



STAFF REPORT INFORMATION ONLY

City of Toronto-South East District Botswana HIV/AIDS Prevention Partnership Update

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From:	Medical Officer of Health
Wards:	All
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SUMMARY

Toronto Public Health has led an HIV/AIDS capacity-building partnership with South East District Council (SEDC), a municipal government in Botswana, for the past six years. The partnership has been funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The focus has been on Palliative Care and Support and HIV/AIDS prevention through youth engagement by establishing a youth-led Kicking AIDS Out (KAO) initiative, the South East District Youth Empowerment League (SEDYEL). Youth engagement was the primary focus of the partnership in recent years. SEDYEL has a sports program (soccer league), peer educators to conduct outreach and HIV/AIDS prevention activities in the community, as well as a female-specific initiative called Kgatelopele Safe Spaces. SEDYEL is supported through a partnership between the City of Toronto, SEDC, Commonwealth Games Canada (CGC), UK Sport, Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) of Kenya, Schools Without Borders and the Kicking AIDS Out Secretariat.

In 2007, City Council established the Global AIDS Fund as a legacy of hosting the 2006 International AIDS Conference. Grants from this fund were allocated to Schools Without Borders to facilitate HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives and to support the building of a youth centre to house SEDYEL. This centre will serve as the office and meeting space for SEDYEL.

The partnership, funded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), has now been wrapped up in its original form. However, the City of Toronto, under the leadership of Toronto Public Health, will continue to provide mentoring and support to SEDYEL and SEDC. The City will also continue to work with FCM to develop an HIV/AIDS skills sharing approach with particular emphasis on youth engagement using the Botswana-Toronto partnership as a model.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact stemming from this report.

DECISION HISTORY

In May 2002, Council adopted an International Policy Framework with seven key goals. (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2002/agendas/council/cc020521/pof8rpt/cl009.pdf>) One of these goals is to position Toronto as a caring and compassionate City, which assists cities in the developing world with community capacity-building projects. Consistent with this goal, in May 2002 Council also approved the City's involvement in an FCM-led partnership in South-East District, Botswana with a view to increasing the capacity of that municipality and the municipal sector to address HIV/AIDS issues in Botswana. (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2002/agendas/council/cc020521/pof8rpt/cl010.pdf>)

FCM's approach to municipal capacity building involves an active dialogue among Canadian technical experts, their overseas counterparts, political representatives and members of civil society. At the same time, FCM establishes strategic partnerships with national municipal associations, such as the Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA).

FCM's International Centre for Municipal Development (ICMD) funding comes from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). CIDA has recently changed its funding priorities in Africa such that Botswana is no longer eligible for funding through FCM's technical partnerships. However, FCM recognizes the accomplishments of the City of Toronto – South East District Council partnership and is interested in applying the lessons learned in the partnership elsewhere in the region. The City of Toronto will therefore continue to work with FCM as well as other partners including Schools Without Borders and Commonwealth Games Canada to ensure sustainability of the partnership.

The City of Toronto has also made contributions to the South East District Council through the City's Global AIDS fund which was established as a legacy to the International AIDS Conference hosted by the City in 2006. Through the fund, monies have been allocated to Schools Without Borders to support HIV/AIDS prevention through youth engagement. This has included the building of the youth centre in SEDC, Botswana as well as establishing girls' Safe Spaces initiatives in Botswana and Nairobi, Kenya.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In 2001, Stephen Lewis, United Nations Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa, made an impassioned plea asking the citizens and institutions of Canada to help the people of Africa as they faced an enormous HIV/AIDS crisis. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) took up the challenge and initiated a municipal partnership focussing on HIV/AIDS and invited the City of Toronto to take the lead. In May 2002, Council approved a formal partnership between the City of Toronto and South East District Council, Botswana. The partnership has been fully funded by FCM with in-kind support from the City of Toronto, under the leadership of Toronto Public Health. The partnership is administered through the City Manager's office.

