Welcome
(excerpted from the Zambia Men's Leadership Training handbook)

It is with great enthusiasm and humility that we at Men's Resources International join you on this journey to understand and alleviate men's violence; to heal the harm it has done; and to advance a more compassionate and understanding model of masculinity.

We are excited to listen and learn from your perspectives, experiences, and work. We also hope to share with you our knowledge, skills, and tools from over 25 years of experience working with individuals, groups, and communities around issues of sexism and men's violence.

We acknowledge that this important work cannot be done alone. We seek the blessing of our elders, the support of our friends and families, and the alliance of women and feminist organizations. We are grateful to the YWCA of Zambia and the Zambia Men's Network for their commitment, vision and collaboration.

Together we can lay the groundwork for positive change.

We come together with open arms and open minds; with strength and courage; with warmth and forgiveness; and with hope and faith for a more peaceful and compassionate world.

Let's begin!

In commitment and faith,
Steven Botkin & James Arana

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Men's Resources International (MRI)
MRI is a non-governmental organization headquartered in the United States. MRI's mission is to promote positive masculinity and help end men's violence by supporting men's initiatives in diverse communities around the world, and developing a global network for men committed to gender equality and ending violence and oppression.

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Summary

On June 6, 2006, Steven Botkin and James Arana of Men’s Resources International traveled to Lusaka, Zambia in the southern part of Africa to conduct a Men’s Leadership Training for the Zambia Men’s Network. The event was hosted by the Zambia YWCA and was funded by private U.S. donors.

Twenty men and four women participated in the training, which focused on positive masculinity, violence prevention, and gender equality. Steven and James employed a combination of ritual, story-telling, consciousness raising, and team building to create a safe space for participants to share their own stories and recognize the effects of sexism on their own lives and the lives of their loved ones. This provided a personal context for discussing sensitive gender issues, and a compelling foundation for addressing more practical lessons on community outreach, leadership skills, organizational development, and financial sustainability.

The formal training took place over three full days. In the days before and after the training, however, meetings with key leaders helped MRI understand the social and political dynamics, establish relationships of trust, and reinforce lessons learned.

While it is too soon to judge the long-term impact of the training, feedback from the participants and organizers has been inspiring. Unsolicited responses given in person, by telephone, and via e-mail, have universally described the experience as powerful, illuminating and motivational. As a result, participants have a renewed commitment to the success of the Zambia Men’s Network, and to developing relationships among like-minded organizations from around the world.

Steven and James returned home excited and eager to continue this work in Zambia, Nigeria and other African nations.

Purpose of Training

To increase the effectiveness and sustainability of the Zambia Men’s Network by providing consciousness-raising, team-building, skill training and strategic planning for its members and allies.

Specific Goals

1. A leadership circle of men and women with clear values and strong relationships acting as resource people and role models in their communities for gender equality and violence prevention.
2. A group of men prepared to lead consciousness-raising groups, gender awareness programs, advocacy campaigns, and mentoring.
3. Visibility and support for the mission of the Zambia Men’s Network from diverse sectors of the community.
4. An action plan for members of the Zambia Men’s Network.
5. Connections with a global network for gender equality and violence prevention.

Background

In January 2005, Stephen Mbati from Zambia contacted Men’s Resources International requesting assistance in the creation of a Zambia Men’s Network (ZMN) as a project of the Zambia YWCA “to involve men, male youths and boys in the fight against gender based violence in Africa.” In March, Men’s Resources International organized, hosted and partially funded Stephen’s 10-day study-tour of men’s violence prevention programs in the United States.

See reports at www.mensresourcesinternational.org/newswire.php.

The study-tour coincided with the United Nations’ 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (“Beijing+10”). Stephen Mbati and Steven Botkin, executive director for Men’s Resources International, were invited to make a presentation for delegates to this conference as part of a UN-sponsored institute on working with men and boys for gender equality.

In May, MRI was contacted by one of the delegates who attended the presentation. Ms. Ugo Nnachi, founder and director of a Nigerian women’s organization, Daughters of Virtue and Empowerment Initiative (DOVENET), requested collaboration on the creation of a Men’s Resource Center in her state of Ebonyi, stating:

The role of men in eliminating violence against women has often been neglected and I must confess that the Men’s Resources International has offered us a deeper insight into how men can intervene and partner with women in eliminating violence in our families and society.

