**Gloria Schultz:** You are listening to the PYD Lab. (Music plays)

The podcast for implementers and young leaders who want to examine innovative approaches to Positive Youth Development and hear stories of young people leading change in their communities.

This podcast is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development or USAID.

The content and opinions expressed in this podcast do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States government.

**Natasha Zena**: Hey it’s Natasha, and you’re in the PYD Lab.

I call Peggie, Helen, and Gontle The Mighty Trio because they are! These three women do incredible work at Women Against Rape (WAR), a women-initiated, women-led, and women-centered human rights organization in Botswana that has been providing counseling and support services since 1993 for survivors of gender-based violence.

A 2020 study by the government of Botswana revealed that 66 percent of women from ages 18 to 44 have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

Their mission is to reduce the incidences and impact of gender-based violence in the North-West District through empowering women and children, providing support for survivors, public education, and legal reform.

This aligns with all four PYD domains of agency, assets, contribution, and enabling environment.

Their employees deliver a number of services on a daily basis to women and girls who are often experiencing trauma. And, mental health and psychosocial support is just as vital for those who work in the gender-based violence space as it is for those who are receiving the services.

Thanks to a grant from USAID’s CARE-GBV Small Grants Program, Women Against Rape will be able to build the capacity of the organization and promote in an internal culture of resilience and wellness.

Let’s listen in as we talk about their work with women and youth, the needs of staff, and the part you can play in ending gender-based violence.

**Natasha Zena:** (starts) So welcome to the PYD Lab!

I want to welcome Helen, Peggie, and Gontle. Thank you so much for joining us today!

**Helen, Peggie, and Gontle:** (collective) You’re welcome! Thank you for inviting us.

**Natasha Zena:** Today we’re talking about the very important work that you’re doing at Women Against Rape. You’re making a huge difference in your community and across the world.

Could each of you kind of take a turn and tell us a little bit about your role at the organization?

**Gontle Samakabadi:** My name is Gontle. I am a social worker based in Maun at Women Against Rape. My current role is a Shelter Manager.

The shelter, or the safe house, is a place where we house survivors of gender-based violence.

**Helen Anne Apps:** Hi everybody! My name is Helen and I work at Women Against Rape as a Researcher.

I’m involved in collecting data and evaluating programs and writing grants like the USAID CARE-GBV grant that we’ve recently been awarded.

So my role is principally pulling together information and data that we generate from the programs that we conduct and making sure that they actually appropriate for the target population that we serve.

**Peggie Ramaphane:** My name is Peggie Ramaphane. I’m the Executive Director at Women Against Rape.

From being the face of the organization to presenting the organization to various levels, especially at strategic level, and the other things that I do is fundraising for the organization. And that fundraising involves also proposal writing.

I also coordinate the advocacy part.

**Natasha Zena:** Could you tell us a little bit about your human rights organization and the people you’re serving?

**Peggie Ramaphane:** Thank you. Women Against Rape is an organization that is based in Maun, Botswana.

We have also moved into the Okavango Delta so we have three outreach offices to respond to the problem of gender-based violence especially sexual violence that was happening in the country.

So the organization offers support to victims and survivors of all forms of gender-based violence.

**Gontle** **Samakabadi:** Gender-based violence is a problem globally.And Botswana is also facing a lot of violence cases, especially against women and children.

A lot of our clients which we place at the shelter have been through a lot of sensitive issues, including life-threatening situations. So we keep them safe at the safe house for a certain period of time, up to three months sometimes it can even go up to a year or more.

We work hand-in-hand with the police, social workers from the government, because Women Against Rape is an NGO so we work hand-in-hand with the government officials to make sure that the community members are safe, especially from gender-based violence issues.

We support our clients through counseling and other holistic measures, including making sure that they have medical attention, that they go to school safely, just family reorientation, and also just making sure that the perpetrators have no contact with them because that is very important.

