

Mary Open Doors

Final Paper



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“Breaking Free”

Mary Open Doors

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Introduction

Poverty, emotional trauma, a never ending cycle, control, abuse, hopelessness, fear—all these words poorly capture the truly inhumane, cruel and criminal act of domestic violence. Its perpetrators gain a sense of victory by dominating the helpless. Its victims are stripped of their humanity. The minds of both abuser and victim are entangled in a twisted mindset that can only be broken when light is shed on the dark, evil deed.

Mary Open Doors has taken on the immense task of shedding light on this social ailment. Its goal is to battle and eliminate domestic violence from Belize. Domestic violence inhibits social development. When women in society are suffering injustice, like a domino effect, it will affect all other aspects of society. The children of these women witness the grotesque act and think it is O.K. The economy loses out on the potential contributions of these women. On an on, the repercussions continue. The result is stunted development of the country.

Domestic violence is composed of a complex web of social issues. Its perpetuation thus affects all areas of society. Eliminating domestic violence from society could, thus, also lead to a brighter future for all Belizeans. The empowerment of women will lead to a healthier, better functioning society. Mary Open Doors is playing its role as a member of the country of Belize, but it faces many limitations.

Financial, human, and material resource constraints plague the NGO. As an NGO, MOD does not receive payment for its services. It relies on the donations of both the public and private sector. Resource constraint can be attributed to the main fact that the staff of only three shoulders very large responsibilities. More human resources are needed. But in order to acquire more human and even material resources, financial resources are needed. To get financial aid, the staff must take time to write time-consuming proposals for donations, use marketing tactics to raise awareness, make sure

their NGO is accountable and transparent by having a sound financial management system, and other such administrative tasks. Unfortunately, the staff must also, and foremost, attend to the needs of the many women who come to MOD for help. On average, about 30-40 women visit MOD each month. The staff must also sometimes watch children, go to court to assist women, file police reports, counsel, and do many other odd tasks. It is difficult for the team to find time to duly attend to administrative concerns but if they wish for the organization to continue, finding time to write proposals, set up a sound financial system, and set up controls for the organization (including a properly functioning board) is absolutely critical. Success is dependent on the strategy they take now to ensure their NGO is still in existence tomorrow.

One must recognize, however, that MOD has only been open for one year. May 4, 2009 will make it one year since MOD officially opened its doors to the public. In its first year, MOD has accomplished a lot for being run by only two women (the additional staff member was only recently added). The NGO is new. It still has much to learn. Through this project, our group hopes to have helped the NGO grow as we too have grown from the exchange of information and ideas.

Our group's task was to assist MOD in setting up its organizational structure through assistance in proposal writing, public awareness through marketing techniques, fund raising, and in general, letting MOD know that they have our support—that the community and Belize is grateful for their efforts.

This paper is a report of our semester long partnership with MOD. Following this introduction are the methods we undertook to accomplish the tasks we established. Next, the report goes on to share our results, findings, and conclusions. We end with recommendations for future actions the NGO can take in building its capacity.

Methods

Our group began by meeting with our new partners at MOD. We listened to their concerns and needs. We took notes of all they said and prioritized what we thought we could handle. We had to be careful not to promise what could not be delivered. Almost every week thereafter, we met with MOD to update our status, get feedback from them, and listen to them. Only after consultation with MOD and approval, did we make any move.

“Money is one of the things that takes up most of management time” (Mostashari, 2005). When the staff of MOD is faced with the decision to either aid a desperate woman who has come to their shelter for the first time or sit down in front of the computer to check the books, there is no question of what their priority will be. The women get top priority. Financial issues come second. However, in order to be able to continue to help these women, the NGO needs finances. Perhaps helping these women will be a signpost to the community and will in itself generate revenue, but, for true sustainability, a steady, yet variable, source of funding is necessary.

Marketing

Donation Boxes: The first task our group undertook, realizing the NGO’s need for finances, was to create donation boxes. Appendix 2 displays the letters sent out to various business establishments asking for permission to place the donation boxes in their business. A couple businesses did not require letters but immediately gave us permission. Donation boxes were placed at Scotia Bank, Atlantic Bank, Belize Bank, and Martha’s.

The donation boxes were made from plywood purchased by the group. The boxes are 8” by 8”. The boxes were painted blue, decorated, and a lock was placed on the front to ensure safe holding of the donations. On top of the box, held up by a popsicle stick, is a laminated sign giving brief information about MOD, and politely asking for donations. Appendix 3 shows the sign.

After the donation boxes were made, and while our creative ‘juices’ were still flowing, we proceeded to work on a marketing campaign for MOD. The flyer in Appendix 4 was created. The picture of a hopeless woman, coupled with a picture of hands breaking free of the rope that bound them, fully exemplified MOD’s cause. They help women to break free. The tag line, “Breaking Free”, has thus been part of our slogan for MOD. The flyer also gives a brief description of services MOD offers and follows with MOD’s contact information.

Ms. Marilyn Greig went on a trip to the U.S. in the first week of April, 2009. She will mass copy the flyers and brochures there. Upon her return at the end of April, the flyers will be placed in various strategic locations such as at bus stops, in businesses, and on lamp posts.

Brochure: Immediately after the flyer was made, a brochure for MOD was produced. The brochure is depicted in Appendix 5. The brochure highlights MOD’s beginnings, services offered, its goals and objectives, and includes an extra paper for those interested in becoming members. This paper asks for the person’s name, address, phone number, and membership type (donation amount). On the back of the paper is MOD’s address and an area to put a stamp for easy mailing.

Administrative Tasks

Our next area to tackle was helping MOD with administrative tasks—tasks that before we arrived, they had little time to properly complete. The tasks were divided into two phases: a volunteer manual and a proposal for a government subvention.

Volunteer Manual: The group completed a volunteer manual. Appendix 6 shows, in a condensed form, the volunteer manual. Ms. Anna Silva recently suggested adding MOD’s profile to the manual. After this is done, the manual will be printed for final review, and then five copies will be made and placed on file.

Proposal for Government Subvention: Our group completed the second draft for the Proposal for Government Subvention. After being handed a booklet from Beltraide and the UN on proposal

writing, the proposal was revamped. Appendix 7 shows the draft proposal. A generic letter is the first page depicted. Following is MOD's mission statement, goals, abstract, background, future goals, etc. The only item remaining is a more detailed budget with explanation. This leads the discussion to MOD's lack of a solid financial management system.

Findings

It was made clear upon our arrival at Mary Open Doors (MOD) that, as a fairly young organization, it would need to make use of marketing tactics. Marketing MOD would give the organization much needed public awareness. Springing from public awareness would be increased support for the organization.

We also discovered during meetings with the founders of MOD, Anna Silva and Marilyn Greigg, that the organization needed assistance in restructuring its organizational system. Its financial system, policies and control measures, and board members' roles, needed to be re-examined and upgraded to be made more efficient. Human resource constraint is a prime factor in the organization's poorly functioning organizational structure. The staff of MOD finds it difficult to find the time to keep track of necessary financial transactions, inventory, records of women who have been assisted, and activities undertaken. The Excel template the staff uses to keep track of financial transactions is not only rudimentary, but also very inefficient. Additionally, the computers storing these documents are plagued with viruses that cause the computers to run at very slow speeds. Not all their data has been backed up. There is an fear that one day the computers will crash and MOD will lose all its information.

MOD also needs to establish long term goals. This is an extremely important task that will define where the organization wants to be in the future and that will highlight how it will get there. The policies will establish what MOD expects to accomplish and what it stands for. A five year plan will function as a measuring tool for the organization's success. Discovering the organization will allow MOD to make progress and improve its organization.

Results

The first step in redefining Mary Open Doors to become a more effective and efficient organization has been completed. Our group was able to address the financial and marketing issues by completing the goals of making and distributing donation boxes, creating a brochure, writing a government subvention proposal, and creating a policy manual. Our group gained experience in learning how a non-governmental organization operates as well as appreciation for service learning in the community. In addition, we were able to form a very open relationship with Mary Open Doors' founders, Ms. Anna Silva and Ms. Marilyn Grieg. We did not go to the organization trying to establish and bring impose our views. As a result, we were able to accomplish the "first step". Regardless of minors setbacks, the 4 months of service learning was beneficial not only to our group, but hopefully also to the service partners.

Conclusion

The Mary Open Doors service learning project was a great accomplishment. Though there were a few trials along the path to completion, the group was able to complete most of the tasks required by the partners. MOD is now able to apply for grants through the generic proposal we helped to create. They will gain more publicity from our marketing efforts. Given more time we would surely have done more (as our recommendations for future activities will allude to). However, we do hope that MOD is now at a better place than it was upon our commencement of this service learning project.

Recommendations for Future Activities

In the future, groups that are doing volunteer work with Mary Open Doors should continue to be as helpful with the administration and inner workings of Mary Open Doors as possible. This semester, our group has assisted with trying to make Mary Open Doors a more successful NGO. Unfortunately, time constraints made it hard to accomplish everything the NGO needed. In this section, we make recommendations for future volunteers to carry on the torch.

