

## LIFE SKILLS AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT REPORT



**Activity** : Life skills and Career Development training programme

**Training Dates** : 27th September, 4<sup>th</sup> and 18th October 2014

**Reported by** : Pwani association of facilitators

**Client** : Friends for life foundation

## **BACKGROUND TO THE ASSIGNMENT.**

The Friends for Life (FFL) Foundation provides scholarships to young people in financial need from Kwale County in order to further their education after secondary school. After graduation, these young people are mentored and supported until they gain employment and the long-term aim is, therefore, to contribute to a more stable economy and sustainable development in the county and beyond.

FFL had requested collaboration with Pwani Association of Facilitators (PAF), a network of facilitators with a wide range of skills and experience in various aspects of facilitation and training, in order to support the development of a Life skills and Career Development training programme with some of its students and former students. This was agreed as a pilot programme, with a view to developing other training and mentoring interventions in the future.

Pwani Association of Facilitators (PAF) was formed in 2012 with the aim of supporting the development of Facilitation as a professional whilst enabling its members to provide appropriate and relevant interventions in all aspects of facilitation. The current membership has a wide range of local, national, regional and international experience and members have a vast expertise in participatory facilitation methods

As per the signed contract between Friends for Life Foundation and Pwani Association of Facilitators dated 11/08/2014, a training under life skills and career development lasting 3 days were held on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> October 2014. For this particular assignment facilitators who had vast skills and experience in facilitation were selected to spearhead the training.

## **PROCESS.**

Good facilitators are concerned with both the outcome of the meeting, with how the people interact and also with the process. While achieving the goals and outcomes that everyone wants is of course important, a facilitator also wants to make sure that the process is sound, that everyone is engaged and the experience is the best it can be for the participants. That is why as facilitators we ensured that the facilitation process we used was clear and precise as possible.

## **Day One-Developing quality social and life skills.**

*MODULE 1: Welcome and introductions.*

*TOPIC 1: Course introduction and overview.*

*TOPIC 2: Learning objectives and expectations*

The sessions had a total of twenty students and they began at 9:00 am to 4: 30 pm with tea and lunch break in between .The breaks were meant to be a breather to allow the students rejuvenate and come back energized. In any facilitation session logistics is of great importance and to achieve this we arranged the chairs in a semicircle to encourage participation and familiarity. More so this was also to achieve equality and to encourage the students that no one was senior than the other. We went a step further to ensure that that they all had the same type of seats, again to emphasize in equality.

We started off by welcoming all the participants and introducing ourselves to create rapport and establish credibility to facilitate the sessions. Introduction included a short background on our motivation to do facilitation and in particular for these sessions.

The participant's were also given an opportunity to introduce themselves by using some of the guidelines shown below:

- ✓ Stating an adjective that begins with the same letter as their names.e.g one participant introduced herself as Victorious Valentine: Notice the V in Victorious and Valentine.
- ✓ Stating their professions/Careers.
- ✓ Where they were coming from.
- ✓ One thing that other participants do not know about them.

Introductions were meant to build a sense of belonging and break down feelings of unfamiliarity and help share participants skills and experience.

Next the participants were asked to write down their expectations/objectives (withholding their names) for the training and stick them on a designated flipcharts for visibility of the newsprint so that each participant could see what the other expected or wanted to achieve. An achieved expectation was indicated by a tick at the end of the day. Some of the participant's expectations/objectives were;

1. Meet mentors and potential employers

2. To be in a venue and get reimbursement for travel costs.
3. Acquire relevant skills to help me in life.
4. Be able to handle myself during interviews.
5. Be capable of developing a winning curriculum vitae and cover letter.

Next point of action was setting the ground rules/ guidelines/Norms that were to govern us during the sessions to enhance participation flow. To build a sense of power in the participants, to make them feel invested in we informed them of our intentions to set ground rules and gave them the opportunity to give their suggestions. We ensured that at least each of them had something to say. Some of the agreed ground rules were;

1. Phone on silent/vibration mode.
2. Respect of others opinion.
3. People to observe time.
4. Prayers before and after sessions.

Lastly we shared the programme to the participants so that they could be aware of what session was coming next. Sharing of the programme promotes a sense of ownership. It lets the participants know that we are there to facilitate their training and not our own agenda. The programme was designed in a way that enabled the facilitators to impart life skills to the participants using participatory and experiential approaches to training.

