapped into a real need. Through this campaign, we realized just how big the need is and just how much people are willing to help. We managed to sell the campaign and are still receiving school uniforms from our members and the society. People are looking forward to the next campaign, and several people have pledged to donate more next year.
- **Funding:** We learnt that we need to diversify our funding sources; rather than depending on one donor, we should have two or three. This would prevent issues with insufficient funding or funding coming in late. We also realized that our existing model worked for us; we could continue to have meetings and workshops using the membership fees and apply for external funding for bigger events.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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