

# **INANDA Family Preservation Project, Inanda, Durban**

**Spoken with: Mrs. Valerie Gugu Mthembu and Mrs. Gloria Luthuli-Chuluvane and with 7 (of the 10) child care workers**

*Mission report*

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*Sabine Ravestijn*

*Purpose of the mission*

*To become familiar with the approach and activities of the Inanda Family Preservation Programme in Durban, which is dealing with youth at risk and their families, and with young offenders and their families. To meet the Safer Cities Project and to see / hear what they are doing.*

## **A. Impression**

The project employs a very intensive approach in which they offer 24 hours-7 days a week service to communities, families, youth at risk and young offenders. The project has developed into a learning centre and is currently providing training to replicate their approach throughout South Africa. The approach and the results so far are successful and suitable for replication in other African countries and cities.

## **B. Activities**

During Apartheid there was no policy on children in conflict with the law. Those children were put into adult prisons. In 1994, after Apartheid was abolished, the government of RSA signed the UN Child's Convention on Children's Rights. The situation of young offenders in South Africa was obviously in conflict with the newly signed Convention. In reaction, the Minister for Correctional Services released all young offenders, unfortunately without a strategy, planning or programme to follow up. This resulted in a crisis which brought together the Ministers of Health, Welfare, Education, Justice and Correctional Services (in an Inter Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk) to come up with solutions. It was decided that each province had to come up with a proposal for a pilot project to develop best practices for replication. The Family Preservation Project was launched in 1996 as a pilot project in Kwazulu Natal Province.

The decision to start this project in Inanda, a big former township of approximately 500.000 people according to a census done in 1996, was based on research conducted to identify the area in Durban with the highest level of young people at risk. The research indicated that most of the children in the prisons and children's homes are from Inanda. Furthermore, Inanda has many broken homes and street children. This situation is caused by the political violence which mainly occurred during the 80s and 90s. This violence displaced many families. Nowadays a lot of young people move into the area to settle because of the availability of cheap vacant land.

## **C. Start-up**

It took the Family Preservation Project 8 months to convince the community and the leadership structures of Inanda to collaborate and co-operate with this initiative. In this respect, the project met with councillors, police station commanders, church leaders, school inspectors, teachers and in the end with the families themselves through using established structures and meetings. The project managed to get the full support of the community structures and local leaders from Inanda. The project collaborates with the schools, the police, the criminal justice system, the health clinics, the shelters for street children, the non governmental and community based organisations, the families, communities and children themselves.

## **D. Contents of the work**

### *The target group*

The Family Preservation project only works with youth identified as being at risk (they receive referrals from all institutions and self referrals), with young people awaiting trial, and with young people who have completed their sentence, who are from Inanda and not older than 25 years.

### *The Team*

The Family Preservation project currently employs 10 highly motivated child care workers, who are all from Inanda. When the project started, its aim was to only recruit people from Inanda to ensure ownership. Unfortunately, in 1996 there were no qualified people available in Inanda. The project therefore recruited 3 child care workers from other areas (they had to be black and Zulu-speaking) and 3 community facilitators (people without any specific education or profession but clearly involved in community work) from Inanda, which were identified by the community leaders. These child care workers have trained the facilitators from Inanda who are now qualified child care workers. These in turn educate and train other people to become qualified child care workers as well.

### *The Components*

The Family Preservation Project is based on a training programme for intensive family support developed by the University of Mexico. This training programme was identified by the South African National Association of Child and Youth Care Workers. The Project adapted it to the South African reality through adding three components to the original. Thus, the FP project consists of four components:

1. Intensive Family Support
2. Family Reunification
3. Youth Mentorship
4. Community Conferencing

#### **1. Intensive Family Support** (by 2 child care workers)

**Dealing with:** children aged 0 - 12 who are from Inanda and are identified as being at risk.

**Objective:** This component aims to prevent the unnecessary removal of children from their family homes.

**Results:** approximately 35 success cases every year.

#### **Activities:**

1. After referral by the schools, the police, welfare or the community, the project first assesses the risk factors. Most of the times these include child abuse, neglect, substance abuse, violence and truancy.

