

## **RESPONSE NETWORK-Z COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM.**

The Core business for Response network is Community Education with the aim to improve lives of vulnerable communities through Self- Help using the Rights Based approach. The Organisation believes that everyone has the potential to develop, if they can identify their need/challenge and what they have around them. The realization of their challenges and local resources is a stepping stone to solve their challenges thereby becoming self sustainable.

The organization operates in the remotest areas where information and developmental efforts by the Government are non-existent because Response Network believes everyone has a right to a better life. This is realized through awareness meetings and capacity building workshops targeting the traditional leaders who are the custodians of the people and the community at large.

### **Response Network works around the 10 outcomes**

Outcome 1 encourages the enrollment of children inclusive of those with disabilities in their own local environment. A community that has low levels of literacy does not see education as a priority. These communities where RN operates are far away from civilization in terms of infrastructure, communication, road network and other social services provided by the government. During the awareness meetings, the right to education for every child is emphasized. This leads to community realization that they need to improve their attitude towards the education of their children regardless of the child's status by enrolling them into schools. Furthermore, people mobilize themselves and provide bricks and other upfront materials for permanent structures.

Outcome 2 addresses increased awareness among rural target communities including persons with disabilities to participate in sporting activities. Considering the many benefits from engaging into sport, the organization uses sport as a tool to address HIV, youth unemployment and build capacity of girls and women as leaders

Outcome 3 focuses on literacy of adults including those with disabilities. Many adults in target areas did not have an education due to few schools during their young ages and being ignorant of the importance thereof. Response Network encourages adult education so that they learn how to read and write.

Outcome 4 focuses on providing income generation activity (IGA) through skills training. Persons with disabilities previously were denied access to such clubs as they were viewed as being unable to utilize and benefit from skills training. With the high levels of poverty among community members, people are encouraged to use the available resources to venture into income generating activities. Those that start some activity are built capacity through IGA workshops so that they can boost their income generating ventures.

Outcome 5 encourages women including those with disabilities to participate in Save and borrow/Self-help groups to earn income. Women are the most affected in society and this renders them vulnerable to lots of vices. Response Network promotes the participation of women in Income generation ventures so that they become self sustainable to reduce dependence which leads to them being abused.

Under outcome 6 and 8, improved health and nutrition for households inclusive of those with disabilities is promoted. Response Network holds Community awareness on the importance of good health and proper eating habits by encouraging Community members to engage in production of nutritious foods that improve their health through organic vegetable growing.

Increased awareness about HIV was achieved through awareness raising in sports clubs (outcome 2) and in community support clubs established for those affected and infected by HIV under outcome 7 and also through (Outcome 7).

Outcome 9, addresses the dangers of alcohol consumption leading to family problems in households. Many people in the rural areas abuse alcohol, which has increased the levels of poverty due to unproductivity as a result of excess consumption by the victims.

During sensitization meetings and capacity building workshops, Outcome 10 aims at raising awareness on disability inclusion, with a specific focus on access to local justice and representation in the day-to-day activities.

These activities are important because persons with disabilities were not previously participating in any kind of activity in their communities.

RNZ uses a rights based approach to facilitate through which community members are mobilized to form informal self-help groups and clubs by encouraging them to work together to identify solutions to local problems and challenges by using locally available resources within reach of the communities. The major focus is to raise self-awareness so that communities engage in activities that lead to concrete changes to improve the lives of community members, especially among the marginalized communities (women, children and persons living with disabilities). This is sustainable development as people's self-esteem is built. They realize steps they need to take to develop themselves and solve their own challenges.



Village meeting



Capacity building workshop



Adult learners with their teacher outside classroom



Clubs exhibit their IGAs during an exhibition fare





Women and girls playing netball

### Miriam Mbewe



She was married with a good home without any disability. Miriam Mbewe is a mother of 4, one boy, a set of girl twins and another girl got divorced due to an illness which led to failure to use part of her lower limbs and uses crutches to move around. Her former husband divorced her when she lost sight of one eye and paralysis of the left part of her body. She was dumped without any of her children (two at the time) at what used to be her parent's home who died then.

Faced with such a predicament Miriam found that self -help activity was the only way she could survive considering the negative perception on disability in the village. Miriam lives in Sikalele village of Chief Simwatachela. She was identified by Response Network field staff, through the encouragement of the trained volunteers she has become self -sustained without depending much on other people. She is a pioneer of the Queens saving group which uses the Save and Borrow strategy to boost their Income generation Ventures (after sensitization on how to save money in groups and lend themselves). She is very industrious in hand work, she makes uniforms on a second hand sewing machine, which she sales to nearby Schools. She also does gardening and keeps goats and chickens. This time she has built herself a nice iron roofed house with three rooms and is very instrumental in motivating women and those with disability to stand on their own and engage in Income generation. The community respects her because they know how she has struggled to rise to where she is now.

Nevertheless, Miriam is still struggling to send her two girls (the twins) to School who she had after her divorce. She got them after being taken advantage of by a man who refused responsibility due to her condition, stating that he did not want to have anything to do with her. She says she is happy now that she has overcome the stigma surrounding her condition through the motivation she gets from the Response Network team.