Tasks that can be accomplished in the immediate future (six months time) include the following:

- Establish the role of the board and as distinguished from management. Management often crosses over into the functions of the board. There needs to be a clear separation of the role of management and the role of the board. Defining/demarcating this boundary will lead to a more effective organization.
- Properly set up the Quick Books Program and teach the staff how to use it. QuickBooks will allow the organization to gain more credibility as the program will allow MOD to keep better track of its finances. Reports can also easily be created using QuickBooks. The result will be a more effective and efficient financial system. (Controls will also need to be set in place and enforced to ensure that only accurate information is entered into the program.)
- Establish a website for MOD. The website will be a great communication tool that will inform both local and international audiences of Mary Open Doors' cause. Hopefully, the website will aid in garnering more financial and volunteer support.
- Add new donation boxes in new locations and redistribute existing unused boxes.
- Distribute proposals to government officials. The volunteers will have to set appointments with each head of ministry and present the proposal.

This semester we tried to accomplish everything the project partners wanted us to help them with but time constraints were an issue. For future projects with Mary Open Doors, it would be extremely helpful if the project partners had planned out, from the beginning, exactly what they wanted the volunteers to work on throughout the semester before the volunteers came to work. An outline for volunteers to go by would more clearly project what the volunteers would be able to accomplish. The volunteers could then work on one project at a time and not try to juggle many various activities. This semester, the service learning project was somewhat overwhelming because we had so much to do all at once. If tasks were broken down a little better in the future, it would greatly help future volunteers to get tasks done in a timely manner and not feel so overwhelmed with all the work.

The administration at Mary Open Doors is struggling with human resources to run the NGO. They needed, and still need, a lot of help with running the business side of the NGO. Many of the tasks required professional writing and detailed knowledge of accounting, running an effective NGO, knowing how to create policies and controls, and much more. If members of the group do not have those particular type skills, then it becomes hard to manage the work evenly between group members. Having a clear set of tasks for the group to accomplish by the end of the semester will result in the group being able to decide who will accomplish what from the inception of the project.

All in all, the project partners at Mary Open Doors have been extremely helpful. They have worked very well with the group. Future groups that choose to work with Mary Open Doors will have a very positive experience if they work hard to accomplish the administrative work at Mary Open Doors. Next year the NGO should be more established. Hopefully this service-learning project has helped them to strengthen the wonderful and empowering work that they do for women in Belize.

APPENDIX 1: LITERATURE REVIEW



“Helping you to Break Free”

Applications of Sustainable Development
Galen University, Spring 2009
Brenna Straw, Shane Rosalez, Kayla Grant
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Literature Review

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) was a milestone—a manifestation of a social movement that had long ago begun to take place in the world. The MDGs are a combination of goals and targets that measure a country’s performance in addressing the global issues of development, human rights, environmental sustainability, peace and security (Johnson, 2005). All 191 member countries, including Belize, agreed to aim to achieve the goals set in these MDGs by the year 2015. One such MDG is to promote gender equality and empower women. Another is to improve maternal health. Though Belize is “well poised” in its rate of progress in achieving these two particular goals, Mary Open Doors’ commitment to eradicating domestic violence in Belize will directly assist in bringing about the full realization and completion of those two very important MDGs.

Mary Open Doors (MOD) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization whose goal is to eradicate domestic violence. For an organization with a staff of only three and limited financial resources, the task is immense. The purpose of this Literature Review is to conduct research that will give our group a deeper understanding of the problem of domestic violence as well as an understanding of the context of the situation a domestic violence NGO faces during its operation, a clear cut depiction of the problems NGOs typically encounter, and insight into various alternatives that will address key problems.

The Literature Review begins by first defining what domestic violence is and documenting its origins. To be able to identify areas that will help MOD succeed, we then explore the context and environment that Mary Open Doors finds itself in. The Literature Review looks at the legal framework, cultural norms, and psychological underpinnings characteristic of the Belizean society. We then conduct an analysis of the statistical data in Belize. The data shows that there are high occurrences of domestic violence going on in Belize. The environment reveals a dire need for MOD’s services.

The Literature Review continues on to review the functions of an NGO. We look at the strength and weakness of its structure, resources, and support groups. MODs performance is then compared to that of other domestic violence organizations in existence. We then identify the areas that need to be addressed in order for MOD to become a viable organization that can confidently continue into its second year of operation.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE/ABUSE

Mary Open Doors strives to eliminate or at the least alleviate the level of domestic violence in the country of Belize. So then what is domestic violence? Why the big concern about it in our society? Domestic violence/abuse is any form of abuse that affects another family member, friend or spouse in a negative way. It can be in the form of physical, sexual, emotional, financial, or psychological abuse. It can take place almost anywhere—in the home, on the street, or at work. Though men can also be victims, domestic violence mostly takes as its victim’s children and women. It is the leading cause of injury to women. In the past it was overlooked and accepted but now “There is quite a lot more awareness that domestic violence, i.e. beating, battering, hitting, and other kinds of abuse, is wrong. People are more aware that it is not the right thing to do - before there was not even the awareness that it was necessarily wrong!” (Hillary Nicholas, 2004).

When domestic violence occurs it trickles down into all walks of the community. For example, if a woman is beaten at home, it leads to her inability to go to work, thus resulting in a cut in her pay because of absence. Quite striking is the fact that 1.8 billion dollars is lost in production and earnings each year due to intimate partner violence in the U.S (American Institute of Domestic Violence, 2001). This has encouraged public and private organizations to address the issue and problems related to domestic violence.

Domestic violence is by no means a new occurrence. Domestic violence has been an intrinsic part of human society in all cultures throughout time. It is often impossible to escape the walls of a home where you are living with other human beings. (www.domesticviolence.in/history-of-domestic-violence.htm, author unknown) When two people with two separate mindsets and world views form an intimate relationship, there is bound to be conflict. Ideologies clash, character flaws surface, and the true human being is revealed. It is how one responds to these conflicts and clashes that separates normal human conflict from one of escalated violence.

Violence in homes has been ongoing for hundreds of years. No region is exempt from this inhumane act. In fact, the belief and value systems of various societies in the world endorse this type of violence which has been typically geared towards women. The subordination of women in societies has helped to shape the course of violence within homes and especially in countries where the laws and social norms diminish the status of women. One has to question why women and even children (who are often depicted as being weak) have been targeted (www.domesticviolence.in/history-of-domestic-violence/htm, author unknown) but even more so what fosters a mindset that makes abusers believe it is ok to react so violently despite society's recent condemnation of the act.

We say recent because public awareness of domestic violence is a recent occurrence. In the United States, for example, the domestic violence act did not become a matter of public awareness until the women's movement in the 1970's. Even more shocking is that it was not recognized as a significant problem until 1983. There was a shift in the mindset. The shift changed the course of American History and had a strong and visible impact on the whole world. Now, in 2009, the goal is to empower women—the women who hold the future in their womb.

PSYCHOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF ABUSERS AND VICTIMS

There is no valid excuse for resorting to domestic violence. Domestic violence is a crime. There are, though, many 'reasons' perpetrators partake in domestic violence. One of the most prominent reasons is stress. Men can feel stressed by living in a family situation. Family pressures can create a situation for some individuals which cause them to burst out in fits of rage. They lack self-control. Anger overrides reason and ultimately leads to violence in the homes. An often cited cause for domestic violence is the abusers desire to establish power and control (Australia domestic violence handbook).

Victims often get caught in a cycle of domestic violence. Abusers typically express genuine remorse. The victim returns and the violent cycle starts to begin once again. There are many other reasons women cannot just leave the situation. One common reason that prevents many women from leaving is their heavy financial dependence on their partner. Often in developing countries such as Belize, women who tend to have more children to care for are more in need of the economic stability provided for by men. Women lack the resources, education, or ability to wean themselves from the dependence. It is more difficult for women to make an exit or escape from a violent partner. (www.domesticviolence.in/history-of-domestic-violence.htm, author unknown)

There are many psychological aspects of a domestic abuser. Some of the most predominant characteristics are anger, suspicion, moodiness, tension, resentment, and hypersensitivity. Many abusers feel helplessness, fear, inadequacy, insecurity, low self-esteem and loser mentality. Many abusers have problems with communication or may find it natural to express themselves through violence because they experienced their parents during violence as a way to communicate. When this combined with poor anger management skills can lead to violence as their means of expression. This anger generally follows a pattern that starts with self-need and often leads to resentment that this need is not fulfilled. Along with mental psychological factors there are external factors that can facilitate the abuse of women. There are six main categories of external psychological factors. These are

media/entertainment, societal/cultural, historical/religious, physical/genetic, economic/financial, and legal/judicial.

HOW TO COUNSEL A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIM

In order to counsel a victim of domestic abuse you must understand the cyclical nature of an abusive relationship. This is helpful in understanding how someone can become caught up in a potentially never-ending life of violence. Abusive relationships involve a build up of tension between the two partners, then a violent explosion that releases the tension, then a temporary return to peaceful interaction between the two individuals. The cycle of this abuse will continue and the violence generally becomes more and more frequent as the relationship progresses unless one of two things happens: the abuser changes his behavior or the victim seeks help from professionals.