Gender-based violence is a crime, and therefore they need to be accountable for what they have done.

**Natasha Zena:** *Mmm*.

**Gontle** **Samakabadi:** So in order for the survivors to testify for them in court, they need to be in a space where they can be provided with counseling and be prepared to give their evidence in court.

And we pride ourselves of the success stories of many clients who have successfully survived the ordeal and are thriving at the moment because of the service we have provided.

**Peggie Ramaphane:** As a feminist, human rights organization, we are forever in contact with the lawmakers.

Wherever we identify gaps that are negatively affecting women and children, particularly, we highlight those through various statements or various advocacy issues that we make.

**Natasha Zena:** Thank you.

Peggie just touched on something that I think is interesting and important, because I would imagine that the work you are all doing is kind of twofold, right?

You’re working with those who you directly serve, but then like Peggie mentioned, you know, lawmakers and policymakers who have the ability to kind of drive change around gender-based violence on a different level.

What do you want policymakers abroad and at home to know about the people that you’re serving?

**Peggie Ramaphane:** I think for us as an organization gender-based violence is quite topical.

And we want the world out there to know that gender-based violence does exist in Botswana and that we need all the support we can get to agitate our government to place gender-based violence at the top of their agenda.

We want to hear everyone in a position of influence in their speeches, in their address, in their everyday life, to bring gender-based violence issues on the table.

So that our beneficiaries, because it’s the people whose lives are impacted by the laws, or the lack of laws, or the gaps that are in the laws.

For instance, when we talk about the Domestic Violence Act. The Domestic Violence Act of Botswana doesn’t criminalize domestic violence.

There is only protection orders that are meted out on domestic violence cases. We would want domestic violence to be criminalized, because we expect the home to be a safe place for everyone.

I’m sure we can do it with the support of the whole world out there.

**Natasha Zena:** And with the work that you’re doing with the policymakers I’m sure that you’re sharing stats and statistics and you know, telling stories and sharing data and you know, Helen you work like you mentioned with the data, and I know that the organization has been around since about ’93.

Have the needs of the women and families that you’re serving changed over the years? And how has your program kind of shifted to accommodate their needs?

**Helen Anne Apps:** You know Botswanalike every other country in the world, you know, life has changed dramatically.

Each village in Botswana has a tribal chief, and that tribal chief is responsible and accountable for the safety and the well-being of the population of the village they serve.

Those traditional customs are very entrenched in the country.

They’re a vital part of how Botswana functions.

But things are changing. Women are becoming emancipated, they’re achieving equality in the workplace, they’re striving for more equal partnerships at home, and those changes cause a lot of friction within the traditional system.

The violence has escalated, because women have also become a lot more vocal about their circumstances.

Jobs are in short supply. And that in its turn has changed the dynamics in-in families, in the home, and in communities and in the country as a whole, which has a knock-on effect, you know so we’re in the middle of a quite dramatic shift and change.

And change always comes with consequences, both positive and negative.

**Natasha Zena:** Yeah, and I’m curious because I know, you know over the last couple of years with things like the Me Too movement, it’s brought more of a focus on things like gender-based violence and gender equity.

Has that had any impact in your community?

**Peggie Ramaphane:** The country is quite connected with what’s happening in the world.

Botswana has very good internet I should say. And so the whole of Botswana is in touch with what is happening in the world.

So that hashtag “Me Too” was also felt in Botswana.

There were incidences where people started coming out and relating their stories of abuse, but during the hashtag “Me Too” people started talking about it. It was part of our 16 Days Campaign, it was part of everyone’s work included the hashtag “Me Too.”

I remember we had a lot of campaigns across the country, ranging from the little villages up to Havaroni, everywhere, even us at Women Against Rape we had a campaign on the Me Too movement.

It’s something that is bringing out the silence that is very much a common practice in our country to keep everything under wraps.

That hashtag made us speak.

