



Intombi Shelter

Discussion of the Problem

Some female children fall through the cracks in the social welfare systems, and end up prostituting and addicted to expensive illicit drugs. The largest percentage of the children we deal with have had past dealings with welfare and many of them have been 'exonerated' by this system - in other words welfare officially turned her back on that difficult child, closing her file. Upon retrieval of this child from the Street the impossibility of residential placement in a therapeutic facility faces the child. To attempt to integrate a 17-year-old crack-cocaine addicted child prostitute (usually since the age of 14) into any residential facility that does not specifically cater for her, would be an atrocity. Intombi Shelter specialises in residential care of children falling into this category.

Some of the children mentioned above, may suffer from major social drawbacks caused by the multiple rapes, the addiction to drugs, and the dysfunctions during her time as a child prostitute. Whilst the emphasis of regular children's homes fall on academic schooling, this facility understands that these children come to us at the age of 16 or 17, with maybe a grade 4 or 6 education. This facility will attempt to instil a stronger internal focus of control, and will provide them with skills. The focus will be on therapy and counselling and on preparing her for reintegration with family and/or society.

We understand that about 80% of these children suffered childhood sexual abuse, which are in some cases due the inadequacy of the legal systems and schools of detention. A great percentage of them will eventually find themselves on the street, having to survive by becoming a child prostitute. These children usually have very serious sexual dysfunction, anti-social personality disorder and a multitude of problems associated with disassociation and repression.

The needs verbalised by these children are: The need for further education, job opportunities that are non-sexual, and assistance to get out of the vice they live in. It is our estimate that these children need to be domesticated and rehabilitated in a family setting where they can acquire social skills and other personal skills that will make integration with normative society a possibility.

Aims and Objectives of Intombi Shelter

AIMS

1. To provide a temporary residential care centre for female children that ran away from abusive homes see

2. To provide a temporary residential care centre for female children living on the street in the Johannesburg area.
3. To provide an alternative for those girls who perceive themselves as trapped in a life of child prostitution.
4. To provide these children with the necessary skills to make reintegration possible.
5. To reintegrate these children into society and with their families.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide medium term facilities for 25 girls at a time, thus about 120 girls a year.,
2. To act as a place of safety for approximately 60 children per year.
3. To provide life and social skills training, religious and spiritual training and nurture, personal psychological support.
4. To provide children with legal, social, therapeutic and other resources necessary to facilitate their reintegration to normative life.
5. To recruit, train and employ volunteer workers to facilitate the various aspects of the Shelter.
6. To employ appropriately trained staff to manage the facility.
7. To provide trained adult supervision at all times.

Project Results

All the girls in the project start attending programmes/school within two weeks of intake. This is not only a good therapeutic measure and a start on the way to reintegration but it also serves the purpose to filter out those girls who are not yet serious about changing their lives. Such girls inevitably leave the shelter and return to the street, only to come back again once the hardness of street life has convinced them to make a change.

Project Impact

Intombi proves to be a rare source of hope for the difficult-to-place girl child. The program takes for granted the early maturity of these girls, due to sexual and physical abuse, rape, prostitution and drug addiction. We treat them with much respect and afford them an unusual amount of freedom of choice within a highly disciplined environment. They may choose to leave our project at any moment.

The impact this project is making on the girls is of the highest standard. Peer group are used therapeutically, and is currently one of the project's sources of finding new girls on the street.

The impact this project is making on the street culture is of tremendous value. Intombi Shelter is a resource for the girl child who ended on the streets for whatever unfortunate reason. In the past the only healing resource for these girls was the same welfare which most of them perceive as representing the abusers in their lives, the parents, the placement facilities and society. Girls who, in the past, had to resort to child prostitution to escape unwanted government and family interference in their lives now have the option to walk into a shelter - while the shelter slowly chips away at the hard shell of her anti-social behaviour to get to the nature and cause of her problems.

Networking and co-operation

Intombi Shelter endeavours to have good relations with other shelters and organisations. Because of the pioneering nature of the project, various similar projects came into being and make use of our project's manuals. Our knowledge we gained by making a multitude of pioneering mistakes. Only about 10% of the girls we work with result from the Gauteng area, most of the children come into the city from rural areas and the need to find networking partners in the rural and neighbouring countries is fast becoming a necessity.

Some interesting facts about the Intombi Shelter

- 6 426: Opportunities to provide 24 hour shelter for the girls in the programme. The girls make the decision to enter the reintegration programme to enable us to help them to return home or to find other suitable placement.
- 52: Girls were successfully reintegrated with their families.
- 10: Girls were referred to the Kulula Life Skills Centre.
- 19 723: Meals were prepared by the staff and the children. The children assist with the cooking of all the meals and the washing-up and cleaning of the kitchen.
- 43: Girls while in Intombi celebrated their birthdays.
- 456: Counselling sessions presented in preparation of the children's future plans and for integration within their families or other programmes.
- 15: Double bunks and lockers were purchased, thereby increasing the shelter's capacity from 20 to 30 beds.
- 2: One industrial stove and one large deepfreeze were bought.
- 137: Pairs of shoes were needed.
- 1645: Items of clothing were needed.
- 7 219: We endeavour to maintain a therapeutic environment with life skills training underlying in most of our interaction with the children.
- 7 219 Opportunities for therapeutic and life skills training were made available to the children - most of the children eagerly participated.
- 63: Scarves were knitted / crochet by the children during the winter.
- 37: Trips to Kulula Life Skills Centre for either a weekend or holidays.
- 485: Study hours. Intombi concentrates on the reintegration of the girls, therefore the discipline and routine of studying is very important, making it easier for the girls to later adapt to the 'normative' routine of home and school.
- 390: TV hours. The programme does not allow for unlimited hours spent in front of the television, therefore only 390 weekday hours were allowed for the girls to watch their favourite programmes.
- 291: Children participated in social or educational outings, as well as cultural events.

These figures reflect statistics for the year 1997. Since then the need for care have increased.