Before one starts to counsel a victim of domestic violence you need to understand yourself and your own prejudices. To be a good counselor you must be neutral and supportive. You should take time to think about your personal history with the issues you will face. A counselee should expect you to listen without interruption and judgment to her story, to help her identify her feelings about the abuse and to understand and identify the extreme danger she has been in. A good counselor should get her to identify her own inner strength and courage and to assist her in building her self-esteem and empowering herself and her children.

Trauma and shock following abuse affects people in very different ways. Each woman who is abused has her own reaction and coping style with what has been happening to her. Some of the types of women you may encounter while counseling are women who are very nervous, women who talk very little, women who talk too much, women who exaggerate, women who are too calm, women who are very angry, women who are hysterical, women who are silent and women who don't act as you would expect.

The most important thing to remember when trying to counsel somebody who has been in an abusive relationship or has experienced domestic violence is there are three main counseling qualities every counselor should have and go by. They are understanding, acceptance, and empowerment. (Cornerstone Organization,)

THE BELIZEAN CONTEXT

In December 2000, the Belize Domestic Violence Act was passed. The passing of this law illuminated the great importance of realizing Domestic violence as a serious issue in the Belizean society. The law addresses several solutions/punishment for the offenders that commit domestic violence. Part 2 of the act mentions the possibility of placing a restraining order form on the offender. It states that a restriction order may be taken out by "the spouse of the person, being the spouse in respect of whom the alleged conduct has been, or is likely to be, engaged in by that person" (GOB, 2000).

The act continues on to make mention of the extent of action that the law can take for those charged with domestic violence. Once a person is charged with domestic violence, he/she can obtain bail under the basis that the "defendant does not harass or molest, or cause another person to harass or molest, a specified prescribed person" (GOB, 2000) If such agreement is terminated then bail will be removed and the defendant will be imprisoned. The laws are put in place to protect the victims. The courts and law upholding officials are usually on the side of the victims which usually leads to perpetrators getting their just deserves.

The following quote adequately illustrates the context MOD finds itself in.

" While welcoming the new Domestic Violence Act, which takes effect in July 2007, the Committee is concerned about the continued prevalence of violence against women and the lack of social awareness about it in the country. The Committee is

concerned that women victims of violence are advised to return to their abusive partners by authority figures, including the police and magistrates. It is concerned about the limited progress made in the State party in preventing and eliminating violence against women, reflected in a lack of prosecutions and convictions and lack of access to justice for women, particularly in the rural areas.

The Committee is further concerned that despite the criminalization of marital rape, there are apparently no prosecutions for that crime in the State party. It regrets the lack of information and statistical data on all types of violence against women and of steps taken to assess the effectiveness of measures undertaken to address violence against women”—Concluding comments of the committee on.” (MOD, 2008)

Despite increasing awareness throughout the world, domestic violence is still a big epidemic in our society in Belize. Belize has seen its share of domestic violence. Over the first three quarters of 2008 there were a total of 1,070 reports of domestic violence throughout the country (the epidemiology unit, MOH, 2008). The age of victims who suffered these vicious attacks ranged from 1 to 65 years of age. Women between 20 and 30 years of age were the most commonly affected; this age range alone was responsible for one third of all victims.

Out of the 1,070 cases reported in 2008, 552 were reported in Belize City alone. The most developed part of the country, with the highest literacy rate, leads in domestic violence cases! 62 cases were reported in Cayo. Many more go unrecorded. The problem will continue to exist because it appears that people—whether regular citizens or high officials—overlook this matter. Four hundred forty-four (444) of the total 1,070 victims were in a common law marriage or living together with their abuser. 329 cases of domestic violence were reported by victims who were married. Most of these cases occur behind closed doors and because of fear of some sort remain behind closed doors. Domestic violence, like any other social ill in our society, is overlooked until it affects an individual directly; that’s when they become concerned. Sometimes it is too late; a love one has already been beaten to death or seriously injured.

THE ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE NGO

From the statistical analysis, it is clear that the perpetuation of domestic violence is a serious problem in Belize. In order to combat domestic violence, it is essential that the NGO fighting this battle operates both efficiently and effectively.

The term NGO “came into use in 1945 because of the need for the UN to differentiate in its Charter between participation rights for intergovernmental specialized agencies and those for international private organizations” (Mostashari, 2005). There are two types of NGOs—operational and advocacy. Operational NGOs “have to mobilize resources, in the form of financial donations, materials or volunteer labor, in order to sustain their projects and programs”. Advocacy NGOs “mobilize large numbers for brief periods”. Although at times it takes on functions of an advocacy NGO when it aims to raise awareness of domestic violence via a campaign effort, Mary Open Doors is primarily an operational NGO. According to Mostashari (2005), “operational NGOs need to possess an efficient headquarters bureaucracy, in addition to the operational staff in the field”.

Before delving into the bureaucratic structure of the NGO, Cousins makes note of six main roles of NGOs.

1. Development and Operation Infrastructure
2. Supporting Innovation, Demonstrations, and Pilot Projects
3. Facilitating Communication
4. Technical Assistance and Training
5. Research, Monitoring, Evaluation
6. Advocacy for and with the Poor

To fulfill its roles, the NGO must first have vision. Its vision and subsequent mission goals will be the ultimate guide for the NGO. Of importance for the NGO as well, is for the NGO to have a solid organizational structure. Though the structure varies with each organization, having a board is integral to all NGOs. Mostashari¹ emphasizes broadening and strengthening the constitution of the board. The purpose of the board would be to assist in the internal workings of the NGO—setting policies and strategies, making plans and budgets, operational guidelines, making funding decisions, monitoring and evaluating performance, and representing the NGO in the community (Mostashari, 2005). The board members should be selected based on their standing in the community, ability to make sound and strategic decisions that fall in line with the NGO’s purpose, and ability to communicate effectively. The board usually consists of 10-15 members. The board of directors consists of a president, a vice president, treasurer, secretary, and other members. (Mostashari, 2005)

“The board’s function is to provide policy direction, ensure organizational planning, and hire and direct the NGO’s senior manage” (Peace Corp, n.d.). Management is responsible for the daily operations of the organization and for implementing the board’s policies and plans. Both the board and management monitor the internal and external environment and are responsible for assisting the NGO in adapting to changes in the environment. All too often, boards tend to micromanage and managers take on the role of the board in setting the NGO’s direction and policies. A common issue in NGO governance is the different roles of the board and management.” (Peace Corps, n.d.)

Another important aspect of the NGO is the development of bylaws (aka articles of association). Bylaws are usually necessary for the registration of the NGO. The bylaws are “internal documents, a set of rules that enables each organization to conduct its affairs” (Mostashari, 2005). Following is a list of items addressed in the bylaws as noted by Mostashari (2005).

- The Name and purpose of the NGO
- The frequency, notice, and quorum requirements for organization meetings
- Voting qualifications, proxies, and procedures for approval of boards i.e. governance structure of the NGO board
- Membership and authority of committee or working groups
- Record-keeping and financial reporting responsibilities
- Amendment procedures for the bylaws and provisions for dissolution of the organization

One final important topic worth mentioning under the heading of having a solid organization structure, is capacity building. Capacity building is akin to organizational development. It is “actions that improve nonprofit effectiveness” (Mostashari, 2005). Capacity building efforts include providing training and development sessions, providing coaching, supporting collaboration with other nonprofits, and granting funds. “Assessing the impact—what changes in clients’ lives as a result of an NGO’s services—is an integral piece of program capacity” (Peace Corp, n.d.). Impact assessment is important. The NGO should search for ways staff and volunteers can easily collect data over time. Impact data will help NGOs design better projects and persuade donors to support those projects.

PROBLEMS FACING THE NGO

“A well-run business and a well-run NGO have much in common” (Peace Corps, n.d.). “Peter Drucker and others have consistently pointed out that NGOs need to adopt business practices.” (Peace Corps n.d.) By adopting business-like practices, the NGO can be run in an effective and efficient manner. To accomplish this, there are several issues that must be looked at. The first is good financial management. According to the Mostashari (2005), to have good financial management, the NGO must keep records, have internal control, have an accurate budget, and do financial reporting. The key for

¹ Mostashari’s document on “An Introduction to NGO Management” is very comprehensive. Most of the information in this section, unless otherwise notes, thus cites his work.

keen financial management then, is to be organized. One must keep track of all transactions—expenses, revenue, liabilities, assets—in one place. Having a control in place will ensure that every transaction is monitored and recorded. Such controls can include sticking to a budget, carrying out bank reconciliation, having only one employee in charge of handling cash, etc. The prior will ensure that financial reporting can be carried out more effortlessly. It follows then that it is very important to set realistic budgets. This is often a daunting task as one of the biggest challenges NGOs face is a lack of financial resources.

Nonprofit organizations do not charge for their services so raising capital is often a big problem for NGOs. Craven (2006) cites that intense competition for financial resources and the reluctance of international funders to fund directly (due to a perception of lack of accountability) makes fund raising a hard task. Creativity, strong support groups, networking, and maintaining a good corporate reputation in the community will assist in bringing about successful funding efforts. In the following list, we touch on a few important solutions to NGOs difficulty in acquiring the necessary funding.