2. Then the child care worker sits with the family to discuss the problem. The idea is to promote open discussion amongst the family members themselves, to be supportive and constructive in order to make the person who is causing the problems realise the effects of his or her behaviour on the family and its members. It often requires a lot of effort because families tend to deny that such problems exist. The child care worker first has to prove the existence of the problem. Then he or she will plan and clarify the objectives of the support together with and for the family. The person causing the trouble will, in principle, not be arrested but will receive counselling instead.
3. Furthermore, the project organises workshops for families at risk. Depending on the needs, all kinds of workshops are offered, such as child abuse awareness, the importance of the family, sexual development, behavioural management.
4. In case of problems that need special professional attention, the project refers to or liaises with other services, for instance the Psychological Assessment Centre, hospitals, Childline for sexual abuse, SANKA for substance abuse etc.
5. The project also offers education and training to the parents who are often poor, unemployed and / or illiterate. This activity is called family strengthening and includes teaching parenting skills, empowerment (mainly for women), income generation activities, building of self esteem and confidence, and other forms of family support deemed necessary, such as accompanying the parents to whichever institution they have to go to for either themselves or their children.
6. Regarding the child or children, the child care worker conducts a child needs assessment, develops an individually specified plan, prepares the children for school, checks the child's progress and teaches it household work.

## **2. Family Reunification** (by 3 child care workers)

**Dealing with:** youth aged 0 - 21 years who are from Inanda and are staying in the Children's Homes or the Residential Care Facilities.

**Objective:** Reunification is viewed as essential to the positive development of the young person, because it is believed that a child should feel that it belongs somewhere (sense of belonging).

**Results:** +/- 12 children per year are successfully reunited.

### **Activities:**

Family reunification means bringing together the young person and his / her family after staying in a Children's Home or Residential Care Facility, or after living on the streets because of poverty, abuse or violence. The project seeks to prepare the community, the family and the friends or peers for the return of the young person, who suddenly has to go and live with a poor family after a modern, western and relatively luxurious life in the homes, where you have your own bed, clothes, pocket money and a television. The family and peers are being made aware of these circumstances and the frustrations they may cause for both the child and the family.

1. Initially the project finds out where the child is from. If the child is staying in a home outside of Durban, the project facilitates the transfer to a nearby home.
2. Once the family has been identified, the child is asked how it feels about returning home. It is encouraged to go and visit the family.
3. The child care worker assists in the first visit of the child to the family.
4. Meanwhile, the family is encouraged to go and visit the child as well.
5. The community, the family, the friends, the institutions, the neighbourhood and the children themselves are all involved in the reunification process. The community, the family and the peers are encouraged to set up a Neighbourhood Support System which supports and facilitates the reunification.
6. The child is encouraged to go to school again and its school performance is monitored
7. Family meetings are organised to check the child's progress and monitor the reunification process.

8. Conferences are held in the institutions to provide feedback on the child's visit to the families.
9. The project also organises workshops with children and families on family values, and for awareness building.
10. Furthermore, educational tours and holiday activities are being organised to assist permanent reunification.
11. If the children appear to be homeless, the project identifies foster parents who also receive training from the project.
12. Furthermore, families receive the Family Strengthening services, such as training in parenting skills and assistance in income generation.
13. The whole process takes at least 6 months, after which the project offers after-boost-services to offer additional support, guidance and monitoring once in every two months.

### **3. Youth Mentorship** (by 3 child care workers)

**Dealing with:** youth aged 13 to 25 years who are from Inanda and are school drop-outs, young offenders or youth at risk. Referrals are received from clinics, schools, police stations, communities and from the youth themselves (self referral).

**Objective:** to build a personal relationship with the youth, win their trust and confidence to convince them of the benefits of education and of the family.

