

***Young Women's Engagement and Mentoring in Politics and
Decision-Making Spheres: A Community of Practice***



Photo: Community of practice members, launch session February 22-23 2011, Toronto, Canada

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Abstract:

In a context where women, and in particular young women, remain systematically under represented in political office and decision-making instances both in Ghana and Canada, this project focused on deepening our understanding of and increasing our knowledge around engagement and mentoring initiatives promoting young women's leadership and empowerment. We conducted this project through the piloting of a global Community of Practice that brought together a dozen core participants from ten civil society organizations from Ghana and Canada.

We uncovered the need for our institutions to build our capacity to design and implement quality, flexible and innovative engagement and mentoring initiatives that address cultural norms and systemic barriers that impede young women's participation in their communities or society at large. We found that having different perspectives to address common challenges led to greater analysis of existing challenges as well as pathways to be explored that could offer solutions. This pilot project contributed to connecting leading organizations working towards greater representation and participation of young women in the public sphere who have decided to continue working together using the Community of Practice as an anchor for further collaborations.

Keywords: young women, political participation, mentoring, community of practice, engagement, decision-making

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ii) The Research Problem

The project rationale was based on the consideration that young women's engagement and mentoring in political affairs is crucial for their future participation in governance. Yet, considerable sociological, cultural and economic factors prevent women, particularly young women, from participating fully in various decision making spaces. While formal and informal knowledge identifying those systemic barriers has been generated by civil society organizations and academic institutions, several women's rights organizations with whom Crossroads is working had identified the lack of time and resources to either document their own practice in this regard or to *distil* external knowledge to inform their own strategies.

Crossroads had therefore proposed to pilot a Community of Practice to identify approaches that bared potential for engaging and mentoring young women in politics and decision-making spheres.

The other premise for the project was that by dedicating a structured time on the topic via the Community of Practice, organisational participants would take the time to reflect and learn from others.

Over the course of the project, the original rationale remained relevant but the topic revealed itself very comprehensive and challenging to circumscribe.

We quickly realized the notion of *engagement* is very broad, context specific, and can be defined in various ways along a continuum of action.

For example, during the initial launch session, participants defined mentoring and engagement as a wide range of activity from campaign volunteering/internships; training; conferences attendance; public speaking; site visits; job shadowing; guest speakers; community service; mentees collaboration and networking; matching emerging leaderships/position, etc.

Reflecting on engagement practices also opened the door to concepts such as empowerment and leadership which are equally wide-ranging when looking at implementation strategies.

Coincidentally, participating organizations that had been invited reflected an inclusive definition of engagement work which in turn influenced the project by making it perhaps less focused than originally envisioned.

In Ghana, although 3 out of 4 participating organisations had a mentoring program, the goals were different enough that programs strategies varied greatly while the core of the mentoring relationship remained relevant for all. Mentoring Women Ghana focuses on empowering young women through mentoring by mature and accomplished women, using sports to impart them with leadership qualities with which they can positively impact their communities.

Ghana High-Tech Women (GTW) is focusing on bridging the gender digital gap and its sister organization Ghana Young Women Social Entrepreneurs (GYWSE) is dedicated to advance a culture of social entrepreneurship in which women lead innovative grassroots change.

Abantu's Young Women's Mentorship Program (YWMP) is a comprehensive leadership training program for young women in Ghana between the ages of 18 – 30 with the objective to empower young women to develop the skills, knowledge and experience to take up leadership positions in their community.

In Canada, an initiative like the Toronto Regional Champion Campaign had at its core the mentoring of young women in municipal politics. As for the Maytree Foundation, their DiverseCity – The Greater Toronto Leadership Project would fall more under civic leadership development through training and mentoring programs to equip leaders from visible minorities to run for elected office or manage campaigns.

The YWCA as an institution always had a mandate to engage young women in their communities but YWCA Canada did not have a program as such until very recently when leadership became one of the YWCA's new focus areas –youth engagement, program development, best practices in outreach, challenges, sustainability of programs with or without funding were all areas that were touched on in the CoP and that were judge relevant to this new focus on leadership in their own work.

On the one hand, this range of conception of the engagement notion served us well as it enabled us to consider more facets of the notion; at the same time, it impeded our capacity to generate more focused knowledge around the proposed topic of this project.

Finally, the premise around the need to document our practice evolved towards the need to reflect on our practice, learning from and exchanging with others and then piloting/ testing new strategies. It was interesting to see that participants were not looking for and A to Z manual on what to do but rather for the opportunity to identify challenges, share them and benefit from other practitioners' inputs. It is worth noting also that the rationale based on the lack of time to dedicate to learning about one's practice was definitely confirmed and reflected within this project.

At the conclusion of the project, most participants shared their desire to see the Community of Practice continue beyond the current project timeframe.

iii) Objectives

The general and specific objectives of this pilot project were met for the most part with success. The general objective was aiming to increase the knowledge and ultimately improve the practice of relevant organizations and their staff working on engaging and mentoring young women in governance affairs both in Canada and Ghana.

Specific objectives were as follows:

- Increasing the knowledge and understanding among Community of Practice(CoP) members of the elements that support or impede women's involvement in power structures and decision-making, with a specific focus on young women;
- Increasing CoP members' knowledge of successful political engagement and mentoring programs – before, during and after women gain access to formal structures of power and decision-making;
- Increasing Crossroads International's knowledge and understanding of communities of practice and to foster a learning culture within the organization and among our partners.