1. **Networking and Establishing Credibility:** “The purpose of networking is to establish your organizations reputation for excellent, quality work, and to create a network of organizations and people who will verify to others that your organization is legitimate, credible and worth supporting” (Peace Corp, n.d.). NGOs should have ready a list of references that can support the NGOs credibility.
2. **Know Yourself and Know your Donors:** Before making a funding request, know your organization and research the donor. Know your resources and your strengths. This “requires observing, studying, and analyzing the organization over time, taking into account the many and varied facets in the organization’s internal and external environment” (Peace Corp, n.d.)
3. **Diversifying:** “Diversify the fund base, secure multi-year rather than short term grants, and build up reserves through income-generating activities. (Peace Corp, n.d.)
4. **Sustainable Programs:** “A well-run NGO ensures that its programs are sustained in addition to being appropriate quality services delivered in cost-effective ways” (Peace Corps, n.d.).

Another issue that NGOs should take account is learning not only how to acquire resources, but also how to maximize current resources. Resources include staff, assets, materials, creativity/innovation, and finances. Managers/heads of the NGO are the artists. Their tools are entrepreneurial strategies, analytical techniques, and sound decision making. They understand the vision of the NGO and must therefore know how to maximize resources using the tools they have. NGOs often have limited resources. Efficient use of resources is of prime importance. One such means by which to maximize human resources is to motivate employees. NGOs have a mix of paid staff and volunteers. “Effective motivators appeal to the individual and reward behaviors that make it possible for the organization to achieve its mission” (Peace Corps, n.d.).

The final issue an NGO must address is raising awareness of their cause. The most effective way to do this is by creating tactful marketing campaigns. How the NGO markets itself will determine the scope and impact of their efforts. Adding a tag line (such as “breaking free”) or having a logo will raise brand awareness. Marketing reinforces the importance of establishing credibility through networking. Whether talking to friends, high officials, or other NGO’s, you are simultaneously networking and marketing the NGO.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NGOs IN THE CARIBBEAN

Mary Open Doors is one of many domestic violence NGOs that has been established in the Caribbean region. One such NGO is The Shelter in Trinidad and Tobago. Established in 1987, The Shelter opened its doors “in response to growing awareness of domestic violence and greater need for

support of victims of domestic violence, the Shelter has grown into a successful NGO located in many areas around the country” (The Shelter, 2009). The NGO offers accommodations (bedding, library, sewing room, counseling room and a children’s room) for three to six months, counseling, dental aid, education and skills training, legal aid, medical aid, provision of clothing and food and an Outreach Program for non-residents. The NGO also receives an annual subvention from the Government as well as support from private companies and the public community.

The Shelter’s website is informative, lays out the company’s goals and members of its committee. It is also apparent that the NGO has a strong support group that consists of government, the police and other NGOs in the Caribbean such as Help and Shelter Guyana, Safe Horizon, and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Though the website clearly establishes the NGOs credibility, it could further ameliorate potential donors’ sense of risk by including information on their specific goals, plans for the future, financial statements, and a run down of the NGOs past accomplishments. A few links were not working. Because such information is not readily available, potential donors would hesitate to donate.

Fortunately enough, the Shelter is a part of an amalgamation of over thirty organizations and individuals that are involved in support services for victims of abuse. The amalgam is known as the Trinidad & Tobago Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Formed in 1988, T&TCADV is a highly credible umbrella coalition. Their objectives cover lobbying and advocacy for human rights issues, direct victim support, research, public education, counseling, education aid to victims of domestic violence, witness support and legal aid, and prevention programs.

T&TCADV’s website is comprehensive. It includes a thorough list of their newsletters, projects, history, fund raising, research papers, videos, legislation, a discussion forum, resources, and the list goes on. Missing only are financial statements showing stakeholders transparency and accountability.

CONCLUSION

The Literature Review is a critical step to take in formulating the contextual framework of a problem. Research into the origins, causes, and occurrences of domestic violence in Belize as well as understanding the function, structure, and issues common to NGOs will go a long way in identifying the urgent needs of Mary Open Doors so as to create sustainable solutions that will carry on into the future.

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Appendix

Table A

Domestic Violence Cases by Age-Group and District of Victims**Belize: January - September 2008**

Age-Group	Corozal	Orange Walk	Belize	Cayo	Stann Creek	Toledo	Total
<1	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
1-4	0	0	7	0	1	0	8
5-9	0	1	13	0	0	4	18
10-14	0	8	22	0	1	6	37
15-19	18	14	33	8	1	7	81
20-24	45	31	134	5	4	11	230
25-29	48	16	92	9	3	9	177
30-34	31	22	90	16	6	5	170
35-39	38	17	62	16	3	4	140
40-44	26	14	44	4	7	4	99
45-49	11	5	19	4	1	0	40
50-54	7	1	14	0	1	2	25
55-59	5	4	6	0	1	2	18
60-64	2	1	3	0	0	0	6
65+	5	1	9	0	1	1	17
Dk/Ns	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	236	135	552	62	30	55	1070

Source: The Epidemiology Unit, MOH

Table B

Domestic Violence Cases by District and Civil Status of Victims**Belize: January - September 2008**

Civil Status	Corozal	Orange Walk	Belize	Cayo	Stann Creek	Toledo	Total
Common Law/Living Together	79	52	244	33	15	21	444
Divorced	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
Married	127	63	86	24	11	18	329
Single	4	16	126	1	2	8	157
Widowed	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Visiting Relationship	1	0	18	2	0	0	21
Separated	25	1	29	2	1	1	59
N/A	0	0	39	0	0	6	45
Missing	0	2	6	0	1	0	9
Total	236	135	552	62	30	55	1070

Source: The Epidemiology Unit, MOH

Table C

**Outcome for Victims by District
Belize: January - September 2008**

Outcome	Corozal	Orange Walk	Belize	Cayo	Stann Creek	Toledo	Total
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Suicide	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
Hospitalization	0	0	10	1	2	2	15
Treated & Released	14	18	27	16	6	15	96
Referred to another level of Care	91	16	280	5	7	11	410
Court order for Aggressor	128	87	170	21	3	20	429
Other	7	21	62	19	12	7	128
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	240	142	552	62	30	55	1081

Note: There could be more than one outcome per case or none at all

Source: The Epidemiology Unit, MOH

Table D

**Domestic Violence Cases by Place of Referrals and Age-Group of Victims
Belize: January - September 2008**

Age-Group	Psyc.Nurse	Women's Dept.	Human Ser. Dept.	Health Center/Post	Legal Aid	Police	Haven House	A & E	Family Court/Magistrate	Com. Rehab. Dept.	National Council for Ageing
<1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	0
1-4	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
5-9	3	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	7	1	0
10-14	8	0	14	4	0	4	0	0	8	1	0
15-19	6	11	9	2	0	15	0	5	44	0	0
20-24	4	21	12	2	0	31	2	6	170	3	2
25-29	2	17	12	1	3	31	1	1	135	2	0
30-34	5	14	13	1	2	25	0	1	122	4	1
35-39	4	12	18	3	0	29	0	3	98	2	0
40-44	3	13	10	1	1	21	0	1	61	4	0
45-49	1	3	1	0	0	9	0	2	32	1	0
50-54	1	4	0	0	0	4	0	0	19	0	0
55-59	2	3	0	1	0	3	0	0	12	0	0
60-64	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	0
65+	0	1	0	0	0	5	0	1	10	0	0
UNKN	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total	40	99	95	19	7	180	3	20	728	21	3

Note: A Client could be referred to more than one place.

Source: The Epidemiology Unit, MOH

Table E

Cases by Age-Group and Sex of Aggressors

Belize: January - March 2007

Age-Group	Male	Female	Unknown	Total
<1	0	0	0	0
1-4	0	0	0	0
5-9	0	0	0	0
10-14	5	1	0	6
15-19	35	13	0	48
20-24	130	38	0	168
25-29	167	30	0	197
30-34	147	35	0	182
35-39	104	26	0	130
40-44	60	13	0	73
45-49	59	6	0	65
50-54	20	2	0	22
55-59	22	4	0	26
60-64	4	1	0	5
65+	9	2	0	11
Unknown	122	13	2	137
Total	884	184	2	1070

Source: The Epidemiology Unit, MOH

Table F

Cases by Age-Group and District of Aggressors								
Belize: January - September 2008								
Age-Group	Corozal	Orange Walk	Belize	Cayo	Stann Creek	Toledo	UNKN	Total
<1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1-4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5-9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10-14	0	0	5	0	0	1	0	6
15-19	9	7	28	2	0	2	0	48
20-24	38	11	96	6	1	15	1	168
25-29	29	16	136	5	2	8	1	197
30-34	36	19	104	6	9	8	0	182
35-39	39	8	71	10	0	2	0	130
40-44	18	6	38	3	4	3	1	73
45-49	18	6	26	7	3	5	0	65
50-54	7	2	12	0	1	0	0	22
55-59	10	5	5	0	4	2	0	26
60-64	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	5
65+	4	5	2	0	0	0	0	11
Unknown	11	51	33	24	7	9	2	137
Total	222	136	556	63	32	56	5	1070

Source: The Epidemiology Unit, MOH

APPENDIX 2: LETTER USED WITH DONATION BOXES

Mary Open Doors



#5 Church Street, San Ignacio Cayo

maryopendoors@gmail.com

824-0409 or 824-0425

To whom it may concern:

Mary Open Doors is a privately run Non-Governmental Organization working to combat domestic violence. Mary Open Doors gives women and children who are victims of the vile act of domestic abuse shelter, counseling, and a hope to get released from the grip of this vicious cycle.

