

Music as Therapy International: Project Rwanda Follow up visit 2011

Report for Sponsors

Background

In Summer 2010, UK music therapists Nicky Haire and Caroline Anderson delivered a six-week Introductory Music as Therapy skill sharing project for staff and children at two care settings in Cyangugu, Rwanda. A year on, Nicky and Caroline returned to assess the impact of the project and spend time with the staff, observing their work, as well as addressing any difficulties that may have arisen in the year. This level of personal support and additional training would help make the project more robust and help support the future sustainability of the project.

Ngwino Nawe

We found many changes at Ngwino Nawe. Two members of staff had left the centre but it was encouraging to see that two new members of staff had been introduced to the music programme. We were delighted to see that the music sessions were firmly embedded in their timetable for each day and all the staff seemed eager to build on their existing skills and learn more about using music therapeutically in their work. We observed two staff members who, having received training in 2010, ran both individual and group sessions. They were confident in their approach and instinctively applied the key music therapy principles: *waiting, watching, listening* and *responding*. We were struck by the level of playfulness and fun injected into the sessions which the children clearly enjoyed.

As expected, there were some challenges encountered by the staff working with children with more complex needs. 'S' had been discovered living in a forest at the age of two. She had been raised by animals and was brought to an orphanage where she lived, isolated and neglected for six years as the staff found it difficult to cope with her animal-like behaviour. She was brought to Ngwino Nawe two and a half years ago and although she was less wary of humans, staff felt that they had tried everything possible to engage with her yet still found it difficult to make a connection. After careful thinking and discussion around 'S's history, we observed a member of staff, Ancille, patiently lead a considered, gentle music session which included several moments of 'meeting' between her and 'S'.

Nkanka Nkanka

At Nkanka Nkanka we were also impressed to see a well-established timetable for the music sessions. In addition, the staff had made meticulous monthly session notes dating back to our previous visit. The notes provided evidence of careful thinking around the needs of each child, with appropriate therapeutic objectives linked to observations from the sessions. The staff seemed more confident in their roles leading interactive music sessions, and we enjoyed seeing the new activities they had developed in addition to the ones we had shown them last year.

Last year's report for sponsors detailed a session in which staff were beginning to apply key music as therapy principles with a young boy, 'J'. He was extremely distressed last year and staff had limited success with him in the music sessions. 'This year, however, we observed a staff member, Audace working very sensitively with 'J'. Audace had been running regular sessions with 'J' and the principles of using music as therapy were well established in his practice. 'J' tentatively explored an instrument and Audace responded with careful listening, matching the child's actions, and improvised vocalisations in response to the child's own. 'J' seemed like a different child to the previous year and this was confirmed by the staff who were keen to discuss his overall development and share the positive observations they'd made throughout the year.



Staff workshops and local area network meetings

Due to the isolated location of both centres, one of our aims in 2010 had been to foster links between the two staff teams by introducing weekly training workshops. We reintroduced the same structure on this visit and used the meetings to identify key areas in which the staff needed most support. In addition, we ran interactive workshops with a practical focus to help staff develop new activities, incorporate play and improvise during sessions. We discussed ways in which they could develop their music programmes in the future and further facilitated peer support by encouraging staff from each centre to share their experiences.

To encourage peer support and enable staff to share their skills, quarterly meetings of the staff from both Ngwino Nawe and Nkanka will take place throughout the coming year. These will happen in Kamembe, the town equidistant between the two centres. We were fortunate to gain the support of the charity Rwanda Aid, who have been so impressed with the music programmes and the commitment of the staff teams that they have offered to host these meetings free of charge. During the final workshop the staff planned the agenda and elected a chair and secretary for their first meeting. They will email the minutes to us along with any information relating to the overall development of the music programme.'

Feedback from staff

During the follow up visit we prepared questionnaires to elicit feedback from the staff which provided us with greater insight into how they viewed themselves and the music programme. It was encouraging to see that they were beginning to understand their own potential as practitioners: *The visit from Music as Therapy International was... 'useful as it helped us to improve our capacity to look after handicapped children and helped us learn how to use the instruments'*

For further support, *'we would need instruments to replace the broken ones. We would need help with transport costs to meet with the other centre (& to travel to other centres long term).'*



Staff members even have a vision for the whole of Rwanda: *'Make a meeting of all the centres of Rwanda. Organise training to train other centres. Finance the training. Motivate the trainers and trainees'*.

Conclusion

We feel very positive about the impact of the initial six-week training programme. During the follow up visit we observed the ways in which staff had understood the key principles of using music as a therapeutic tool and adapted them into their own cultural and professional setting. Both centres have shown they are dedicated to developing their therapeutic music programmes and we look forward to hearing from them regularly over the coming year with feedback from their local area group meetings. We are now planning how best we can support the Local Partners longer term and further develop access to the benefits of music as therapy for similar, isolated care settings in Rwanda.

Profound thanks to the Directors at both centres, Thérèse Mukandariyo (Ngwino Nawe) and Consuelo Ceribelli (Nkanka) and to David and Neville Chaplain from Rwanda Aid for their generosity and support. Further thanks to Abernethy Parish Church Nethy Bridge, Bryan Guinness Charitable Trust, The Rhododendron Trust, The Gordron Fraser Charitable Trust and The Marr-Manning Trust, together with the many friends and colleagues for their on-going support and for making this important phase of the project possible.