

DMT in Ghana and Kenya

Eileen McDonald

Following her experiences in attending a conference in Ghana, Eileen became involved with coordinating the development of DMT programs with the Wangu Kanja Foundation (WKF) in Kenya in a Nairobi slum. The WKF is committed to providing health, wellbeing, empowerment and human rights for women and children survivors of sexual abuse and gender based violence. Eileen communicated some of her experiences to us via email as documented in *Moving On*, Vol.13, no's 3 and 4, and as promised in that issue, here is the short article that has been developed from her communications.



Terrie-Ann Bolger (Australia), Wangu Kanja CEO WK Foundation (Kenya), Diane Hobelaid (Canada), Eileen McDonald (Australia).

Eileen is a DMT, Counsellor, Mental Health and Disability Consultant providing training, mentoring and research. She trained and performed in dance and drama in several countries and has worked for over 40 years in community, clinical and educational settings. Formerly a lecturer and supervisor in the Graduate School of Counselling DMT course at the Wesley Institute Sydney, she supervises IDTIA Diploma students in NSW. She also provides curriculum development and training in recovery practice, trauma informed care, and creative wellbeing for mental health and disability organizations, conferences and workshops in Australia and overseas.

She is presently coordinating the development of DMT programs with The Wangu Kanja Foundation, in the Nairobi slum, as described in the introduction.

Eileen emailed the following to us whilst she was in Ghana and Kenya– she said she was only able to email occasionally when WiFi and electricity were available. We are pleased that it was available sometimes as we can forward the following interesting news of her experiences on to readers She said she was:

...trying to cope with extremely hot humid weather, food that is too spicy for me to eat, avoiding peanuts as I'm allergic to them, very intermittent electricity supply and other challenges of being here ... The people are very friendly and helpful, our student accommodation is many kilometres of walking on campus to where the conference is held, we buy our meals at the open-air stalls on campus in the breaks ...

She said, I've been invited to facilitate Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) workshops for 2.5 hours per day at an international dance conference hosted by the University of Ghana. I've facilitated them in collaboration with a Kenyan colleague, our topic: DMT for Survivors of Trauma.

My workshop attendees are from many countries – Ghana, New Zealand, Ireland, Great Britain, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Fiji, South Africa, Israel, Australia (!), Canada and Sweden, including social workers, occupational therapists, counselors, special education teachers, university dance department professors, dance teachers, dance students, music, art and dance therapists ...

I've focussed our workshops on resilience and self-care, age, gender and cultural considerations, differences between teaching and facilitation; therapy and therapeutic, as well as skills in trauma informed storytelling... It's been so enriching as we learn from each other. I've attended other conference workshops including African drumming, papers from African professors ...each evening we have dance performances from various nations ...

The Ghanaian conference committee also organised for my workshop group to go to a children's home funded by charities and

donations. The conference attendees brought new children's clothing and have taken-up a collection for a donation to the home. The DMT workshop group is expected to provide dance activities with the children.

After this week's conference, several of us fly to Nairobi, Kenya, invited by Wangu Kanja Foundation (WKF) CEO, Wangu, as part of their development of DMT programs in a slum with women and children who have experienced gender and sexual abuse, so besides raising our own funds to go to Africa, we also raised funds to bring Wangu to Ghana to co-facilitate the DMT workshops with me and get to know us more before we go to Nairobi to work with her Foundation....

And from Nairobi, we received the following from Eileen: Our team in Kenya consists of Terrie Ann Bolger from Sydney, a DMT and Counsellor working with domestic and gender violence, Diane Hobelaid, an Occupational Therapist and DMT from Canada, specialist with children, and myself. Each day we held sessions in the Mukuru slum with a population of over 700,000 of many tribal and language groups.

Part of each day involved discussions and workshops with groups of WKF community health workers focussing on self-care, team work

and resilience. The Community workers are residents of the slum where the Wangu Kanja Foundation (WKF) is based; some are also survivors. The WKF would like this group to be trained to be peer facilitators of DMT sessions. Part of each day also involved sessions with various groups of women and children survivors of sexual and gender abuse.

We are continuing our commitment to co-design DMT programs with the WKF, including co-developing models of training, evaluation and supervision that will be sustainable and culturally and spiritually appropriate. And potentially where survivors can safely facilitate DMT with their peers. As we collaborate with a variety of other professions and cultures it is widening the potential for this project to become a model for other countries.

Invitations have come to us from other parts of Africa to come and run intensive workshop weeks of DMT training for other professions and potentially be linked with an academic dance department, so there are exciting possibilities ahead. The following pictures are from our DMT sessions at the Wangu Kanja Foundation with community health workers in Mukuru slum. Photos are used with the permission of the participants



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