

PARTNERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

TITLE: Partnership made prison work taste a little sweeter



SOUTHERN AFRICA NETWORK OF PRISONS



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Introduction and Background

Youth Population Alliance (Youth POPs) project was a consortium, which had VSO, SANOP, SAFAIDS, Prison Fellowship Malawi (PFM) and Prisoner Reintegration and Empowerment Organisation (PREO) in Zambia. The consortium members had their own partners and groupings that they were programming with, to ensure that the partnership achieve the outcomes of Youth POPs project. Youth POPs is a three-year intervention, it started in July 2022, and it ends in December 2024.

Purpose for Partnering

VSO/SANOP, work with partners since they are not an implementing organisation. The partnership helped to pull financial and human resources together to address a common cause. They partnered with organisations working on health, livelihoods, and entrepreneurship expertise. Partnership gives a mileage for the work being conducted. *“VSO/SANOP’s work on advocacy is a game of numbers, hence the need to partner”*. Remarked SANOP Project Officer. VSO/SANOP do not implement in silos but in partnerships. They need partners to work with to have a strong voice. Thus, VSO/SANOP was trying to meet SDG 17. They are working closely with ZPCS, and they consider partnering as a key aspect; they have an open-door policy for partners.

Partnering was essential, as there is an element of collaboration. Each partner would bring different skills, expertise, and ideas to help serve populations that are inadequately served. Different expertise from these partners was helpful.

Partnership Issue Identification

Partnering issue was identified through review meetings, from previous programmes and projects. Thus, it was noted that partnering with different organisations was essential. Review meetings, research, monitoring and evaluation conducted revealed the need for addressing the challenges and gaps identified within the programming.



Partnership and engagement beneficiaries

It benefited ZPCS and other stakeholders. Previously ZPCS had very few organisations working in prisons, hence limited resources on issues related to health and rehabilitation. When they had the open-door policy, VSO/SANOP partnered with several organisations. The partners bridged different gaps, sensitized and conducted awareness programs, etc. Different partners came into train, ZPCS staff on SRHR and SADC minimum standards on health, HIV, vocational skills, and entrepreneurship. VSO/SANOP benefited because other organisations such as NAC provided current information and messaging for HIV programming. SANOP chapter members did not have much information about health; some diversified their work to include education, health, and livelihoods because of the key partners. The primary actors also benefited a lot from these services as they were capacitated with skills, information, and commodities, e.g., clothing. All players benefited.

Partnership and Collaboration

ZPCS was a strategic partner and National Aids Council (NAC) provided current and updated information on HIV programming. NAC, SAfAIDS and Network of Women Living with HIV collaborated on HIV issues, SAfAIDS provided helped these partners with information on SRHR, Gender, and Social Inclusion and conducting trainings on documentation. SANOP Chapter members- Jointed Hands Welfare, ZNNP+, Miracle Mission, Government line ministries- Ministry of Justice, Social Welfare, Network of Women living with HIV supported with the training of SADC Minimum Standards.

Implementation strategy

Previously, the problem was that there was a very low uptake of health services in prisons. Hence, VSO/SANOP engaged duty bearers and had a strong network of specific gaps identified regarding access, uptake, and availability of these services. The partnership helped in holding the government and service providers accountable for health services. VSO/SANOP had a platform for having interface and engagement meetings. Interventions include training on the SADC minimum standards to address health uptake, the Peer education model within prisons, and peer-to-peer support in the three cascades of



health prevention part, treatment part, and support and care. Health Support Systems: support groups, youth clubs to remain in continuum of care, differentiated service delivery, engagement meetings to share challenges and assess services, and a checklist to assess the service provision was created. There were vocational skills training, entrepreneurship training and procurement of protective clothing.

Project resources

The project utilised the following resources in implementing the interventions, financial resources, though they were limited. VSO/SANOP had human resources on partnerships; they had different partners with different expertise, materials IEC to do with the information, communications, posters, and flyers so that they could convey the messages they wanted to convey. The volunteers were a resource as they conducted several activities. NAC is the coordinating body of all HIV programming; they have current and updated information on HIV programming; hence it is an important resource. The partners needed NAC to be part of the work it does on HIV.