Women in Nigeria and from our State have suffered various forms of violence ranging from Wife Battering, Rape, Acid Bath, Harsh Widowhood Rights, Disinheritance, Spousal Murder, Incest Threats, Psychological Violence, Verbal Abuse, Abandonment of
The collaborative relationships between Men’s Resources International and both the Zambia Men’s Network and the Ebonyi Men’s Resource Center have already been tremendously fruitful. After Stephen Mbati’s study tour, Men’s Resources International continued to support him with information, ideas and a network of colleagues. In November 2005, the Zambia Men’s Network held its formal public launch in a ribbon-cutting ceremony led by the Zambian Minister of Health and attended by Zambian dignitaries and many of the 71 male ZMN members.

In Nigeria, Ugo Nnachi, with MRI support, organized a “stakeholders’ meeting” in June. Attended by over 30 people, mostly male, the idea of an Ebonyi Men’s Resource Center was strongly endorsed, and a steering committee was formed.

Both Stephen Mbati and Ugo Nnachi state that the support of Men’s Resources International has been critical in helping them launch their men’s initiatives. They each requested an MRI training for their members and key community leaders. The June 2006 Zambia training was in response to this request. In preparation for a fall 2006 Nigeria training, a representative from DOVENET/Ebonyi Men’s Resource Center traveled to Zambia to participate in this training.

Training Agenda

Monday, June 12: Consciousness Raising
- Training overview
- Definitions
- Examples of gender-based violence in Zambia and Nigeria
- Women telling their stories
- Male socialization and the role of men in ending violence
- Men telling their stories
- Review and discussion of Zambian attitudes towards masculinity survey
- Changing attitudes and behaviors

Tuesday, June 13: Activism
- Remarks by Zambia YWCA board chair, MRI executive director, Zambia Men’s Network, DOVENET Nigeria
- Obstacles and strategies for reaching men
- Strategies for change: community education, advocacy campaigns, mentoring
- Overview of women’s and men’s movements
- Reproductive health and the fight against HIV/AIDS
- Men and women as allies
- Action planning groups

Wednesday, June 14: Organizing & Sustainability
- Men showing up
- Counseling skills
- Organizational structure and membership
- Economic sustainability
- Closing ceremony & celebration

Onsite MRI Staff

Steven D. Botkin, Ed.D.
Director, Men’s Resources International
Executive Director Emeritus, Men’s Resource Center for Change

Steven Botkin founded the Men’s Resource Center of Western Massachusetts (MRC) in 1982 and received his doctoral degree in Social Justice Education from the University of Massachusetts several years later. He guided the MRC from a grassroots group of volunteers into a successful non-profit community-based organization, whose programs have become a model for men’s organizing in communities around the world.

In 2004 Steven left this position to found Men’s Resources International to support the development of men’s programs in diverse communities and build a global network. Dr. Botkin has presented lectures and workshops and provided resources for colleges, organizations and individuals throughout the United States and the world, including the United Nations, Japan, Zambia and Nigeria.
James Arana
Program Director, Men’s Resources International

James Arana is a social worker with more than 25 years of working with youth and adults in New York City and Massachusetts, including Unitas Therapeutic Community, I Have a Dream Program, and the NYC Board of Education. A native of Belize, James spent his teenage and young adult years living in the South Bronx. He has a bachelor degree in Social Work from Mercy College in New York City and has completed one year at Smith School of Social Work.

The Training Participants

Zambian young men: The majority of the 25 participants were male Zambian “youths.” This African classification refers to single men ages 18 to 35 years of age who are not yet settled in a career or family. As members of the Zambia Men’s Network, many have already been volunteering their time through the YWCA providing counseling, outreach and community programs.

YWCA female staff: The presence of 4 or 5 of female participants (depending on the day), including the executive director, Ms. Katembu Kaumba, heightened the sense of respect and relevance for the topics of gender sensitivity and violence for the whole group. Their intelligence, honesty, courage, and self-respect provided a strong contrast to some of the prevailing stereotypes of women in Zambia.

Nigerian delegate, Patrick O. Amah, Administrative Officer of DOVENET, and Project Steering Committee Member of the Ebonyi Men’s Resource Center in Nigeria. As an elder emissary from another African nation, “Uncle” Patrick helped Zambian participants recognize the scope and significance of their efforts.

Reflections from MRI Program Director, James Arana

The Zambia YWCA Men’s Network Training was a success, because of our many years of experience, our careful preparation, our commitment to leaving our selves open, and trusting in our ability to meet the challenges together.

Our skills were immediately tested when we stood with our bags for two hours at the Lusaka airport in Zambia. We used the time to take in the magnitude of where we were and the excitement about what we were doing. The language, intonations, inflections and smiles took me back to my childhood in Belize. When our host finally came running with open arms and apologies for being late we were ready.

Settling into our accommodations in the home of our host family, we continued to learn about life in Zambia — a place where water does not flow all the time, electricity comes and goes as it pleases, and time is not ours to control.