**Results:** every year at least 150 youngsters are successfully mentored.

#### **Activities:**

##### *Police Desk*

There are four police stations in Inanda. The project has trained the police officers in each station and identified one or two police officers as focal point, who is responsible for identification and referral, and seeks to divert the young offenders from the criminal justice system.

##### *School Desk*

Once a week, every school in Inanda is visited by a child care worker who is available for all youth for a couple of hours. The teachers refer to this desk or the students come themselves. The project has trained the teachers on risk factors. This initiative has been implemented because it appeared that youth at risk often don't seem to have access to neither services nor teachers.

##### *Home finding*

Shelters and detention centres often call in the project to assist in family finding when they encounter a school drop-out, a street child or a young offender who either does not want to tell where his parents or family live, does not know or is lying out of fear. Often, families don't know that their child is in conflict with the law. In that case, the child has to await trial in homes or centres, in which the environment is not child friendly nor healthy. This, unnecessarily, results in the child not attending school. In this respect, the project also offers moral and family support.

##### *Networking and collaborating with other service providers*

The project collaborates with social workers, teachers, health workers and refers to specialised service providers in case of severe child or sexual abuse, substance abuse or mental illness.

##### *Family Conferencing: mediation*

This form of mediation brings together the victim and the victims family and the offender and his or her family. The offender is offered the possibility to apologise and develop a sense of responsibility. The aim is to satisfy both parties and to remain reasonable. Family Conferencing is recognised as an official form of diversion away from the criminal justice system in co-operation with the South African Police Service and the courts. The project is now working on sensitising victim groups (like shop owners) to make them aware of this option and to make them see the benefits for both parties.

### *Peer Counsellors*

The schools identify successful children to be role models for youth in trouble with the law or youth at risk. Because they are age mates they can more easily understand what their peers are dealing with and are going through. Furthermore, they speak each others language.

### *Youth Mentors: individual counselling (one to one)*

This form of intensive support offered to youth at risk and youth in conflict with the law seeks to build a relationship with the young person based on friendship and trust. Often the child care workers need to invest a lot of time and energy before a child really trusts the child care worker and starts seeing him or her as a friend. It is thought that such a relationship offers the possibility to really make a difference in a young persons life, to really reach and help out.

### *Workshops with and for youth*

These workshops seek to convince the children of the importance and benefits of having and belonging to a family. Often those children who have been living in the institutions have lost touch with their roots and don't want to go back home. Even the families don't want to take them back because they believe the kid is of no good. In these workshops success stories of children who did go back are presented. Furthermore, these workshops teach the importance of education to convince school drop-outs to return to school. Also in this case, the project uses real life experiences to be more convincing.

There are also workshops for the parents to teach them the benefits and values of the family and to teach them parenting skills and skills to specifically cope with these young offenders. Sometimes these workshops are combined so that the children and the parents can explain to each other how they feel and what they want and expect. They are taught about each others rights and responsibilities and they are taught to listen to each other.

### *Boost services: individual after care services (sports, home work assistance), monitoring*

After the project has offered its services, which usually lasts for, more or less, half a year, the project offers after care services, in which the family and the young person are visited and monitored on a regular basis. Sometimes the project offers sports activities as a form of after care.

## **4. Community Conferencing (by 2 child care workers)**

**Dealing with:** the community at large.

**Objective:** Community conferencing activities seek to develop the "ubuntu" culture. "Ubuntu" means "I am what I am because of you". This refers to the culture in which each family realises that it exists, performs and manages life because of the community, which enables that. The community is made into the eyes and ears of the project. A sense of caring is established and the community is viewed as an extended family. A strong sense of community improves early identification and intervention, and facilitates the integration of young offenders back into society.

**Results:** Inanda consists of 32 areas, of which 22 implement community conferencing activities.

### **Activities:**

1. The first step is to identify the needs of the community through engaging in community meetings and structures. The staff of the project is well trained to work with the community and above all they come from the community. It appears to be easy to win the support of the community and its leaders and structures.
2. Once all the stakeholders have been sensitised, the project works on capacity building and the development of the Ubuntu culture:
3. The project offers training to the Community Health Workers and other people delivering social services in the community.