Successes/Achievements

The partnership supported the correctional aspects and rehabilitation aspects of ZPCS. ZPCS was at the centre of the programming to help them improve the uptake of health services; a strong voice helped. ZPCS identified the importance of integrated services in prisons, and all departments came on board during the review meetings. As the partners reviewed their work, they ensured that all departments within ZPCS were present, as well as all partners, such as Jointed Hands Welfare, as they were dealing with health issues. Jointed Hands Welfare ended up realising that they needed to diversify their work. NAC also alluded to VSO/SANOP integrating its work. VSO/SANOP had several organisations working on drug abuse and mental health issues coming on board. ZPCS has several partners in their database who would be invited to participate in different activities. As a result of partnership and collaboration, Miracle Mission volunteered to support the partners to be trained on resource mobilisation, organisational development and other organisational systems as guided by the capacity needs assessments.



Various thematic areas were integrated, education, livelihoods, and health. Prisons are security institutions, and partnering with them takes time. But now the partners have established good relationship with ZPCS, and they are now opening as the partners visit them; there is now trust with VSO/SANOP. ZPCS also now trusts VSO/SANOP in bringing in new partners. *“The relationship was improved. ZPCS now trusts us, and they even disclose information. They are open enough to share key issues that require the attention of VSO/SANOP as they disclose information to improve services. For example, they disclosed that there is no medication for mental patients; we supported them by engaging with Miracle Mission. As partners, we are now free to support Halfway Homes. ZPCS is now considering SDG 17 a priority, and they now consider partnership as a priority as well”.*

The program has different partners who have robust expertise in different thematic areas. There were noticeable changes as some partners were capacitated on different institutional aspects they previously did not have. The capacity strengthening facilitators skills have been improved by working as a group, they were able to tap from each other. Some of them have testified benefiting from facilitating and partnering.

The partnership helped to identify that VSO/SANOP need to integrate health, livelihood, and education services. This helped to improve their programming in prisons. Health is a broad area that includes livelihoods. The aim was to have a holistic approach.

Partnership is not a matter of competing but of complementing each other based on skill gaps. VSO/SANOP identified partners who had expertise in different areas. There were no conflicting issues and no competing, as each partner came with different expertise. It resulted in service improvement. ZPCS gave the partners an open-door policy and trusted and welcomed VSO/SANOP. This made the partnership successful.

Evidence based Results

Some results came from the review meetings, and VSO/SANOP realized that results were important. Monitoring and evaluation visits supported in identifying results. Research was conducted, and it was quite helpful; it flagged the results, challenges, and gaps

Good practices and/or innovations



VSO/SANOP engaged ZPCS to be at the centre of programming to hear their thoughts and suggestions; after they provided their suggestions, VSO/SANOP offered their suggestions based on ZPCS suggestions. Review meetings were held based on the activities carried out. The meetings helped and are still helping the partnership in informing its programming. Regular stakeholder meetings have helped in improving service delivery. These stakeholder meetings are held with key partners, and ZPCS is invited to attend all of them.

Lessons learnt

- Identify different expertise within partners and have partner mapping to avoid a situation where they compete, yet they should be collaborating. Each organisation will be able to bring its expertise without competing, giving partners room to present their work to identify who can do what and where.
- Identify who are the genuine partners, as some organisations pretend to be partners. The partners should engage ZPCS to do security checks first and have the approval of ZPCS before partnering.
- Integration of service provision is a must, and programming using a holistic approach is fundamental. Partnership in programming is also essential.

Replicability and scalability of partnership

VSO/SANOP saw several improvements; however, limited resources remained a challenge. Adequate resources will help bridge the gap between ZPCS and partners, collaborate, and improve services and skills. The project should be scaled up to close the outstanding gaps.

Challenges

- The project had limited resources, yet the demands were very high. VSO/SANOP could not implement some of the activities and action points due to limited resources. VSO/SANOP encouraged partners to seek more resources to address identified gaps and challenges.



- The handover and takeover of officers were not done properly; this resulted in VSO/SANOP starting afresh. *“There was a lot of movement for officers. We were forced to start afresh. We are now involving every department within the prisons so that everyone is well-updated on our implemented activities.”*
- Initially, implementing activities was difficult because of bureaucracy, but VSO/SANOP were later given the green light to work with those at the provincial and station levels.

Recommendations

- Partnership (SGD 17) is important. Funding space is shrinking, and partnering is the way to go. Pulling resources together as partners is important for successful implementation.
- The funding is reducing, and the only way to rescue organisations is to partner. Genuine partners are needed; hence, mapping carefully is essential. The commitment of these partners is essential. Working in a consortium has challenges; thus, working in harmony is great.
- Partner Selection: Diligent partner selection process is important to understand each partner's strengths and weaknesses, ensuring a robust and effective partners