People came out and voiced what they had been hiding for so long because our culture says you keep everything under wraps. You don’t go out and air your linen in public.

But that movement made sure that things came out. And of consequence from that is that the government also now recognized that gender-based violence was a problem.

And then there was a study that was commissioned to look at the whole country and do a survey.

And the results showed that we are just where other countries are. There was a 37 percent experience of violence in the past 12 months for women. And there was a 20 percent for men.

So showing that the violence is there, is happening, and people were now able to talk about it.

**Natasha Zena:** Right, and it and then it also seems like you know in the midst of that, right? While Me Too helped you know, women and those who are suffering abuse, find you know, solidarity with one another and using our voices and-and saying you know “Me too you’re not alone.”

Then COVID happened, right? And the COVID-19 pandemic forced everyone inside and I would love to get your perspectives because you guys are experts in this work, but I’ve read a lot of um, you know, news articles and such that talked about gender-based violence and domestic violence being on the rise during COVID.

Because now people were forced to-to be inside their homes. Um I would love to hear your thoughts and perspectives on that.

How did your organization fare during COVID in terms of resources?

Did you feel like you were stretched pretty thin to be able to-to help families?

**Peggie Ramaphane:** COVID was very real and it really brought out to those who were in denial about the extent and the gravity of gender-based violence to the floor.

It brought everyone to attention.

There was so much, and when the schools opened there were lots of teenage pregnancies, teenage children born nine months after the lockdown.

**Natasha Zena:** *Mmm*.

So that kind of abuse suffered so much during the COVID after the lockdowns because the perpetrators and the victims were together during this time.

**Natasha Zena:** Right.

**Peggie Ramaphane:** So this was a great awakening, and also you know, we say is the benefits of COVID, that during this time everyone’s attention was focused on the plight of women and children in their homes, yeah.

**Gontle** **Samakabadi:** And expecting women who were chased out, who had no place to stay. Once a woman is out of the home, obviously the children will also mean that they are directly affected.

For every woman we took into the shelter, she came along with the, the dependents.

It really stretched us a lot. And consequently it meant that we had to give out more of ourselves.

And that led to the curious trauma which also opened way that we need to do something.

**Natasha Zena:** Yeah, and I think it’s definitely a bright spot, right?

You have your fantastic and wonderful employees who made do with what they had to and still went out and served people in your community.

And then, now you have this additional bright spot which, congratulations, your organization received a USAID CARE-GBV Small Grant.

I definitely want to ask you all about that, you were awarded that this past July, which was a great feat because they received about 518 grant applications, and you were one of five organizations selected so congratulations!

**Helen Anne Apps:** (In background) Yay!

**Gontle** **Samakabadi:** Peggie and Helen, they saw this call for proposal and were like “Let’s do this!”

Even though USAID is a big, big, big organization, but we went for it.

**Natasha Zena:** Right.

**Gontle** **Samakabadi:** We were truly genuine to say, look this is our issue**,** we are still in our mandate but we need to also offer support to the staff, the ones that are working directly with these survivors.

We need to help them be more resilient, be more supportive, so that they may be able to deliver quality service to survivors.

We got together and we spoke about what is challenging us, what do we go through, and the project became what it is!

**Peggie Ramaphane:** So, we have come out on the other side of the cloud, with USAID funding as to carry on and address the staff wellness and resilience.

So, we’ve learned a lot from COVID and we are grateful for the partnership we have now with USAID, and we hope this will not just be a flash in the pan.

It will be a continued relationship.

**Natasha Zena:** I think that’s so important, and I’m so excited to see that your grant is focused on your staff.

So I used to be on the board of the YWCA. Are you guys familiar with the YWCA?

**Helen, Peggie, and Gontle:** (collective) Uh-huh. Yeah!

**Natasha Zena:** Yeah, one of the women’s organizations and so I was on the board for the YWCA in western Massachusetts, but that was…my first real exposure to work an emergency shelter and so that was the first time that I was able to hear and see when women and families might be fleeing in the night to safety.