The next few days were spent meeting many of the people with whom we would be working, and continuing to overcome logistical challenges for the training. A dinner with Ms. Kaumba (YWCA executive director) helped us understand the hardships her organization has been enduring, and forge our friendship and respect for each other.

The training participants were a delight in their eagerness to learn and share their experiences and challenges in working in their communities around gender based violence. It was a cold smack of their reality to understand that men and women between the ages of 18 to 35 were routinely considered “youth,” because of their lack of employment (unemployment is over 50%). Over and over again the stories of the lack of opportunity were
being told by young and old alike. I felt despair from seeing and feeling their talents for reaching out, their skills and passions for the work — with no opportunity to sustain themselves or their families.

We spent a significant amount of time in the training discussing next steps for the Zambia Men’s Network, and brainstorming about possible scenarios for financial sustainability. We heard many impressive and innovative ideas. A high point in the training was when these participants presented their action plans for economic development to elders from their community who are poised to support them when we are no longer there. Each member expressed how affirming it was to have the elders and women embrace their ideas, suggestions and vision. The validation was moving and an important step in building community support for their work.

I am proud of the work we did in Zambia. The confidence in our own skills and our openness to cultural diversity enabled us to work with this new population easily and effectively, creating a powerful current that swept our group towards action and positive change. I believe, with our continued support, that this momentum will be sustained and increased, and our Zambian brothers and sisters will be joined by allies in other African countries and from all over the world. I am committed to making it so.

Responses from Zambian Participants

• “This workshop has transformed me. I learned that women are as important as men and they need my support and protection and, most important, love.”
• “We all experience pain. Men and women alike should...find a solution together as one.”
• “I was happy to hear some of the concerns which affect women come from men's mouths.” (From a woman participant.)
• “I felt so moved by testimonies of the Nigerian experience. Now I see how deep this issue is.”
• “As people spoke of their childhood abuse, I learned that I wasn’t alone. It somehow brought healing to me.”
• “How closely related we are as human beings, regardless of where we come from. I was taught to believe that a man should never cry, should never have compassion, true love, should never show love to the wife, and above all should always be in control — however he can do it — even at the expense of a woman... I am motivated to share with my brothers and cousins at home what happens if we do not take care of our feelings by bottling them up just because we are either men or women.”
• “I became so emotional [with] love and compassion to hear men and women telling their stories. I yearn to learn more. I have developed a passion for reaching out to people.”
• “[I have come to feel that] one can cause change in his or her life for the better no matter one's [position or] upbringing.”
• “I have a sense of hope and urgency that the programmes that we are embarking upon today should be implemented and not just put aside.”
• “[I am eager]...to start the work. We have a very big job to do.”
• “Great things are in store for the Zambia Men’s Network.”
• “I now know that the Zambia Men’s Network will go far in seeing gender-based violence brought to zero.”
• “The vision for the future is one of the most important parts of this workshop because it allows us to formulate personal and organizational [strategies] to help men’s network forge ahead for generations to come.”

James Arana and children in the village of MRI’s host, Simuyi.
Reflections from Nigerian Delegate

Mr. Patrick O. Amah,
Programs Administrative Officer, DOVENET, Nigeria
Project Steering Committee, Ebonyi Men’s Resource Center (EB-MRC), Nigeria

When the training started on Monday June 12, 2006 at the Lodge Serenity venue, it was clear to me that this would be quite different from the training workshops I had attended in the past. My first impression was that Men’s Resources International based their training on practical experience. As we began, I saw that they were working to create a powerful experience for the participants as well.

Steven and James created an atmosphere of “brotherhood” in which it was safe for participants to share their experiences both of pain and privilege. Hitherto, most of the participants (as they later admitted) had lived in a world they were not prepared to share with anybody. But in just a few hours, those participants became free from what I have chosen to call “bondage of the human person.” Genuine healing was achieved.

As I continue to reflect on the training, one thought dominates: no one among us will ever be the same — especially in our attitudes towards women and girls. I am now firmly convinced that gender-based violence will continue to be challenged throughout our lives, and that those of us who participated in this training will live our lives in harmony and understanding — with both men and women — and share that vision with others.

Computer Donation Plan

A few weeks prior to the training, a plan was developed to have donated computers delivered to Zambian schools, in collaboration with the Reverend Abednego R. Mambwe, founder of New Vision for Africa. For a relatively small fee, MRI could release over 20 computers and arrange for the training participants to deliver them to local schools, providing an immediate and positive engagement with children, teachers, and the community.

