



BOND STREET THEATRE

peacebuilding, empowerment & healing through theatre

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Women and Girls Speak Out for Justice Interim Report – April 2022

Organization Name: Bond Street Theatre

Program Title: *Women and Girls Speak Out for Justice*

Grant Amount: \$75,000 (\$25,000/year over three years)

Contact Person: Joanna Sherman, Artistic Director

Address: 2 Bond Street, New York, NY 10012

2) Recap briefly what outcomes the program was designed to achieve:

Bond Street Theatre (BST) originally proposed to conduct programming in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Malaysia over each of the three program years, working with our local partners and serving the needs of women and girls in each locale. When the Covid-19 virus canceled programs around the world, we deeply appreciated the leadership at Together Women Rise for the kindness and understanding they extended to all grantees to apply the funds as needed to survive that difficult period. That first year funding maintained the salaries of our staff so that we were ready to return to programming.

As outlined in our previous report, our target countries had to shift due to current insecurity in Afghanistan and Myanmar. With TWR permission, we implemented our 2021 project in Cape Town, South Africa with our partner Rape Crisis Trust.

Our goals remained the same: to initiate practical, creative solutions to the entrenched problems affecting women, girls and youth in critical places, by applying our model program of training in theatre, advocacy and communication skills, performances that bring rights information to a wide audience, and making these programs widely available to women.

Outputs and Outcomes:

Bond Street Theatre, in collaboration with **Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust (RCCTT)**, implemented a four-week training and performance program designed to engage South African youth as advocates against gender-based violence (GBV), and to promote the value of gender equality, respect and inclusiveness in South African society.

BST conducted **80 hours** of theatre, communication and advocacy training involving 2 BST artist-trainers, 4 RCCTT staff, 1 local artist Co-Director, 1 local filmmaker, and 8 youth participants from Athlone and Khayelitsha townships. We created a **40 minute performance titled *Voices of Change***, which follows the lives of two young women, both of whom struggle against the confining roles dictated by their fathers, peer pressure, and tradition. The play was created and scripted by the young ensemble members from their lived experiences and talent. The youth presented **6 performances** across Cape Town, reaching approximately 250 people.

We are currently compiling an **Arts for Activism Training Manual** that includes the BST theatre exercises, the RCCTT toolkit, and the script for the play, *Voices of Change*.

3) Has funding changed for this program?

No. Funding has been on target.

4) Is your Program situation different than presented in the approved proposal?

Our original Sustained Grant proposed programs in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Malaysia (with Rohingya refugees). As we accommodate new realities, we proposed to shift our work to address gender issues in South Africa, and received approval in April 2021.

The regime change in Afghanistan now disallows all arts, especially involving women. The repression of women is at its worst level in decades, and we are heartbroken to see our 16 years of work for women and girls reversed so thoroughly. We have been working on evacuating many of the women we worked with, and are sending small amounts of money to support those women who had been sole breadwinners for their families and can no longer work..

Myanmar also experienced a shocking reversal. In 2009, when we began working there, the country was under strict military rule. Now, seeing the country's return to strict military rule, is tragic. Our partners had begun to organize our program to counter trafficking with several strong women's groups, but now we are forced to pause our plans with hopes that stability will return.

Violence against women and girls has been a huge issue in South Africa. The problem is generally ignored by the police, especially in the townships, and the situation escalated during the Covid lockdown. RCCTT requested our training for the young women and men (male allies) they serve in the Cape Town townships. They specifically expressed the need for programs to build the self-confidence and communication skills of the young women, and programs to spread actionable information to both men and women in the townships to curtail domestic violence, harassment, and crimes against women. In addition, the program served to alert women and girls to the safe havens, such as RCCTT, where they can find immediate help and counseling.

While the proposed country has changed, our original goal remains the same: **to give women and girls in crises areas the tools and training to speak out for equal rights through theatre, leadership and advocacy training and informational performances in their communities.**

5) Have the number of beneficiaries changed? Yes.