**Peggie Ramaphane:** *Mhm*.

**Natasha Zena:** They’re not just leaving behind physical items. You know, staff like yours are giving these people a safe place, not just a physical space but emotionally.

You don’t often think about the toll it could take on the person who’s actually doing the work. And it’s nice to see that you’re creating a space for your employees, you know, mental health and well-being.

**Gontle** **Samakabadi:** I think it’s relatable and I’m happy that you have actually had that exposure and experience, Natasha. It’s-it’s amazing that you can relate to our story, and I believe that’s the common ground, and we hope that the listeners will also benefit and hopefully also have some form of helping hand to other organizations who are dealing with this pandemic of gender-based violence.

**Natasha Zena:** Yeah. I would love to have a closing thought from each one of you.

What is one thing that a person can do to do their part in ending gender-based violence?

**Helen Anne Apps:** It starts with yourself.

If we can look at ourselves and the way that we are in the world, the way we interact with other people, that’ll help to make a difference and reduce violence, I think.

**Gontle** **Samakabadi:** Um­­–just to add on, as you look into yourself, look also into areas where you have power in your life.

Because the abuse of power that leads to gender-based violence.

**Natasha Zena:** *Mmm*.

**Gontle** **Samakabadi:** So one has to be aware of the power they have and how they’re using it.

Are you sharing your power well? Are you having balanced relationships? Or are you stepping on people’s toes because of your power?

So I believe you need to be aware of the power and be able to tone it down if it’s over, and be able to increase it if you are underusing it.

**Peggie Ramaphane:** The one thing that I want people to do to address issues of gender-based violence, is to think of two words.

The English one is called “love.” L-o-v-e.

The Botswana one is “botho.” B-o-t-h-o.

The two words almost mean the same thing. Loving yourself, loving the other person.

If you love yourself, you don’t hurt yourself. If you love the other person, you won’t hurt them.

Bohto is how you hold yourself and how you hold other people. So we need to start by loving ourselves, then we love the other person, and we won’t violate one another.

**Natasha Zena:** Thank you! Three great pieces of wisdom.

Now it’s the part of the show where we get into our PYD recommendations.

The ‘P’ stands for “Published,” the ‘Y’ stands for “Youth,” and the ‘D’ in this case stands for “Disrupt.”

The first one, ‘P’ for “Published,” is we asked you “What is a published reading source you recommend on a youth development-related topic?”

It could be a book, an article or a report, and why?

**Peggie Ramaphane:** *Anecdotes on Expressing Experiences*.

These are a set of two books, each with 20 short stories, that were done by students in secondary schools in Botswana.

They are addressing gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, and parent-to-child communication.

And youth in Botswana remain anyone from the age of 10 to 24. HIV and gender-based violence, they go hand in hand.

Gender-based violence is a driver of HIV and AIDS. HIV/AIDS can also be a driver of gender-based violence.

We see our teenagers, children in primary school at risk of getting pregnant. So this has been a concern and an issue that we want the country and even the youth themselves to address.

Parent-child communication, we’re having a problem with parents who don’t talk or have proper conversations about sexuality and drug production with their families, with their children.

And children end up learning from the internet, or learning from their peers, and sometimes learning the wrong things.

Or not learning enough.

So that they don’t get into teenage pregnancies, into HIV infections, into gender-based violence.

So this book for us, it’s a published book that should be accessed by everyone.

**Natasha Zena:** The second one is “Youth.”

What is a resource or project you know of, either authored or led by a young leader, that you want others to know about?

**Helen Anne Apps:** Dipolelo! Girls Against GBV was a project that we ran at Women Against Rape.

We were actually looking for 24 young female survivors of violence. And we ended up with 7 young women who were very brave and came forward to discuss their story, to reveal their story to each other in a group, and then to turn their stories into short, four minute or less videos.