*Module 2: Self awareness.*

*Topic 3: Personal swot analysis.*

This was the first session. It aimed to help participants understand and know themselves. Self awareness was defined as knowing and understands you in terms of strengths, weakness, and behaviour and perception. We then looked at the dimension of self awareness. The dimensions were Mental, Physical, Spiritual, Social and Emotional. One needs to know the dimension in order to know him/herself. Consequently, we discussed the temperament. Participants were asked to walk around the room. There were flipcharts that were pinned on the wall. They were asked to read and one should stand where he/she feels describe her/him the most. After finding where they belong they were asked to note down strengths and weakness. After this activity, they were asked if they know about the temperament. They learnt about the four major temperament; Choleric, Sanguine, Melancholy and Phlegmatic.

The facilitator summarised the discussion by enlightening them that there is no better temperament than the other. One also has some aspects of other temperament in them. They were urged to research more on their temperament and ensure they work on their weaknesses to improve their interpersonal and work relation.

#### *Topic 4: Personal goal setting*

Goal setting was termed as setting a plan that will help an individual to actual his/her vision. Consequently, goals should be SMART. They were also urged to consider the following; what one needs to achieve and where one need to put his effort.

We then talked about three types of goal setting;

- Short term goal- six months to one year to achieve
- Mid-term goal-one to two years to achieve
- Long term goal-more than three years to achieve

We also discussed keys in goal setting:

- Desire
- Believe
- Opportunity
- Knowledge
- Vision
- Plan
- Commitment

#### *Module 3: Assertive communication.*

##### *Topic 5: Types of communication.*

They learnt three types of communication aggressive, assertive and passive.

Aggressive communication- one expresses him/herself without minding others. It is a selfish type.

Passive-one does not express him/herself. He/she is shy or afraid, he ends up pleasing other. Here one is manipulated as he/she cannot express his/her thoughts.

Assertiveness-one express him/herself boldly, but minds about the other person feelings. He/she does communicate in a way that does not offend others.

Participants were asked to share their experience in regards to the above mentioned types of communication.

*Module 4: Leadership skills.*

*Topic 7: Types of leader ship.*

Leadership was defined as the ability to harness people's talent, skills and knowledge towards a common or specific objective. They further named the types of leadership as follows;

- Dictatorship
- Laissez-faire
- Autocratic
- Democratic
- Bureaucratic
- Transformational

However the discussion was based on dictatorship, laissez-fare, bureaucratic and democratic. With the four leadership styles we looked at when to use them and when not to use them. Finally it was seen that there is no good leadership style. It depends with the followers.

*TOPIC 9: Identification of own skills and areas to improve*

Participants were asked to list down their skills, strengths/talents and areas that they need to improve. They were urged to come with action plan on how they will work on their weakness.

*MODULE 5: Reflections.*

The main aim of reflections was to give participants a chance to reflect on their day's activities and their learning points. The Participants were given paper to give their feedback on the training content, styles, venue, food and the trainer.

*Topic 11: Take back home.*

Take back home are meant to be assignments that put the participants on toes and are guidelines to the sessions done during the day or guidelines to the next sessions.

After doing the reflections, the training ended at 4.30 pm.

### **Day two –Professional development.**

*Module 1: Opening session.*

The sessions started at 10:00 due to the late arrival of the participants. We started the sessions with a total of seven participants. After a word of prayer, one of the participants led the rest in recapitulation of previous session. Then the facilitator took over.

*TOPIC 1: Sharing Professional Goals and Dreams*

Participants were paired and were asked to discuss their careers. They were to discuss their careers in terms of;

- What the career is all about?
- Challenges associated with the career?
- Educational and other requirements involved in pursuing the career?
- Decision one may need to make relevance to the career?

From the activity it vividly clear that they all understood their careers in and out. However, there some who were not able to come with tangible challenges associated with their careers. They advised to research more on their careers.

We further looked at the factors to consider when choosing a career. We talked about the following factors;

*Personal abilities, skills, talents and interest*-this was focusing on the individual. One needs to know his/her abilities and skills to decide on a certain career.

*Personal goals and ambitions*-what we want to achieve in life and our purpose in this world determines the career choices.

*Personal values*-they are guiding principles in our lives. Normally no one will opt for a career that goes against what he/she values

*Resources available*-can one afford the expenses related to pursuing their career.

*Career growth path*-do the career allow for further career growth and development.

They asked if they considered the above factors before choosing their careers. Unfortunately no one did. They were asked to do a personal analysis of themselves and in regards to what they have learnt and ensure they become successful in their careers.

*Module 2: Employment opportunities.*

*Topic 2: Sources of job information.*

In this particular session the students were asked to state where they could search for jobs and they mentioned the following;

- ✓ Newspaper.
- ✓ Posters.
- ✓ Online.
- ✓ Peers and family members.
- ✓ Through radios and television.
- ✓ Friends and friend's parents.
- ✓ Churches, parties, weddings.