UNAIDS and the World Health Organization estimate that, world-wide, more than 37 million people are living with HIV/AIDS and 16,000 people are infected every day. The impact of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa is more severe than anywhere else in the world; more than 13 million people have died of AIDS and an additional 26 million are currently living with the virus.

Botswana, a land-locked country bordered by South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Namibia is one of the countries most severely impacted by HIV/AIDS. Everyone in Botswana is either infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. The government of Botswana has demonstrated admirable leadership in confronting the HIV/AIDS challenge head on. They have embraced numerous partnerships as a means of maximising resources and building capacity for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and mitigation at all levels of government and the community.

COMMENTS

Partnership Goal and Areas of Focus

The overall goal of the City of Toronto - South East District Council (SEDC), Botswana, partnership is to increase SEDC capacity to address HIV/AIDS issues by meeting the needs of people affected and infected. An additional goal is to share the learnings achieved through the partnership with other municipalities in Botswana and elsewhere in Africa and to replicate it where feasible.

The first step of the Toronto partnership was to identify priority areas that would benefit from skills exchange and targeted training. The partners together selected Youth Engagement and Palliative Care and Support as key focus areas, with gender and stigma as cross-cutting themes.

Accomplishments of the Toronto-SEDC Partnership

The Toronto-SEDC Partnership has been established now for six years and has accomplished a great deal in both focus areas.

Palliative Care and Support

The goals of the Palliative Care and Support focus area have essentially been achieved. This is a result of TPH facilitating the participation of Casey House, the Toronto HIV/AIDS hospice, in providing palliative care training workshops for SEDC staff and volunteers as well as ongoing mentoring. The leadership of SEDC's Home Based Care coordinator was vital in facilitating capacity building of SEDC District Health Team staff and volunteers. In addition the City of Toronto facilitated training on HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination for staff and volunteers. Palliative Care principles are now integrated into the SEDC Home Based Care system and many of the staff and volunteers have received training and support in this regard. The Home Based Care Coordinator was trained as a master trainer for national government in integrating Palliative Care into home based care programs across the country.

Youth Engagement: Bringing a Kicking AIDS Out Approach through SEDYEL

The Youth Engagement efforts have been concentrated on establishing a youth-led Kicking AIDS Out initiative in South East District which is now called the South East District Youth Empowerment League (SEDYEL). Kicking AIDS Out is an approach used by an

international network of organizations to bring the power of sport to fight the spread and stigma of HIV/AIDS. The KAO approach integrates HIV/AIDS prevention, health promotion, life skills, sexual health and youth leadership into sport. SEDYEL has a sports program, peer educators to conduct outreach and HIV/AIDS prevention support in the community, as well as a female specific initiative called Kgatelopele Safe Spaces.

SEDYEL is a partnership between the City of Toronto, SEDC, Commonwealth Games Canada (CGC), UK Sport and Mathare Youth Sports Association of Kenya (MYSA). Through this partnership an outstanding MYSA trainer and community development specialist George Nange was based in Botswana to help build SEDYEL by establishing the league and building the skills and capacity of the local youth to run the project.

The accomplishments of SEDYEL have been extraordinary. SEDYEL has established 100 soccer teams, 27 of which are girl's teams in a district where there was little sport infrastructure in place and no youth led sport initiatives or female participation in the sport. SEDYEL now engages about 2000 children and youth from all villages in the district. There are now four SEDYEL coordinators in place to run the project. This is a first for Botswana where youth have organized such a venture on a "youth for youth" basis and with such a strong emphasis on girls' participation in all aspects of league organization.

Both female and male leaders in SEDYEL have begun to develop self confidence and skills in league organizing, outreach, HIV/AIDS prevention and sexual health promotion, information sharing and public speaking. It is clear that being engaged in an initiative that is both intellectually and physically demanding has made a profound difference in many participants' lives. The league and accompanying outreach and training now extends across the entire district; SEDYEL has given a face to the partnership in every village in the district.