As we receive no funding from the government, we turn to the community and private donors to assist us in keeping this organization afloat.

We thus humbly ask that you allow Mary Open Doors to place a donation box in your local business. The prior will not only help to raise funds that will assist in running the organization, but it will also bring awareness to the service Mary Open Doors has to offer our community.

Thank you for your help in supporting Mary Open Doors and our drive to eradicate the social problems that plague our society.

Sincerely,

Ms. Anna Silva

CEO Mary Open Doors

APPENDIX 3: SIGN PLACED ON TOP OF DONATION BOXES



Mary Open Doors

"Breaking Free"



Each year hundreds of women suffer in silence as they are beaten, raped, and abused by the ones they should be able to trust the most.

Here at Mary Open Doors, we help give these women the hope and the strength to **BREAK FREE of the SHACKLES of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** but it comes at a cost. We are an NGO with limited available funds and resources. We are currently struggling to stay afloat.

Thus, We come to you, the community, asking for assistance. Any donation is welcomed.

Assist us in the fight to eradicate domestic violence from our country.

**May you be Blessed in Return
for your DONATIONS!**

We Offer

- ◆ Basic Counseling
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Case Management
- Shelter
- Court Advocacy
- Referrals

For more information, please call us at 824-0409 or 824-0425 or visit us at #5 Church Street, San Ignacio Cayo. E-mail: maryopendoors@gmail.com

APPENDIX 4: MOD FLYER

Mary Open Doors

W E C A N

H E L P

We Offer

- ◆ Basic Counseling
- ◆ Shelter
- ◆ Education
- ◆ Court Advocacy
- ◆ Case Management
- ◆ Referrals



Don't let domestic violence continue to hurt you and your family. Visit us today and **BREAK FREE.**

#5 Church Street, San Ignacio Cayo
maryopendoors@gmail.com
824-0409 or 824-0425

APPENDIX 5: MOD BROCHURE

How to Become a Member

Call and Sign up to be part of our various membership groups. Membership fees will allow Mary Open Doors to keep its doors open to the public. Members will also receive monthly newsletters notifying them of how their contributions have helped women and children suffering from domestic abuse.

Individual membership- \$5 annual fee to join

Family membership- \$10 annual fee to join

Lifetime membership- \$100 annual fee to join



**Thank you for your
Generous support!**

For more information

contact:

Anna Silva or Marilyn Griggs at

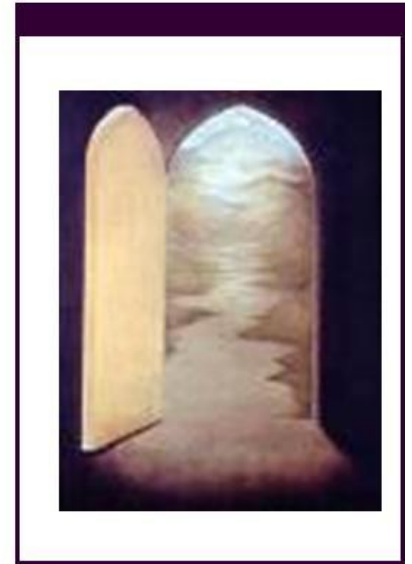
824-0425 or 824-0409



Mary Open Doors

#5 Church Street, San Ignacio Cayo
maryopendoors@gmail.com
824-0409 or 824-0425

Mary Open Doors



“Empowering women and
children affected by Domestic
Violence”

About Us

Mary Open Doors is a newly founded organization whose aim is to address the issues of Domestic Violence. A Safe House in the Cayo District was established in order to support and assist battered women and children who need somewhere to turn.

Mission Statement

"By providing safe shelter, support & education, Mary Open Doors is committed to empowering and improving the health and well being of women and children in the Cayo District, affected by Domestic Violence"

Vision

To let survivors of Domestic Violence know that they have an option—that they have a safe place to stay and people to turn to who will assist them in leading an independent, positive future.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is one of the most serious problems women in Belize face. 99% of violent crimes against women are perpetrated by their partner or spouse. Despite the known existence of domestic

abuse in Belize, discussion of the problem continues to be taboo, especially in rural areas where education on the matter is very low. In the Belizean culture, women are under the "protection" of men. Women are thus seen as the subordinates to men. Such attitudes are allowed to persist. Women are still reluctant to come forward mainly because of the lack of an adequate support system.

A safe Shelter in the Cayo district is critical to be able to ensure the safety and protection of the lives affected by Domestic Violence.

Goals

Mary Open Doors thrives to:

~establish an agency to which women can turn to get the support and empowerment they need to change their situation

~become a community based resource.

~establish a Safe Shelter.

~work together so as to strengthen and ensure the safety and protection of lives of women and children affected by Domestic Violence

~Collaborate with other agencies to establish a "referral system" so that other agencies have somewhere to which they can refer women who are in need of shelter

→ Make Mary Open Doors a resource in the community

Current Services

Include:

Office-

- ◆ Education
- ◆ Basic Counseling
- ◆ Court Advocacy
- ◆ Case management
- ◆ Referrals

Shelter-

- ◆ 24 hours service with Security
- ◆ Basic Needs
- ◆ Supportive Confidential Counseling

How You Can Contribute to the Cause:

- ◆ Financial donations
- ◆ Donating clothing, food, household items
- ◆ Volunteering your time
- ◆ Becoming a member.

We greatly appreciate your contributions.



Breaking Free of the Shackles of Domestic Violence

APPENDIX 2: MOD VOLUNTEER MANUAL

"Mary Open Doors"

Volunteer Manual

"Welcome to Mary Open Doors. We are delighted that you will be joining us. We hope that your experience here will be both interesting and enjoyable. Please read this orientation manual carefully. It contains important information that will assist you in carrying out your volunteer duties. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have."

PURPOSE OF THE VOLUNTEER MANUAL

The Volunteer Manual will:

- Provide direction to volunteers
- Define the role of volunteers
- Help volunteers be effective
- Answer questions regarding volunteering

By becoming a volunteer at Mary Open Doors, you are joining an organization dedicated to eradicating domestic violence through the empowerment of women. Our commitment to eradicating/alleviating domestic violence at Mary Open Doors is essential to reaching, by 2015, Belize's Millennium Development goals. As employees and volunteers, we are responsible for identifying, counseling and rendering assistance to women in need and for creating a positive work environment. You can help.

About the Organization

Office Opening Hours: 8 am- 5 pm

Contact #: 824-0409 or 824-0425

Address: #5 Church Street, San Ignacio, Cayo

Email: maryopendoors@gmail.com

Mission:

By providing a safe shelter, support and education, Mary Open Door is committed to empower and improve the well being of women and children affected by domestic violence in the Cayo District.

Vision:

Survivors of domestic violence know that they have a choice and a safe place to turn to as a start to an independent, positive future.

Principles:

- To serve our clients consistent with our basic values of human dignity, integrity, and confidentiality, and without discrimination
- To remain impartial and non-judgmental
- To remain committed and supportive to the cause

Acceptance, Classification & Assignment of Volunteers

Volunteers must at least be 18 years of age to render assistance at Mary Open Doors. Upon acceptance into the volunteer program, volunteers must agree to accept and abide by the policies of Mary Open Doors. Volunteers' assignments will be made in accord with their interests, abilities, and vocational goals and in accord with the needs of the Organization, which will be the ultimate determining factor. Volunteers will be given the opportunity to interact with clients and should always remain discrete and respect confidentiality with personal information. An individual's privacy must be protected at all times. All necessary training sessions must be attended.

Duties and Expectations

A description of your assignment will be developed by your volunteer coordinator. It will contain the purpose and duties of your assignment e.g., guiding, counseling, and providing good company. You may not perform professional services for which certification is required unless you already hold the appropriate certificate or license or have received approval from your volunteer coordinator. Please provide a copy of any certification or license (e.g., special counseling licenses or psychoanalysis certificates).

Conduct

While volunteering with Mary Open Doors, volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standard of honesty and integrity. Any conduct that falls below this level may result in the volunteer being permanently excused from his/her assigned responsibilities.

Schedule

It is important for volunteers to perform their duties per the agreed upon schedule. If you find you have a schedule conflict, please inform your volunteer coordinator as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made.

Attire

Volunteers are all expected to be properly dressed at all times. Professionalism is a must at all times.

Attendance

Volunteering requires a firm commitment. At Mary Open Doors, we ask each volunteer to agree to serve at least five hours a week. You should not accept an assignment unless you have given serious thought to the demands it may place on you.