We concluded the lesson by stating that to be able to land a job interview one must have strong network of friends to interact with and who have friends who can get you information on openings and referrals.

*TOPIC 3: JOB HUNTING.*

Here the students were to identify web based resources and tools critical to job hunting and also appreciate the roles of blogs and social platform networks to land jobs.

Some of the mentioned web based resources and social platforms were:

- ✓ Brighter Monday.
- ✓ Best jobs Kenya.
- ✓ Social sites-Facebook, twitter, linkedin.

From the lesson the participants were quick to mention that indeed they have tried applying for jobs through Social sites and as much as they do not get these jobs they still keep trying.



### *Module 3: Personal Marketing.*

Personal marketing was defined as the ability and courage to sell oneself through skills and experience in order to get a job.

#### *Topic 4: Building skills and experience.*

The participants were asked to mention why experience is important and some ways in which they could gain experience and they stated the following:

- ✓ Internships.
- ✓ Volunteer positions.
- ✓ Clubs and organizations.

Together with their points we concluded that through, other low paying jobs, students' activities/leadership roles, working as temporary staff, apprenticeship and starting their own business/company were ways in which they could gain experience. This is however after deciding and developing the career path that they wish to pursue.

#### *Topic 5: Developing a winning CV and cover letter.*

The take back home assignment that the participants were given was used as a guideline to build up on this lesson. It gave clear indications on which were the participant's strengths and weakness in regards to cover letter and curriculum vitae writing.

Some of the questions that the participants asked in regards to curriculum vitae and cover letter writing were:

1. The difference between profile and objectives.
2. Where to sign off and align (whether left or right) in a cover letter.
3. In case one has attended many primary schools should all those go in the curriculum vitae?
4. Between work and education experience which one comes first in the vitae?
5. Is it proper to add your picture in the vitae?
6. Can you indicate a relative as a reference?

At the end of the session it came out clearly that the participants had great mastery of the subject and were given home assignments to go work on an improved version of their cover letters and curriculum vitae.

*Module 4: Self packaging.*

*Topic 6: Becoming employable.*

The participants identified soft skills training critical for employment. Some of the most sought after soft skills that they mentioned were:

- ✓ Proactive-The can do attitude.
- ✓ Problem solving-Ability to discern problems and get solutions.
- ✓ Service-centeredness-Willingness to serve in a consistent and heartfelt manner.
- ✓ Team work-Being able to work with others in a structured group those possess hierarchies.
- ✓ Decision -making-Ability to make informed and well thought off decisions.

Others included flexibility/adaptability/Self confidence/good communication skills.

The facilitator summarized the session by emphasizing on the importance of completely honing their soft skills.

*Topic 7: Selling yourself through an interview process.*

The cover letter and curriculum vitae have managed to get you through the door in to an interview. If anything, the interview will land you the desired job. For one to hit the nail on the head you have to be thoroughly prepared for the interview. To achieve this, we assembled together common sample questions that are used in interviews and even did a drama and role play under interview;

Common interview questions compiled by the students and facilitator:

1. Tell us about yourself?
2. What are your strengths?
3. What are your limitations or weaknesses?
4. What motivates you?
5. What do you know about our company? Our products? Our services?

Common questions that an interviewee could ask the panel:

1. What is the reason for the vacancy?
2. How do you motivate your staff?
3. What is the culture of the organization?
4. Describe your management style or how you like to manage people.

Due to time factor we were not able to touch on the drama and role play for successful interviews therefore it was pushed to the last day of the training. The day was summarized by doing a reflection of what was facilitated on. Each participant was asked to mention one thing that he/she learnt to the rest of the team. After the lesson on Cover letter and curriculum vitae writing they were asked to come with a good version of the two documents

Lastly they evaluated the day's venue, facilitator and food.

### ***Day Three-Applying social and Life skills.***

*Topic 8: Tips for successful interviews/using drama and role play.*

The main objective of this session was to enable the participants understand the value of preparing for an interview. Together with the previous lessons points the drama and role play session was to give them a better platform for tackling interviews in a more a practical way.

To engage the participants effectively, the facilitator requested for two volunteers, male and female who would pause as interviewees before a panel made up of selected participants. The panel was given a brief on some of the questions to ask. After the play the participants were then asked the dos and don'ts in an interview first as depicted by the roleplay, then adding any other the participants knew of.