Recognition of SEDYEL is also growing. For example, SEDYEL was an early entry finalist in the Ashoka Foundation/Nike Changemakers project for youth mobilization and development through sport and performance art. The British Council, Norwegian Olympic Federation (through KAO), the UK based Coaching for Hope and other organizations have also provided collaborative support and in November 2008, SEDYEL was awarded the Botswana National Youth Service Award.

Kgatelopele Girls Safe Spaces Initiative

The Girls Safe Spaces initiative, Kgatelopele ("Success") is a partnership between the City of Toronto, SEDC, SEDYEL and Schools Without Borders (SWB) with support from CGC and KAO. It focuses on providing the space for young women and girls to come together to discuss issues, plan, acquire skills and envision and pursue the future they want for themselves and their communities.

Kgatelopele activities focus on outreach and implementation of HIV/AIDS prevention and sexual health promotion into neighbouring communities in collaboration with SEDYEL peer educators (many of whom are female). Kgatelopele has also launched a catering business to generate income and to build skills and capacity. In addition, through the support and mentorship of SWB, Kgatelopele participants are able to participate in youth to youth exchanges to connect with other female-focused (Safe Spaces) groups and to develop

regional networks for skills exchange and information sharing. SEDC officials have provided support and mentorship to the Kgatelopele initiative. Over time it is hoped that Safe Spaces will evolve into a network of support for girls and women both in Canada and Africa. Already some individuals in Toronto have provided support to Kgatelopele which enabled them to purchase equipment required to get the catering business started.

Relationship between Local Government and Youth – Collaboration between SEDYEL and SEDC

A significant feature of the partnership is the cementing of the relationship between SEDYEL and SEDC which in turn facilitates collaboration between SEDC and its youth population. The partnership is now seen nationally as a “best practice” and as a key way of engaging youth with a particular focus on HIV/AIDS prevention. In addition, there is growing recognition of SEDYEL internationally. SEDC has provided support to SEDYEL in numerous ways over the years through the mentoring and leadership of the project coordinators and other staff, the provision of in-kind support in the form of office space and transportation and some project operating costs. This has required passion, commitment and creativity from all involved as SEDYEL crosses many traditional boundaries and responsibilities.

Unintended results of the Partnership

While violence prevention was never identified as a specific goal of the partnership, anecdotal evidence indicates a marked decrease in youth violence in South East District. Ramotswa, the largest village in the district, was formerly known as “the gang epicentre” of Botswana. Now, former gang members are in SEDYEL leadership positions and a high percentage of the district’s youth are involved in the football league as coaches, referees, players, peer educators, Kgatelopele leaders and SEDYEL theatre performers.

Many SEDYEL participants are now computer literate and are very comfortable using the internet and all aspects of information technology. They have been very willing to support and train SEDC staff in this regard as computers are unfamiliar to many of them. In turn, a number of staff from a range of departments and positions, played both formal and informal mentoring and support roles to SEDYEL and now have a true investment and passion to see it succeed.

The involvement of the City of Toronto in a small municipality in Botswana provided a vehicle for many others to become involved. In addition, a number of “spring-off” initiatives have emerged. One notable project was the writing and publication of “Chanda’s Secrets”, an award winning novel by Allan Stratton for young adults published by Annick Press in Toronto. Inspired by the Botswana situation, this is a compelling look at the reality of HIV/AIDS through the eyes of a young woman in sub-Saharan Africa.

The SEDYEL Youth Centre

In 2006, SEDC was able to secure a plot of land through the Botswana Land Board. SEDC decided to dedicate this land to SEDYEL. In addition, after the 2006 International AIDS conference hosted by the City of Toronto, through the advocacy and support of Councillor Kyle Rae (the City’s HIV/AIDS advocate) and Mayor David Miller, City Council approved the establishment of a \$100,000 Global AIDS Fund, as part of the AIDS Prevention Grants

provided by the City of Toronto and administered by Toronto Public Health. A portion of the monies from this fund were allocated by City Council to Schools Without Borders in 2007 to facilitate HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives and to support the building of a youth centre to house SEDYEL. This centre will serve as the office and meeting space for SEDYEL.