And, it was the most remarkable experience for them and for us, because it was the first time that they told their story for themselves.

So it’s their story in their own words, so each of those seven stories is a very powerful way of communicating their trauma.

All of them in some way either had counseling or were guided by Women Against Rape to get access to services.

They were accommodated at the shelter. The videos are anonymous, they’re not identified in any way.

And it’s a very rare glimpse into the experience of young Botswana women and how they handle violence, the effect it had on their lives, and the value that Women Against Rape brought to their recovery.

In addition to the videos there’s also a booklet which we’ve donated to schools and school libraries so that teachers can use the videos as a teaching tool to teach kids about gender-based violence.

**Natasha Zena:** *Mmm*. Wow, that’s super powerful. People being able to tell their own stories is unbelievable, so thank you.

Last but not least is ‘D’ for “Disrupt.”

What is a disruptive, innovative idea, project, or resource that does or will tackle a youth-related challenge?

**Peggie Ramaphane:** We chose a project that originated in Maun, they are called The Clicking Generation.

It started by a young lady, and she wanted every child, every youth to start learning how to do coding.

So she’s going around the country teaching young people in primary schools coding and also how to just get familiar with the computer.

And she’s taking this program to the remotest of areas in Botswana.

As long as there is electricity, or they’ve got solar powered electricity she’s there working with the kids on the tablet. And that for us is an example of leaving no one behind in this digital generation.

So we are proud that she is disrupting where technology is said not to reach. But now she’s making sure that every child, even in the remotest area of Botswana, they can hold on to a tablet and they can work on it, they can do a program through the scratch coding.

**Natasha Zena:** That is fantastic! Children definitely need tech and I love when I hear that youth are getting skillsets about coding and learning how to work technology and that’s just a fantastic project going on there.

You guys are amazing, you’re such a mighty trio!

**Helen Anne Apps:** Thank you, wow!

**Natasha Zena:** Yeah,it has been such a pleasure and a privilege to chat with the three of you and learn about the important work that you’re doing at your organization.

**Peggie Ramaphane:** We just want to reach out there to everyone who is going to be listening to this podcast to know that we are out here, and we can do with any kind of assistance, whether you want to assist us virtually, you can reach out to us on our website or our email and let us know how you can contribute to us reaching to our beneficiaries.

Even that kind of giving, if you give us your time, your skill, we are forever grateful.

Thank you very much.

**Natasha Zena:** Thank you!

For those who are listening, where can they go, what’s your website address if they want more information?

**Peggie Ramaphane:** [www.womenagainstrape.org.bw](http://www.womenagainstrape.org.bw)

**Natasha Zena:** Thank you so much for joining me today! I truly appreciate your time.

**Peggie Ramaphane:** Thank you very much, thank you for this.

**Natasha Zena:** A special thank you to Gontle, Peggie, and Helen for joining us today.

It’s that time in the show for our PYD recommendations. Here’s what we have to offer you today:

Our first recommendation is the CARE-GBV How To Note.

Now, in consultation with USAID, CARE-GBV is creating a series of How To Notes for USAID staff and implementing partners to strengthen the GBV programming portfolio.

So, the first note is how to identify and advance equitable social norms. This How To note on social norms highlights how social norms relate to gender-based violence and includes guidance on how to identify, address, and monitor shifts in social norms.

The second recommendation is the Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support into Youth Programming Toolkit.

This toolkit provides strategies and tools for designing, implementing, and evaluating mental health and psychosocial support programs and activities for youth in low-and middle-income countries. It’s available online and as a download at [youthpower.org](https://youthpower.org/).

Our third recommendation is the Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Starter Kit.

Now this kit features 23 best resources on the YouthLead website relating to gender-based violence.

A portion of the material covers the 16 Days of Activism Campaign running from November 10th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, all the way to December 10th, Human Rights Day.

(Exit music starts playing)

Until next time, I’m Natasha and you’ve been in the PYD Lab.