Some of the dos and don'ts that the participants pointed out were;

#### **DO'S**

- ✓ Prepare early enough for the interview by finding out more about the company interviewing you and taking time to anticipate potential questions and those you want to ask.
- ✓ Put together all the relevant documents that will be required for the interview. If possible make copies of them. Arrange them in order.

- ✓ Arrive in time so as to familiarize with the environment.
- ✓ Dress appropriately for the interview.
- ✓ Follow the interviewer's direction on where to be seated. Sit upright and look alert at all times.
- ✓ Ensure you look the interviewer in the eye-maintain eye contact.

#### DON'TS

- ✓ Don't answer questions with a simple yes or no .Always give a satisfactory explanation and use examples wherever possible.
- ✓ Never bad mouth previous employers .This might be seen as an excuse for poor performance and lack of ability.
- ✓ Do not fidget, instead sit in your most comfortable position.

After this session we did a small energizer before we moved in to the next session.

#### *Module 1: Keeping the job.*

##### *Topic 1: Rights and obligations of employees and employees.*

Many times people make a lot of noise clamouring about their rights, but they forget that the rights have corresponding responsibilities, duties and obligations. In this session we explored the rights and obligations owed both to the employer and employee. The participants were divided in to groups of five each and in each group they appointed someone to present their points to the rest of the class. They gave the following points:

#### *The employer must:*

- ✓ Provide a safety and healthy workplace.
- ✓ Not discriminate the employees.
- ✓ Pay his employees on time.
- ✓ Provide the employees with a written job contract.
- ✓ Let employees know of changes at the workplace that significantly affect them.
- ✓ Despite being the boss, serve as a role model to the employees.
- ✓ Not to deduct salaries unlawfully from the employees.

*Rights and obligations of the employee were mentioned to be:*

- ✓ Entitled to leaves (maternal, paternal, and sick, annual and public holidays).
- ✓ Entitled to the right wage for the job done.
- ✓ Freedom to belong or not to belong to a union.
- ✓ Receive wages without unlawful deductions.
- ✓ Arrive at work on time.
- ✓ Dress appropriately for the job.
- ✓ Respect your employer, colleagues and customers.
- ✓ Take care of the employer's property.

The lesson ended with the participants sharing some of their experiences at their various work places. The facilitator emphasized the need for the participants to ensure that they have their contracts with them when employed.

*Module 2: Work ethics.*

*Topic 2: How to build strong work ethics.*

Under work ethics the main objectives were to list the practices that enhance productivity in the workplace and to appreciate the role of ethics in the workplace. Again we divided the participants into groups for them to discuss the practices that enhance productivity in the workplace.

The participants listed the following practices:

- ✓ Attendance.
- ✓ Dependability.
- ✓ Knowledge.
- ✓ Demonstrate commitment.
- ✓ Problem solving.
- ✓ Responsibility and ownership.
- ✓ Mentors.
- ✓ Customer service.

Doing well in your current job not only ensures you remain in employment but also creates room for promotion and gives a base for better future jobs elsewhere so give one should give it your all.

*Module 3: Conflict analysis tool.*

*Topic 3: Conflict handling (drama and role play).*

*Topic 4: Conflict mapping activities.*

By the end of the lesson we hoped to encourage the participants to appreciate the fact that conflict in the workplace is inevitable and understand how to go about resolving conflicts.

We achieved this by experience sharing on conflicts that they had undergone and thereafter did a role play on workplace conflict between colleagues. Together with the participants we did debriefing to talk about what was good/not good about how the conflict was handled.

*Finally we came up with the following common causes of conflict:*

- ✓ Misunderstandings.
- ✓ Personality clashes.
- ✓ Competition for resources.
- ✓ Authority issues.
- ✓ Lack of cooperation.
- ✓ Low performance.

*Techniques often used to resolve conflict:*

- ✓ *Avoiding the person or subject.*
- ✓ *Leaving the scene.*
- ✓ *Change the subject.*
- ✓ *Try to understand the other person's subject.*
- ✓ *Turning the conflict into joke.*

*Module 4: Career coaching.*

As facilitators our main objective was to ensure that the participants think critically and analyze their careers in the right direction towards achieving a particular goal. Under career coaching we tackled the following topics:

*Topic 5: Guidance and mentorship.*

By the end of the lesson we aimed to ensure that the participants were able to appreciate the role guidance and mentorship play in career developments.

Some of them mentioned to have their parents, friends and teachers as mentors. They confessed to have intentional relationships with them in ensuring growth and prosperity.

Some of the key guidelines mentioned in ensuring meaningful coaching/mentorship relationships were:

1. Identifying people you think can be of help whether in general or specific areas.
2. Politely share with them your wish of them becoming your mentors.
3. Keep up with what you commit doing.
4. Keeping them involved in all that you doing. In each and every step taken.