4. The poor are being empowered through training, skills development and employment support.
5. The Family Preservation Forum is also a specific activity under community conferencing. The Forum exists of the police, health care workers, teachers and other community members, and meets ones every two months to discuss what is happening in their community and to identify children and families at risk. This Forum tackles crises, builds capacity and offers training.
6. The Police Desk. There are four police stations in Inanda. The project has trained the police officers in each station and identified one or two police officers as focal point, who is responsible for identification and referral, and seeks to divert the young offenders from the criminal justice system.
7. The project specifically trains women to become foster parents.

### **E. Problems, challenges and difficulties**

- Resistance from both children and parents / families.
- The high crime and violence rates threaten the Inanda staff, including gangsterism.
- Families often shift their responsibilities to the government agencies: they don't want to deal with it.
- It takes a lot of time to win the confidence of the families and youth.
- Poverty is a major hazard, because empty stomachs don't listen. Therefore, the child care workers often bring food and pay school fees.
- Lack of accommodation due to the political violence.
- In the community conferencing activities stakeholders often postpone or don't show up. Sometimes, they even want to make a profit out of it.
- Still, the police are often not recognised, especially not by the offenders and the ones who still vividly remember Apartheid.
- The staff do not receive any debriefing service to deal with the issues they encounter in their daily work. They receive no emotional support or supervision.
- Furthermore, the institutionalisation of Inanda within the structures of the regional department of the Ministry of Social Welfare is uncertain and insecure. As a result, the project is losing its staff.
- Finally, the government does not cover any insurance for the Inanda FP staff.

### **F. Funding**

The Inanda Family Preservation Project is completely funded by the Dutch government.

### **G. Future**

The Inanda Family Preservation Project was supposed to last only 18 months. Now it exists already for more than 4 years. It has turned into a learning centre that offers training all over the country and supports replications. Furthermore, it still implements the work itself. The project will only survive if it becomes institutionalised within the government structures or turns into a government or foreign sponsored NGO. Its results and marketing are strong enough to make the project persist as an independent NGO. The Regional Department of Welfare is less enthusiastic, because it has not been involved in the project since its inception and because its bureaucratic

administration does not fit the 24 hours service of the Inanda Family Preservation Project. Fortunately, the Ministry of Welfare at the national level is pushing the regional department to integrate the Inanda project in its structures.

## **H. Replication and training**

Expansions are taking place to the informal settlements or former township areas called Tezuma and Kwamashu. They are located next to Inanda.

Twenty replications are taking place within the Eastern Cape, in Cape Town, Gauteng, Port Elizabeth, Mpulanga and Mpentle.

The project offers training throughout South Africa to community leaders (also traditional leaders), police officers, teachers, social workers, and all kinds of NGO's and CBO's. The training courses offered, include:

- Introduction to Family Preservation: what is it?
- Engaging Families: How do you enter a family at risk? How do you build constructive relationships?
- Strength Perspective: How do you identify people's strengths and how do you develop these? How do you create self esteem and confidence in people?
- Youth Mentorship: How do you build a relationship based on friendship and trust with a young person who is at risk or already in conflict with the law? How do you approach such children? How do you convince them to follow education and reunite with their family?
- Community Conferencing: What is it? How does it work?
- Quality Family Plans: How to make family members aware of each other rights, roles and responsibilities? What kind of family agreement is required to improve the situation? How to set it up?
- Family Conferencing: How does this form of mediation between the victim and the offender work? What is required?
- Cultural Competency: Build awareness of and sensitivity towards cultural practices at community and family levels.

## **I. Follow-up**

The Safer Cities Programme should include the Inanda Family Preservation experience as a good practice for replication in the Port Elizabeth workshop on Youth in Conflict with the Law.

Furthermore, the types of training that the project offers appear very useful for Safer Cities Co-ordinators and Safer Cities Teams. This option should be considered as well.