	<u>Originally proposed:</u>	<u>Actual:</u>
Direct Beneficiaries:	20-50	14
Indirect Beneficiaries:	2,000	250 direct audience members 1,500 through social media, video and publicity

The prevalence of Covid 19 and its mutations restricted the number of direct participants and audience members. Few people are vaccinated, especially in the townships, and the venues were reluctant to host large audiences in their halls, yet people were eager to attend the performances if they could, since such entertaining and informational programs are a rarity in the townships. In addition, the Omicron variation was identified while we were in Cape Town, with much of the attention directed at South Africa since it had been first to announce Omicron's existence.

6) What challenges are you facing as you move forward with this project? How are you approaching these challenges?

Covid 19 still poses a problem, but cases are diminishing and access to vaccines has proliferated. The government is actively promoting the benefits and availability of vaccination.

We anticipate that our future workshops and performances will be able to accommodate larger numbers of participants and audiences. Many organizations requested our return and to bring our training sessions and performances to their communities -- to schools, women's shelters, and other community centers.

We are prepared to continue the program, expand our training to RCCTT's diversity of volunteer and staff counselors, and raise public awareness about the services offered by RCCTT.

7) Have you revised your original objectives since the project began?

Our Overarching Goal remains the same: To give women and girls in crises areas the tools and training to speak out for equal rights through theatre, leadership and advocacy training and informational performances in their communities.

Goals pertaining to South Africa project remain the same:

- To engage South African youth as advocates against GBV, equipped with the leadership, advocacy, and communication skills to effect social change;
- To promote the value of gender equality and inclusive societies among South Africans;
- To provide South African youth with the opportunity to exchange methodologies and best practices towards Arts Activism.

Objectives remain the same:

1. To apply our model program of training in theatre, advocacy and communication skills to **20-50 youth**, along with Rape Crisis Trust staff and other local women leaders, toward the creation of a cohort of youth prepared to speak out for women's rights and against all forms of gender-based violence.
2. To create an attractive and **informative performance** that illustrates the societal benefits of achieving equal rights for women and girls, including their right to be free from violence, to pursue an education in their selected career, and to marry the person of their choice at an age they choose.
3. To present at least **6 performances** to diverse audiences in the city of Cape Town, with a focus on less-served areas and the townships where violence is rife and opportunities for women and girls are curtailed by prejudice, tradition and social pressures.
4. To conduct **feedback sessions** with the audience following each performance, during which audience members have the opportunity to ask questions directly to the characters in the play and suggest alternative solutions to the problems that each character faces. The feedback sessions further illuminate the issues, provide new solutions, and encourage ongoing discussion in the community on these essential topics.
5. To create an Arts for Activism **Training Manual**, with exercises in self-expression, play creation, issues and myths around women's rights, places to seek help, and the full script to the play. The Manual will be made widely available online and through a variety of social justice organizations.

8) What progress have you made towards achieving your objectives? Please address each objective.

1. Conducted **80 hours** of training in theatre-making, leadership, communication and advocacy training involving 2 BST artist-trainers, 4 RCCTT staff, 1 local Co-Director, 1 local filmmaker and 8 youth participants from Athlone and Khayelitsha townships. The **14 total** combined BST and RCCTT teams also conducted 20 hours of pre-project zoom meetings to discuss issues, plan curricula and logistics.
2. The group created a **40 minute performance** titled *Voices of Change*, which follows the lives of two young women, Mishka and Sineh, both of whom struggle against the confining roles dictated by their fathers, peer pressure from friends, and deeply entrenched traditions. The play was created through improvisations by the youth ensemble, emanating from their life experiences, and shaped by the Co-Directors. The play illuminates some of the difficult personal issues that confront young women from teen years through young adulthood, and the important role of male allies.

3. The youth ensemble presented **6 performances** around the city of Cape Town in community centers in the townships and one professional theatre, reaching an audience of at least 250 women, men and youth, and was filmed for continued presentation in the city.
4. The group conducted **feedback sessions** with audiences following each performance. In this process, members of the audience ask questions directly to the actors (as their characters in the play), or comment on their situation and suggest alternative solutions to the problems that each character faces. The responses often reflect shared experiences and elicit an open dialogue within the audience, which builds empathy and offers encouragement and new solutions to ongoing gender issues in the communities.
5. We are creating an **Arts for Activism Training Manual**, to be available in print and online to serve as curricula and a resource for other organizations. The Manual will include BST's storytelling and play devising exercises as used in the training process, along with the full script to the play, and RCCTT's facts and myths around rape and women's rights, places to seek help, and training to be survivor counselors. The Manual will be made available by the end of the program, both online and through a variety of social justice organizations.