We concluded the session by mentioning how mentors offer excellent avenues for personal and career development and that they can also have added advantages like job referrals and wider connections.

*Topic 6.Career development plan.*

Carer path plan was defined as the process of identifying career goals/aspirations and ways to achieve them. Career plan has continuous improvement and constant monitoring built into it.

Using some steps the participants were able to generate a career plan and align their education and interests to their careers. They were also able to generate a career plan using the following guidelines:

- ✓ Goal:(Your specific, ultimate career goal)
- ✓ Current Education:(Your current Education)
- ✓ Required Education:(Any education,(formal or informal)needed to reach ultimate goal)
- ✓ Current skills/Experience :( Any skills or experience you [posses that are relevant to your ultimate goal).

- ✓ Required skills/Experience: (Any additional skills or experience you need for your ultimate career goal).
- ✓ Step 1 :( The first step you need to take to reach your ultimate career goal).
- ✓ Target completion date :( Write down a target completion date for each step in the process).
- ✓ Step 2 :( Each step should be what you need to do beyond the previous step to help you towards your goal).
- ✓ Target completion date :( Again, a date when you expect to complete the goal).

N.B.Attached with the report are samples of the career plans that the students developed.

## **METHODS**

The facilitators used a lot of different participatory facilitation methods including, but not limited to, brainstorming, group discussions and role play. As facilitators we ensured that the methods were participatory, productive, and friendly and geared towards cooperation

### *1. Brainstorming.*

The purpose of brainstorming was particularly to encourage the participation of everybody, harness their thoughts and think critically and give opinions in regards to the topic being discussed. Brainstorming was mostly used in the start of a new topic. It was one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to quickly generate a lot of ideas, encourage creativity and generate excitement and energy. As facilitators we would write all ideas on a flip chart for all to see and encourage all to speak up citing that no answer was wrong. During brainstorming, there was also no criticism nor discussions of ideas, i.e. all ideas were accepted as relevant and equally important.

### *2. Drama and Role play.*

For better understanding of a topic, drama and role play was often used. We used drama and role play in the interview sessions to showcase what really happens in interviews and also in the conflict analysis sessions. As a method of facilitation, we used it to generate practical and creative solutions and hands on practice for better results.

### *3. Small group discussions.*

The participants were divided into groups of five so as to conduct purposeful discussions for better results. In their groups they would select a secretary who would write down their points and a chairperson who would represent their points to the whole team. Small



group discussions were used in topics like work ethics and rights and obligations of employers and employees .The group discussions helped surface new ideas and solutions as there was maximum involvement of everybody.

#### 4. Games and exercise.

Games and exercise are very much a part of a learning process. They include ice breakers and energizers. These games and exercise speed up and enhance the amount and the quality of interactions in the group. Ice breakers were done before the start of the sessions to break tension and energizers were done during the sessions.

#### **MAIN OUTCOMES.**

- ✓ Students were able to differentiate between a profession, hobby, passion and a career.
- ✓ Participants developed action plans that will be able to guide to actualise what they learnt.
- ✓ There was a change of attitude from the students.
- ✓ The methods used for facilitation were able to achieve meaningful exchange of ideas and they involved the entire group in thinking through difficult issues.
- ✓ After much practice, the students came up with presentable cover letters and curriculum vitas.
- ✓ We did a mock interview where participants were able to learn how to behave in interview and before the interview.

#### **CHALLENGES.**

- ✓ The participants often arrived late for the sessions owing to the fact that some came from as far as Lunga Lunga and Voi.
- ✓ Time management was an issue. Participants did not observe time. They reported late and wanted to live early. This was a real challenge as we had to crush the program
- ✓ There were also some distractions from the late comers as they had to settle and a facilitator had to quickly give them an overview of what was discussed so that they can be at par with their colleagues.
- ✓ Some participants were not able to submit their take back home as they would forget. This was attributed to the spacing of the trainings.

- ✓ Full attendance for the sessions by the participants was not observed due to absenteeism which was fuelled by the Muslim Holiday.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS.**

- ✓ FFL should arrange for accommodation and do a 3 day workshop. Mombasa is central but the distance people have to travel is quite something.
- ✓ The participants should observe time. Probably whoever comes late should be penalised or exempted because that shows lack of commitment and seriousness.
- ✓ The trainings should run consecutively. So as to wire together participation of all participants.
- ✓ Prior planning before the trainings the participants should sign commitment forms to show their commitment in the trainings

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