MRI was able to quickly raise the necessary funds. However, upon arrival in Zambia, it was learned that the cost to release the computers had risen dramatically and without explanation. Although the computer donation plan did not work out this time, MRI was still able to deliver to New Vision for Africa a significant number of much-needed, donated batteries and software. MRI supporters who contributed to this computer plan were offered a refund or the option to use their donation to support future programs.

Evaluation

MRI distributed and collected evaluation forms from each participant for each day of the training. Additionally, MRI conducted surveys of both participants and non-participants regarding attitudes toward gender sensitivity issues. All of these were immediately read and used to shape the remainder of the training. MRI has since begun to process the evaluations more carefully for insight about how to improve future trainings.

To quantify the effectiveness of the Zambia Men’s Leadership Training on gender-based violence in Zambia is beyond the current resources of MRI. However, it is clear that this training has lent momentum to a burgeoning awareness of gender issues; an action plan for the development of a Zambia Men’s Network; and a sense of optimism and commitment for the work ahead. Follow-up surveys will be conducted with training participants six months after the training.

MRI will continue to support the formation of the Zambia Men’s Network as much and as long as we are able and welcome. We have opened channels among like-minded groups and have encouraged ongoing communication and support.

Practical Notes and Lessons Learned

• U.S. dollars go a long way in Zambia
• The presence of an outside perspective from another African country (e.g. Patrick Amah from Nigeria) was extremely valuable
• Flexibility is essential: electricity and communications were sporadic, governmental policy and procedure changes without notice or reason, etc.
• Making connections with other sectors of the community deepens an understanding of the social and political context and builds a network of support that is vital for follow-up and sustainability. Our time with administrators and faculty at the University of Zambia was very valuable, and additional time to make connections with others in government, corporations, NGOs, and healthcare services would also be helpful.
• If possible, participants and host organization should share more financial responsibility for training expenses. MRI may be able to suggest funding sources and strategies.
• Including older men as guest advisors in the training establishes the basis for ongoing mentoring relationships, and an
expanded network of support.

- There is a significant pool of unemployed young men in African countries who are intelligent, passionate and eager to find a meaningful way to contribute to their community and country.
- Women are ready to support men learning how to become allies in the fight against gender-based violence.
- Addressing issues of organizational development and economic sustainability are critical components for a training to have long-term impacts.

Next Steps

1. Meet with MRI Board of Directors to align mission and strategies with current momentum in Africa.
3. Arrange for representatives from Zambia Men’s Network to attend MRI training in Nigeria.
4. Strengthen relationships with interested individuals and organizations in other African nations including Rwanda and South Africa. Identify future training opportunities and invite representatives from host organizations to attend MRI training in Nigeria.
5. Continue processing current evaluations from Zambia Training, conduct follow-up evaluations to gauge impact over time, and seek input from research and analysis professionals.
6. Strengthen relationship with University of Zambia and follow-up on their interest in hosting MRI-led seminars for students and faculty.
7. Develop and host Web pages on MRI servers for select African organizations to increase awareness, facilitate sharing of resources, and foster communication among the various organizations.
9. Identify interested and appropriate men and women in Africa to post on the Uncommon Man Weblog.
10. Explore funding sources with local African organizations to further their own economic development, and help subsidize MRI training and follow up if requested.
11. Submit formal proposal to lead working group on engaging men and boys in violence prevention for the World Health Organization. (Proposed verbally at summit in Brussels, June 2006.)
12. Refine and repurpose Zambia slideshow for presentation at universities, conferences, and other interested groups and classes.
13. Edit 7+ hours of video footage from Zambia training for the creation of promotional/educational tools.

Concluding Thoughts from MRI Executive Director, Steven Botkin

This experience was a tremendous affirmation that our approach to working with men, developed over the past 25 years in the United States, could be effectively adapted to African societies. Watching the enthusiasm, sincerity and commitment of the men and women in this training confirmed what Stephen Mbati had been telling us — that there were significant numbers of Zambian men and women invested in working together as allies in challenging gender-based violence.

Our conversations with people from the university, government and non-profit sectors made it clear that Zambian society is in a dynamic process of redefining itself, creating a unique opportunity for promoting gender equality and violence prevention. While it was obvious that gender-based violence is a significant problem, we were heartened by the determination of Zambian men to forge a positive masculinity from the fires of their own experiences.

As we handed each participant an MRI certificate in the closing ceremony, we knew that the connections made and the relationships developed from this experience will have a significant impact for years to come. And as we watched a youth group performing traditional drumming and dancing, we knew that Zambian culture would provide a beautiful context for this growing movement.

Steven and Jamse with Patrick Amah from Nigeria