Volunteers are expected to be prompt for their assignments and to sign in and out each day. When you arrive for your assignment, sign in on the daily attendance roster and on your own individual time sheet. Report to your volunteer coordinator when you arrive and when you leave. At the end of your assignment, please be sure to sign out on your individual time sheet. Monthly and cumulative totals of hours of volunteer service will be calculated by the volunteer coordinator.

Absences

Please do not report for duty if you are sick or otherwise unable to carry out your assignment. If you must be absent for a day, call the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible.

Leaves of Absence

The volunteer coordinator may grant leaves of absence to volunteers. If you intend to be absent for two weeks or more, please contact the volunteer coordinator before you leave to request a leave of absence, and before you return to discuss your schedule and assignment.

Leaving Volunteer Service

If volunteers choose to leave the organization they should give at least two weeks' notice for required personnel to fill that position.

Use of Telephones

Mary Open Doors' telephone is to be used only for calls associated with the organization's work. Please do not use the organization's telephone system to place personal calls.

Do's

- Always remain loyal
- Always be honest and polite
- Always be professional
- Always respect boundaries
- Always be prompt

Don'ts

- Never disclose personal information about individuals to outsiders
- Never provide misleading or biased information
- Never accept bribes
- Never lie
- Never take personal documents out of the building

QUESTIONS THAT MAY ARISE:

Do I have to work five hours a week?

As a volunteer you can work hours that best suits you. It is our requirement that you work at least five hours per week due to the size of our staff. However, exceptions can be made.

If I choose to work an entire day, will I be allowed to leave for lunch?

Yes, one can leave the premises for lunch, as long as the volunteer coordinator is informed.

Will I interact with people who seek shelter in your organization?

Volunteer interaction with clients may be possible based on the discretion of the volunteer coordinator.

"Mary Open Doors"

Volunteer Registration Form

To qualify as a volunteer at Mary Open Doors, this form needs be completed and delivered to Mary Open Doors, #5 Church Street, San Ignacio Cayo.

VOLUNTEER

I, _____, agree to serve as a volunteer for the Mary Open Doors organization and commit to the following:

1. To perform the duties of my job description to the best of my ability and to seek authorization before proceeding with activities outside my job description.
2. To act at all times as a member of the team responsible for accomplishing the vision, mission, goals and principles of Mary Open Doors.
3. To treat everyone with dignity and respect and to help maintain and demonstrate the commitment to the principles of human rights established in policies and legislation.
4. To attend required training sessions, read necessary documents, and take advantage of other resources that are offered to enable me to enhance my skills, experience and contribution.
5. To share in accountability for maintaining the security and the confidentiality of information about individuals and their personal status.
6. To meet my commitment to perform volunteer services for five hours per week.
7. To complete assignments and other reports and documentation as requested.

Volunteer: _____ Date: _____

Volunteer Coordinator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 7: Proposal For Government SubventionError! Not a valid link.Error! Not a valid link.Error! Not a valid link.Error! Not a valid link.

20th March, 2009

Honorable Dean Barrow
Minister of Finance
Belmopan City
Belize, Central America
Dear Sir/Madam,

We would like to introduce you to Mary Open Doors.

Mary Open Doors is a newly registered NGO whose aim is to eradicate domestic violence from Belize. Both official statistics of reported cases of domestic violence in Belize and informal everyday observances of domestic abuse reveal a dire need for the empowerment of women.

Our office is presently located in the Cayo District. We offer basic supportive counseling, court advocacy, case management, and referrals when appropriate. We have a temporary shelter that offers twenty-four hour security, a twenty- four hour house supervisor, and basic needs for the women and children such as food and clothing. Most importantly we offer these women hope.

Domestic violence harms society. It inhibits social development. We thus valiantly take on the task to assist in bringing about change in society via the means of addressing domestic violence. But in doing so, we are presented with a great financial constraint. We rely on private donations and revenue generated by our thrift store but, it is insufficient to run operations in a sustainable manner.

We thus humbly come before you to apply for a government subvention which will assist in enabling us to achieve our purpose and goals and to continue battling this social ailment.

Enclosed is a copy of our proposal for subvention. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further information.

We are looking forward to meeting with you. Thank you for your time. Many blessings in return for any assistance provided.

Sincerely,

Anna Silva
CEO

CC:AS/tm

Mary Open Doors

March, 2009

Funding Proposal for a domestic violence shelter in the
Cayo District

Prepared by: Anna M. Silva

Contact Information: Phone: 626-5780

E-mail: annasilva2321@yahoo.com

Or

maryopendoors@gmail.com

Name of NGO:

Mary Open Doors (a safe shelter)

Basic Premise for NGO:

“Elimination of Domestic Violence”

Head of Project:

Ms. Anna Silva

Mission Statement:

Mary Open doors is committed to empowering and improving the well being of women and children affected by domestic violence in the Cayo District by providing a safe shelter, support, and domestic violence education.

Principle:

It is Mary Open Door’s duty to serve clients with respect to their basic values of human dignity, integrity, confidentiality, and non-discrimination. Mary Open Doors provides direct assistance through temporary shelter and support for survivors of Domestic Violence.

Vision:

For Survivors of Domestic Violence to know that they have a safe place to go to and that they have a strong support group that can help them start an empowered, and positive future.

Purpose:

To Eliminate Domestic Violence from Belize.

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Abstract:

Domestic violence is one of the most serious problems affecting the Belizean Society. Much like any other ailment in society, it is highly linked to other social issues such as crime, health care, and poverty. Coordination between and support for all social issues are needed for a healthy, well-functioning society. When one issue, such as domestic violence, is not properly attended to, then other areas of society such as crime will be negatively affected.

Mary Open Doors is committed to addressing the problem of domestic violence in our society. The goal is to empower women. By providing abuse victims with a twenty-four hour shelter, food, clothing, counseling, assistance in finding a livelihood, and a support group of women who have escaped the cycle of abuse, we give these women, and even their children who are affected, hope. Hope will give them strength to carry on and hopefully, leave the violent situation.

Outlined in this proposal is Mary Open Door's operations. Following this abstract is a short literature review/background information on domestic violence in Belize. Next we share how the idea was established and the women and board members currently involved. Then the organization's scope, purpose, goals, and objectives are discussed. Finally highlighted are Mary Open Door's achievements in its first year of operations. We conclude with goals for the future, expected results of our actions, and a call for action.

Background:

According to Women Against Violence (WAV), domestic violence is one of the most serious problems women face in Belize. Ninety percent of violent crimes against women are perpetrated by their partner or spouse. Violent crimes against women result in deaths and disfigurements from mutilations, burnings, and beatings. This type of violence affects women of all ethnicities and occupational status.² For various reasons, such as the lack of an adequate support system and financial dependency, many women are reluctant to come forward.³

Currently, there is only one shelter located in Belize City. Many cases are reported to the police but few end up in the court system. ADD MORE INFO IF FIND IT

Despite the known existence of domestic abuse in Belize, discussion of the problem continues to be taboo, especially in rural areas where education is poor. In the Belizean culture, women are often seen as the subordinates of men. Additionally, men, more so than women, seem to have considerable problems with proper anger management techniques. Such attitudes and behaviors persist.

The following 2007 UN committee report stresses the importance of addressing domestic violence.

² Irma McClaurin, *Women of Belize. Gender and Change in Central America* (New Brunswick, NJ:Rutgers University Press,1996), 80-81

³ Interview with Lisa Shoman, attorney, head of the Belize Bar Association and human rights activist, 29 September 1997.

“While welcoming the new Domestic Violence Act, which takes effect in July 2007, the Committee is concerned about the continued prevalence of violence against women and the lack of social awareness about it in the country. The Committee is concerned that women victims of violence are advised to return to their abusive partners by authority figures, including the police and magistrates. It is concerned about the limited progress made in the State party in preventing and eliminating violence against women, reflected in a lack of prosecutions and convictions and lack of access to justice for women, particularly in the rural areas.

The Committee is further concerned that despite the criminalization of marital rape, there are apparently no prosecutions for that crime in the State party. It regrets the lack of information and statistical data on all types of violence against women and of steps taken to assess the effectiveness of measures undertaken to address violence against women.

The Committee urges the State party to place high priority on implementing a comprehensive approach to addressing all forms of violence against women, including through the effective enforcement and monitoring of the Domestic Violence Act. It also urges the State party to raise public awareness, through media and educational programs that all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence and marital rape, are unacceptable and prohibited by law.

The Committee calls upon the State party to provide training on the new Act to the judiciary, law enforcement officials, legal professionals, social workers and health providers and to fully sensitize them to all forms of violence against women so as to ensure that the perpetrators of violence are effectively prosecuted and punished with the required seriousness and speed.