SEDC used their municipal staff to design and build the centre. This required strong leadership from senior staff and Council as well as collaboration among a number of different SEDC departments (ie. lands, buildings, parks, district health team, planning and the Council Secretary Office).

SEDC succeeded in building a beautiful and functional space containing three offices, a meeting room, small kitchen and bathroom. To complete it and make it the welcoming space it now is, SEDC assigned their parks and landscape officer to design and build attractive landscaping and green space around the building. In addition, a number of SEDC departments contributed to the purchase of furniture and finishing of the space. SEDYEL now has a wonderful home and can proudly welcome participants and visitors to the centre. There is enormous potential to develop the centre and surrounding land for additional programming and income generation activities. SEDYEL and SEDC are committed to continue to seek other sources of funding locally and internationally to accomplish this.

The official centre opening was a major event. Attended by about 300 people, it was a moment of pride for SEDC, SEDYEL, the City of Toronto and all other partners. It was attended by a number of key stakeholders as well as community members, and the Kgatelopele participants provided the catering. The event was truly a celebration and a testimony to partnership and collaboration.

The building of the youth centre has also provided an effective vehicle to seek support from private donors to develop the centre and support SEDYEL sustainability. Already a number of individuals in Toronto have shown enormous generosity in purchasing basic kitchen equipment to get the catering business off the ground as well as providing some “seed” money for a community garden initiative. People in Toronto are keen to support such an inspiring and effective grassroots initiative where small contributions can have tangible results and there is considerable potential to expand this further. With the internet connection in place, SEDYEL participants are in a position to communicate directly with donors, mentors and partners in Toronto and elsewhere.

SEDYEL Sustainability

While SEDYEL is clearly a “youth for youth” initiative and must remain so to be successful, it requires ongoing support to ensure sustainability. This requires the ongoing support of SEDC and the City of Toronto, as well as resources and support from national government, the community and private sector, and other donors. CGC, UK Sport and SWB have committed to provide some support to SEDYEL at least until March 2011. However, more resources and local capacity will be required to ensure the project remains on a solid footing. While the SEDYEL coordinators have acquired considerable skills and capacity in a relatively short period of time, SEDYEL is a large and complex project requiring considerable skill and resources.

The Way Forward

Ensuring that SEDYEL is firmly rooted across the district and the KAO approach fully integrated will be a major contribution to assisting SEDC to engage its youth and thereby reduce the prevalence and impact of HIV/AIDS while building valuable leadership and other “marketable” skills for SEDYEL participants.

The City of Toronto, under the leadership of Toronto Public Health will continue to work with South East District Council, Botswana and other partners including Schools Without Borders, Commonwealth Games Canada, UK Sport and the Kicking AIDS Out network to continue implementation of the partnership through mentoring support and fundraising initiatives with particular emphasis on sustainability of the South East District Youth Empowerment League. In addition, the City of Toronto will continue to collaborate with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to share lessons learned and to facilitate information and skills to other municipalities in Botswana and to other African countries.

The partnership has benefited enormously from regional linkages, primarily through the partnership with the Mathare Youth Sports Association (MYSA) of Kenya and the Kicking AIDS Out network. It is clear that establishing new and strengthening existing regional linkages can leverage considerable additional resources. It can also serve to strengthen information and skills sharing in a culturally appropriate and cost effective manner. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa face many of the same issues and sharing skills, information and project strategies can be very helpful. The City of Toronto will continue to work with FCM to develop an HIV/AIDS and gender networking and skills sharing approach, with particular emphasis on youth engagement using the Botswana-Toronto partnership as a model and foundation for skills exchange.

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