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Developing multidisciplinary teams to address child sexual assault in Zambia

The sexual assault and exploitation of children is an international phenomenon. However, in the Republic of Zambia, children are at a significantly higher risk of exploitation due to child marriage, the vulnerability of AIDS orphans, and the cultural belief that HIV infection can be cured by having sex with a child, also known as the “virgin cleansing myth” (Lecler, 2002). Currently, Zambia is an international leader in the incidence of pediatric AIDS orphans, with current statistics of more than 85,000 children living with HIV and another 380,000 orphaned due to the disease (Avert, 2016). In a country where 1.2 million citizens are affected by the disease, children compete for resources and effective strategies to meet their needs. The multidisciplinary response to sexual assault, which is the hallmark of coordinated Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART), is a model that can fill the gap in Zambia. In the current system, even when assaults are reported, the lack of trained forensic examiners, police investigations and legal interpretation of evidence, results in less than 10% of cases resulting in successful prosecution and conviction. Recognizing the need for a stronger multidisciplinary response system, an experience exchange program was developed, providing training to clinical, police and judiciary representatives. The program brings these key individuals to the US to learn forensic examination techniques, collection and interpretation of evidence. Upon return to Zambia they are supported in adapting what they have learned from the US multidisciplinary training to the dire realities that they face in Zambia.

Biography

Dr. Nicole M. Barnett, RN, Chair of the Board and offers a comprehensive background in biomedical research, education and nursing. She completed her nursing training at Contra Costa College in 1994. She is also an alumna of Oberlin College in Oberlin Ohio, and California State University Dominguez Hills where she earned her BSN and MBA. In August 2005, she earned her doctorate in health sciences from the Nova Southeastern University College of Allied Health and Nursing. Dr. Barnett is also a state certified public health nurse (PHN) and in 2012 achieved her certification as a Clinical Nurse Leader from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

Shota is nonprofit professional with twelve years of non-profit development experience on a local and international level. His field of expertise lies with strategic planning, program and organizational development grant management, proposal writing, program evaluation and fund development. He graduated from Tbilisi State University 1995 with his MS in Oriental Studies, received a Non-Profit Management Certificate and his Master's degree in Public Administration from the California State University East Bay in 2009 and 2011. In 2014 he completed his doctorate course in Walden University. Shota is dedicated professional and scholar practitioner. He is author of Experience Exchange Fellowship Program, Community Ambassadors' Program and many other international initiatives. He is working on his doctoral research as a PhD candidate in Public Policy and Administration with specialization of International Non-Governmental Organizations.