The Committee further recommends that the State party seek to increase the number of female judges and law enforcement officials as a means to encourage women to report cases of violence. It calls on the State party to establish support measures for victims of domestic violence, including increasing the number of shelters and legal, medical and psychological support.”⁴

Statistics from the Women’s Department, police and informal reporting indicates a severe need of establishing a Shelter in the Cayo district. The Women’s Department is strongly supporting the need of a Shelter in the Cayo District and recognizes the gap of resources concerning the work against Domestic Violence. There is only one shelter in all of Belize and it specifically serves women in the Belize district. There is a lack of agencies where women can turn to get help. For the last six month there has been no representative of the Women’s Department or any other person representing these issues in the Cayo District. Furthermore there is no agency, such as a Shelter, to which the police/Social Services can refer victims of Domestic Violence in the Cayo district. Mary Open Doors was thus established under this need.

How the idea was established

In 2004, Ms. Anna Silva and Ms. Marilyn Greig created a support group called Women in Action Against Domestic Violence (WAADV). The group assisted abused women with resources, safety, and protection. A large amount of work and resources were required to assist the women. Group members

⁴ Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Thirty-ninth session, 23 July-10 August 2007 2007 UN committee report with comments of the CEDAW, Belize

were housing women in their homes. It soon became apparent that a safe house/shelter was urgently needed.

Ms. Silva and Ms. Greig conducted community surveys, gathered information, and met with officials to assess the viability of opening a shelter in the Cayo district. Ms. Humes, Director of the Women's Department in Belize City under the Ministry of Human Development, welcomed the idea of a safe shelter for the Cayo District. The two women visited the only current safe house in the country of Belize ("Heaven House") and met with its director, Ms. Rosado, who also encouraged the idea.

Ms. Greig, a pharmacist, has ten years' experience working with the general public, assisting many women with basic counseling, overnight stay, food, clothing, referrals and supporting women.

Ms. Silva, has eight years of working experience in the field of social work. She has worked with many organizations on cases related to domestic violence and with women and children living with HIV/AIDS.

Both women are fully dedicated to the vision and goals of MOD. Members from the previous group (WAADV) also joined MOD. Together they have mobilized their efforts and initiated Mary Open Doors. It is well to note that the Majority of the women in this organization are themselves survivors of domestic violence.

Many recognize the problems surrounding the issue of Domestic Violence. MOD thus has the approval and the support of Governmental and non-governmental entities, local businesses, local organizations, and the community. It also has strong support from people on a grass root level.

In February 2008, MOD established an agency where domestic abuse victims can get the support and guidance needed to change their situation. Survivors of domestic violence now have a choice, opportunity and a possibility to have a safe place to turn to as a start to an independent and positive future.

Mary Open Doors officially opened its doors on May 10, 2008. Its base (office) is located at #5 Church Street in San Ignacio.

Organization's Scope of work

MOD presently offers *Basic supportive counseling to develop assertiveness skills, raise self-esteem, learn about the dynamics of domestic violence, improve parenting skills and utilize available resources to break the cycle of violence. MOD also provided court Advocacy assistance pertaining to the legalities of the court, Case Management assistance, and preparation for court. MOD makes referrals and offers a Temporary Shelter.

The shelter offers 24 hours crisis intervention, 24 hours security, immediate assistance with food, clothing, and medical assistance, weekly goal setting sessions with shelter residents, and weekly support group meetings. The length of stay recommended is no less than thirty days and are not to exceed ninety days. Clients in the shelter for a period of 1-3 months have access to education/skill training, probable job placement, and entrepreneurship training.

MOD Works with the Local government, Women's Department, Social Services, hospitals, churches, the police department and other NGO's. They refer women and children, who would otherwise return to their situation, to MOD.

MOD works directly with the persecutor in the court system. While waiting for their court hearing, Women do not return home. Normally, the procedure is a closed door hearing and only perpetrators and defendant are present. But, the magistrate allows personnel from MOD to be present in court to support women during court hearing. Collaboration with the court has helped MOD to strengthen its commitment of the protection and preparation of our clients for court.

Who is involved?

Direct Involvement:

- **Staff of Mary Open Doors:** The staff of MOD is responsible for managing the financial affairs of the organization. They are also responsible for carrying out the goals of the organization by providing support and counseling for women, using funds to buy items (such as food) necessary to the functioning of the organization, garner support and donations for the organization, education and public awareness campaigns, and other tasks relevant to successfully ‘eliminating domestic violence from Belize’.
- **Board of directors:** The board of directors is responsible for FIND AND PUT HERE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

Support Groups:

- **Sacred Heart Church:** Sacred Heart Church has greatly assisted in not only religious support for victims, but also supporting MOD as much as possible in meeting its needs.
- **Police Department:** The Police department has been extremely supportive in referring victims to MOD.
- **Women’s Department:** The Women’s Department also has provided much guidance and support to MOD since the inception of the idea.
- **Local community:** The local community has provided MOD with private financial and material donations, volunteer work, and general support for the cause.
- **Business community:** The local business community NAME A FEW!! has provided MOD with donations such as toilet paper, diapers, food, and clothing.
- **Government:** The government has shown support for MOD’s cause.

Our Mission

- Contribute to social change by eliminating Domestic Violence via education, awareness, and support
- Provide education for the women in the Safe House.
- Provide a Counseling program for the women and children in the Safe House.
- Make Mary Open Doors a resource in the community.
- Collaborate with other governmental and non-governmental agencies to establish a “referral system” so that other agencies can refer women who are in need of shelter to MOD.
- Collaborate with other groups in society to be able to contribute to social change on a local level and in the long run, make an impact on the national and regional level.
- Make Mary Open Doors an active partner and agency incorporated in the safety system to protect victims of Domestic Violence in the Cayo district

Target group:

- Women and children, in the Cayo district, who are victims of Domestic Violence.
- Women and children in other districts whose lives are in imminent danger and need to be relocated through referrals by sister organizations addressing women issues.

MOD ensures the protection, safety, and empowerment of Belizean women by collaborating with agencies such as churches, Women’s Department, Police Department, Hospital, BFLA, Social Services, Churches and others involved in the elimination of domestic violence.

Specific/defined idea:

Mary Open Doors is an organization in the Cayo district, providing direct assistance through temporary shelter and support for victims of Domestic Violence.

- **Future Goals:**

- To find Local donors/sources and apply for sustainable funding and support
- Establish a permanent 24 hour Shelter/Safe House with occupancy for 10 families-
- 24 hour Hot line phone service
- To have representatives in different villages so as to increase the scope of the organization.
- To have a trained and professional Counselor on staff (even if just for a few days of the week)
- To have on staff someone specifically working to spread awareness and education about domestic violence (talks on all aspects of domestic violence, such as anger management)
- To have more training sessions in counseling and effective management of an NGO.
- To Establish a Day Care Center to generate revenue for MOD
- To restore the Thrift Center
- To have the day care center, the thrift center, and office located at the building government donated to MOD
- To Form an alliance with the men's support group (Men can receive counseling. This would get at the root of the domestic violence problem—breaking the mindset that violence is the correct way to solve conflicts.)
- To establish a more effective, highly accountable financial management system
- To create a database that will Record and Create follow ups on victims that have visited Mary Open Doors
- To establish a reporting and evaluation mechanism.
 - Reporting will occur on a monthly basis between the “operating project group” and Board of Directors. We will also report to donators, funders and other supporters.
 - An evaluation tool will be established to evaluate the quality of the organization and its work.

- **Strategies**

- **Research** on counseling techniques, proposal writing, NGO management techniques, etc.
- **Marketing** tactics to raise public awareness such as donation boxes in local businesses, brochures, posting flyers, advertisements via free media avenues such as community bulletin board and donation ad spots in newspapers and local television stations
- **Sustainable Practices** that generate revenue for MOD. Establish a diverse donor base, a day care center and thrift center run by MOD, and fundraising programs.
- **Establishing Credibility** via a strong Network
- **Establish Accountability and Transparency** by developing an effectively run financial system
- **Develop** and use **resources** efficiently and effectively by applying for
 - National/International funding and grants
 - Donations (personal, business, etc.)
 - Government Subvention

Limitations:

- **Patriarchal Social structure** □ Patriarchal power structures exert a strong influence on the social system. Even though there are laws and legislations concerning women's rights, there is little awareness and thus weak implementation. Women are still victims to many injustices. The struggle to create an equal society needs to take place in the minds of both men and women on both grass roots level and on a structural level to bring about positive end results.
- **Lack Financial Resources** □ Financial resources are vital to the sustainability of the project. A diverse base of both short term and long term funding will ensure sustainable use of resources.
- **Insufficient Human Resources/Staff** □ Without financial resources, it is difficult to expand the staff and thus scope of the project. At the moment two women are striving to carry the weight of running the whole organization. Not enough time can be spent on, for example, proposal writing or strong organizational structure.
- **Incentive Constraint for Volunteers** □ FIX NAME MORE APPROPRIATE Board members are volunteers. MOD thus faces a constraint in providing the board with the right incentives (whether abstract or tangible) to perform their function more effectively.
- **Safety Concerns** □ Security has, as of yet, not been a serious problem but it might be. We will soon have to put in measures to protect staff and client from potential hazards.
- **Confidentiality Concerns** □ How does one keep a Safe House SAFE in the Cayo District? Measures have to be put in place to ensure confidentiality—to ensure only very small number of key personnel knows where the Safe House is located. There also has to be very strict regulations concerning confidentiality for the women and children staying there.

general accomplishments During 1st Year of Operation

- MOD established its office/center for information at #5 Church Street.
- A board of directors was established. The board meets every last Wednesday of every month.
- MOD Received a house from the government of Belize. The house has been renovated and will be used as the location for the office, the day care center, and the thrift store. All materials to assist in the renovation were donated.
- A Support Group was established. The group meets three times a week. They talk about their problems, what they have been through, and how they got out. The women in this support group also do craft work and make jewelry for about an hour. Sometimes people come in and teach craft. Materials for the jewelry are donated. Then, every Saturday, they take their work out to the market to sell. This helps to bring in revenue for the women. (The Support Group also attended the Women's Summit.)
- A 3 bedroom house was received from an anonymous donor to be used as a shelter in an undisclosed location. A family is currently living there.
- An average of 30-40 women come to MOD every month. Approximately twenty-five women were housed and approximately nine women were assisted in finding paying jobs. Women come in from all over Belize—the Belize District, Belmopan, Bullet Tree, and much more. (A precise record of the number of clients Mary Open Doors is not available.)
- Mary Open Doors has housed approximately 21 to 23 families. CHECK THIS OUT!!

