

The Light of Hope: Transforming HIV and AIDS Services in Botswana

The Light and Courage Centre in Botswana has transformed from a day care centre for people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) to a major care and support service in Francistown and a best practice learning model for communities across Botswana. Skillshare International development worker Nigel Stapley has raised funds for the centre, enabling it to increase and expand its range of services, and has contributed to its organisational development.

Established by the Francistown community in 1998, the Light and Courage Centre provides a wide range of services ranging from prevention education to care and support for people living with HIV and AIDS, orphans and vulnerable children and caregivers. At any time, the centre has between 35 and 60 clients, and has now become a model of best practice that has stimulated interest in other communities around the country.



A year after the centre was established as a drop-in day care centre for people living with HIV and AIDS, it started providing some services to orphans and vulnerable children. It has since, with the help of previous Skillshare International development worker Olwen Donald, transformed itself into a “hospice at home” service which provides care and support to terminally ill patients in their own homes. The centre has maintained its day care functions and provides services such as counselling, education to build awareness of HIV and AIDS, craft skills development, physiotherapy and spiritual support. It also provides meals and transport for its clients, giving them the opportunity to meet with others and reducing the burden on their caregivers. One of the centre’s clients, 34-year old Puso Ratinyama, described the centre as “*the light of hope in a sea of despair*”.

Light and Courage Centre client, Joyce Molebatsi © Skillshare/Claire Lewis-Armes

As a best practice model and a member of NGO networks such as BONASO, BONEPWA, BOCAIP and BONELA, the Light and Courage Centre shares its experiences and learning and has inspired other communities to start their own centres, including Palapye’s House of Hope and the Otse Home Based Care Centre. The Botswana Network of AIDS Service Organisations (BONASO) describes it as “*a place that provokes your inner self, clients will be laughing and talking their day away and you marvel at the courage and hope that they enthuse.*”

Skillshare International development worker Nigel Stapley has made a significant contribution to the centre’s achievements and organisational development by sharing his skills in accounting and resource mobilisation. “*Because of Nigel’s skills and well written proposal we have secured \$2.26million funding for the centre over the next three years from PEPFAR*” enthused coordinator Angelina Magaga. Increased funds have enabled the centre to provide new services such as home visits, physiotherapy and supportive counselling services. They also mean that the centre can expand geographically, establishing four new satellites centres in the municipality; the District Commissioner has described the centre as a place of “*encouragement, hope and companionship*”.



Skillshare International development worker Nigel Stapley with the Light and Courage Centre’s Coordinator Angelina Magaga, © Skillshare/Claire Lewis-Armes