9) Do you anticipate any difficulties in competing your project in the timeframe outlined in your proposal?

We don't foresee any difficulties in completing our project in the timeframe outlined.

We anticipate that our next series of workshops and performances will include more participants -- youth from the townships, volunteer counselors from RCCTT, survivors who have sought help from RCCTT and want to speak out about women's rights to safety and respect, and male allies who are eager to stand up for equality and progress.

We anticipate reaching the many organizations that have requested our training program and performances in their communities.

We are prepared to continue the program, expand our training to RCCTT's diversity of volunteer and staff counselors, and raise public awareness about the services offered by RCCTT and other organizations that serve women and girls.

Addenda attached:

1. Project Participants
2. Performance List
3. Audience Responses
4. Sample Pre-and Post-Program Surveys (2)
5. Photos (7)
6. Video link
7. Detailed list of Budget Expenses

Thank you again for the wonderful work that you do for women around the world! We are deeply honored and thrilled to be a Sustained Grantee.



Joanna M. Sherman, Artistic Director

Addenda

1. Project Participants:

Bond Street Theatre, NYC www.bondst.org

Joanna Sherman, Artistic Co-Director

Michael McGuigan, Trainer and performer

Casey Diepeveen: Project Planner, Media and Communications

Local Artist Co-Director: Zandile Mentjies, Artistic Co-Director

Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust, South Africa www.rapecrisis.org.za

Rifqah Barnes, Training and Development Coordinator

Barbara Williams, Program Manager

2 Trainers: Zeenat Hendricks and guest director/trainer

Local Artist Filmmaker: Abigael Thompson

Youth Participants:

Name	Age	Gender	Background
Lina Mafumana	19	Female	First experience in theatre, singer
Taylor-Lee Booyesen	18	Female	Middle school drama club
Chad Florence	20	male	Drama club and visual artist
Joshua April	19	male	First experience in theatre, graphic design
Yusroh Jones	18	Female	Dance, music and drama from high school
Sinesipno Mrgeni	21	Female	No theatre training, just loves acting and singing
Elethu Gogo	22	male	First experience in theatre, a choirmaster
Luzuko Matiso	24	male	Drama and performance experience

2. Performance List:

Date	TIME	Venue	# Aud:
11/22/2021	10:00 am	YISS Youth Center, Hanover Park	42
11/22/2021	2:00 pm	Makukhanye Art Room, Village 4 North, Khayelitsha	60
11/23/2021	6:00 pm	The Drama Factory, Somerset West Business Park	35
11/24/2021	4:30 pm	Lookout Hill Hall, Khayelitsha	21
11/25/2021	10:00 am	*YISS Youth Center, Hanover Park **Venue change - see notes below	43
11/25/2021	3:00 pm	*YISS Youth Center, Hanover Park	49
		6 Performances	Total Audience: 250

* Youth Impact and Sustainable Solutions Center

** Originally scheduled at Bonteheuwel Community Center, but canceled due to a security issue.

3. Audience Responses:

- *“If a woman takes a stand like Mishka, she is right. This is what we are facing now.”*

[Context: Mishka stands up to her boyfriend who demands that she get an abortion or he will leave her. She refuses his ultimatum and makes her own choice.]

- *“I admire all of you. I want to encourage you.”*
- *“You show us what women are -- STRONG!”*
- *“You can own these characters now, and take their messages forward with confidence.”*
- *“We are proud of you. I salute you all.”*

4. Pre- and Post-Program Surveys: [separate attachment]

- Lina Mafumana (Xhosa)
- Taylor-Lee Booysen

5. Photo List: [separate attachment]



1 BST-RCCTT Youth Group.jpg



2 Group warm-up.jpg



3 Sine & Lina - Voices of Change rehearsal.jpg



4 Argument scene.jpg



5 Performance in Khayelitsha.jpg



6 The abortion dilemma.jpg



7 Post-show Feedback session with audience.jpg

6. Link to Video Excerpt [separate attachment]

7. Detailed Budget List [separate attachment]