- An educational presentation on Domestic Violence was given at Sacred Heart College and the public service union.
- Mary Open Doors received an ‘Outstanding Organization Serving the Women of Belize’ from the Women’s Department during the month of March (Women’s Awareness Month).
- A small network was created to access products, services, and financial donations such as food, supplies, and medical attention.

Expected results For 2nd Year:

It is hoped, that in MOD’s second year of operation, all of the goals outlined in the section “Future Goals” will be accomplished. The organization will achieve an environment where women feel safe and empowered—a place where they can get help and support when relationships turn violent. In addition, we hope to create a long term working relationship with other organizations addressing issues of domestic violence both in our community and on a national level. We can then contribute to the improvement of women’s situation and position in Belizean Society.

In the long run both the community and the nation of Belize will benefit from eliminating Domestic Violence, fighting for women’s rights, and empowering women.

Conclusion

Women are essential human assets. They produce and rear future leaders, they contribute to the economy’s growth, and they bring balance and inspiration to the world. Women and children are valuable. Domestic violence violates their rights as human beings. Domestic violence is an inhibitor to our nation’s full growth. When women are not empowered, there is a break down in the social structure. The results are a string of effects that touches every sector of society.

Domestic Violence is a significant issue in Belize (and Central America). There is only one Safe House in the entire Country of Belize. Setting up a Safe House in Cayo is vital for social development. Organizations such as MOD is needed to help women get out of violent relationships and dangerous living conditions. There has to be a place where we can provide a safe and secure environment. Mary Open Doors is that place.

Mary Open Doors will continue in its efforts to battle this social impediment. We hope that the Government of Belize, through its financial assistance, can join us in the effort to develop our society.

Our office is located at the corner of Bullet Tree Road and Church Street in San Ignacio Town.

Contact information Tel.: 824-0425 – Emergency 626-5780 or Email: maryopendoors@gmail.com.

Our safe shelter is at a separate location.

Appendix 1**Over view of budget – “Mary Open Doors”****GET CORRECT BUDGET!!!****Cost in BZ\$:****Total budget for first year:**

~ 33 000.00

“Starting-up” expenses:

• Electricity (Installation fee)	200.00
• Water (Installation fee)	130.00
• Telephone (Installation fee + deposit)	310.00
• Internet (Installation fee + deposit)	370.00
• Computer	3000.00
• Fan	50.00
• File Cabinet (with lock)	490.00
• Chairs + table	200.00
• Lock for door	50.00
• Sign	50.00
• Office supplies (Paper, pens, ink, folders etc.)	250.00
• Clock	30.00
• Organization stamp	50.00
• Kitchen supplies (cups, glasses, garbage bin etc.)	150.00

• Business cards/Brochures etc.	400.00
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~ 5730.00

Monthly expenses:

• Salary	1500.00
• Electricity	60.00
• Water	50.00
• Telephone	30.00 + 50.00
• Internet	130.00
• Landlord	250.00
• Gas/transportation	250.00
• Office supplies	50.00

~2370.00

APPENDIX 2

Collaborating Organizations:

- Mayor’s Office
- Sacred Heart Church
- Belmopan International Women’s Group
- St. Martin Credit Union
- Kaana Resort -
- Galen University
- Pertof
- San Ignacio Hospital
- Belize City Women’s Department
- Social Services Department
- Women’s Department San Ignacio
- The Cornerstone Foundation
- Belize Family Life Association
- Martha’s Kitchen and Hotel
- San Ignacio Police Department
- Rotary San Ignacio
- Legal Information Bureau

- References:

- Mayor John August
- Rev. Fr. Jim Foley
- President Linda Lane
- Director Mr. Ronald Hulse
- Manager Eva Garfield
- Prog.Co-ordinator Mrs. Rhondine
- Administrator Dr. Maria Gonsalves
- Director Mrs. Humes
- District Officer Mr. Nestor Novelo
- District Officer Ms. Melissa Jenkins
- Manager Rita Defour
- District Nurse Dolly Witz
- Proprietor Mrs. August
- Superintendent of Police Mr. Wade
- Mr. John Accot
- Attorney Diana Shaw

Board Members

- Board of Directors
- President—Marilyn Greig
- Vice President—Consuelo Habet
- Secretary—Teresita Moguel
- Treasurere—Daisy Codd

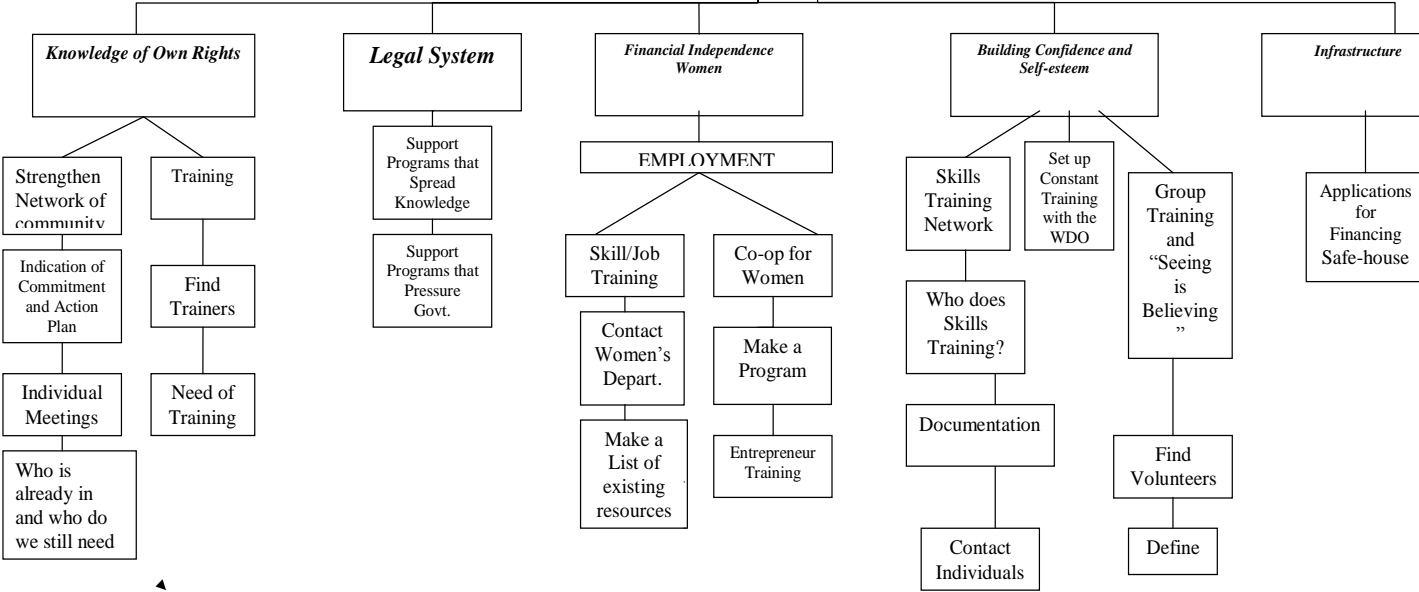
- Amira Estrada
- Mirianni Foreman
- Lancelot Muschamp
- Melissa Jenkins
- Anna Recinos

Members:

Mike Ferris

APPENDIX 3

Survivors of Domestic Violence know that they have a choice and a possibility to have a safe place to turn to as a start to an independent positive future.



Contributions**Writing:**

Acknowledgement	Kayla
Introduction	Kayla
Methods	Kayla
Results/Findings/Conclusions	Shane
Recommendations	Brenna

Reviewing:

Acknowledgement	Shane and Kayla
Introduction	Shane and Kayla
Methods	Shane and Kayla
Results/Findings/Conclusions	Shane and Kayla
Recommendations	Shane and Kayla

Re-writing:

Acknowledgement	Kayla
Introduction	Kayla
Methods	Kayla
Results/Findings/Conclusions	Shane
Recommendations	Shane