All participants in the Community of Practice reported knowing more and understanding better mentoring and empowering programs enabling young women's involvement in political and decision-making instances, both in Ghana and Canada. During an evaluation session towards the end of the project using the Socratic Wheel we had designed together at the beginning as our evaluation tool, participants were very positive towards the overall success of the project.

We had sustained engagement of over 90% of our original membership; we had concrete examples of impact from learning on programming and unexpected results at a municipal level in Canada; the Community of Practice process itself had inspired at least 3 participants (and their organisations) to plan to replicate the experience in other professional networks and to a certain extent, we had managed to document the process and materials sufficiently to be able to refer to it and share with other interested parties.

This last *spoke* or criteria (see photo next page) around the documentation became the most challenging due to unforeseen circumstances. Crossroads' Knowledge Management and Learning Officer, who was going to be the principle architect in this documenting function, was not able to participate in the project beyond the initial stages due to a medical leave. The project leader and the learning coordinator took over this function as much as possible but within their own time constraints and abilities.

Photo: our Socratic wheel designed at the launch workshop as our evaluation tool.



“Here I could work for a year, whatever, with like-minded people, instead of going to a conference and just listening to somebody, I could put [what I learn] into practice right away.” Danielle Masanto, past protégée from Toronto Regional Champion Campaign.

iv) Methodology

The methodology we had chosen to support our objectives was to pilot the setting up of a Community of Practice. As our participants were to be based both in Canada and Ghana, we had planned to meet mostly via the web and once face-to-face over the course of the eighteen month project from May 2010 to October 2011.

The three core organizations, Crossroads International, Abantu for Development (Ghana) and the YWCA Canada identified other relevant organisations and invited them to be part of this project. This initial recruitment process took longer than anticipated and some organisations or individuals that were approached could not meet the time commitment required to participate in the project. The Community of Practice was finally launched *live* in February 2011 in Toronto with 13 participants from 10 institutions (4 in Ghana, 6 in Canada) plus the learning coordinator and the consultant facilitator. (See appendices A for participants list).

We had a good diversity of organisations from civil society both in Ghana and Canada and the group dynamic was very productive and collegial from the start. We did, however, lose early on in the project a strategic participant, the organisation Equal Voice. It was unfortunate because we had high expectations with respect to their participation given their specific mandate and experience in engaging and mentoring young women in politics in Canada. Their Experiences Project came to an end and their representative, who had attended the launch and the first 2 sessions, had to move onto another job. Regrettably, no one else in the organisation made themselves available despite numerous attempts to reconnect.

This confirmed that the selection of participants was a very important step, especially in ensuring organisational buy-in in order for individual participation to be fully supported.

During preparatory work in the course of the summer and early fall, it became apparent that it would be very challenging to begin working at a distance with people we had never met, and that this original plan would pose difficulties around the notion of group formation including the development of a Community of Practice.

In addition, we faced some challenges in determining what technology we would use to support our web-based session. Reliable connectivity remained an issue amongst the participating organisations in Accra, be it the unforeseeable power cuts or the erratic internet server failures. After lengthy consultation and tests, we resorted to using Skype premium to access numerous cameras at the same time with the least demand on slower connections.

We therefore decided to make use of the face-to-face meeting originally planned to take place toward the end of the project to launch the project with a two-day workshop in Toronto in February 2011.

From the initial two-day launch workshop, a learning coordinator, in collaboration with the project leader, played a key role in keeping the members focused on our priorities and coming up with innovative and engaging ways to prepare the online sessions and facilitate them. She took the lead in setting up the agenda for the sessions based on the priorities we had identified and made sure an ongoing reflection of our learning was taking place at the end of each session. She was also responsible for collating the notes of every session and made the most use of the Ning virtual platform that was set up to support our community by Crossroads Knowledge Management and Learning Officer as a common space where members could exchange and share relevant documents, tools and knowledge. At two occasions, she also designed online surveys to take the pulse of the members on specific topics. When some members volunteered to lead part of a particular session, she was also there to accompany them in the preparatory work.

Overall, she facilitated 6 online sessions of 3 hours each on April 4 2011, May 19, June 21, July 28, Sept 27 and January 25, 2012. (See appendices B for an example of session agenda).

The two face-to-face meetings/workshops were unquestionably the most successful *methodology*. Participants were eager to learn tools that would enhance their intervention within their programming and frequently reported during the web-based session that they had used one of the new tools or techniques they had learned about.

Our hope was that we would also use the Ning platform during sessions as an interactive tool while having the voices and visual presence through Skype but this proved to be unrealistic in terms of connectivity and also to some extent, in terms of technological ease amongst some participants.

“What I found interesting about the Community of Practice is... the methods with which we explored things.” [ie. by seeing how the CoP itself was run, she learned a lot that can be applied to her own mentorship program] Brigitte Dzogbenuku, Founder of Mentoring Women Ghana.

v) Project Activities

The funding provided by IDRC and other sources supported the following activities as planned:

Abantu's Program Officer responsible for their Young Women's Mentorship Program came to Canada for four weeks in May 2010: Ellen Dzah attended a certificate program at the Coady institute on *Advocacy and Citizens Engagement*, met with the municipal councillor behind the Toronto Regional Champion Campaign initiative and was a guest speaker at the YWCA Canada AGM on a young women's panel.

Young Women's Mentorship Program Advisor: Gabrielle Zilkha spent five months in Ghana with Abantu over the summer and fall of 2010 to support the development of a curriculum and a training manual for the Young Women's Mentorship program.

Hiring of a Learning Coordinator: The Learning Coordinator was hired to support the Community of Practice by facilitating the exchanges planned to take place during the web-based sessions for a total of 20 days of work between October 2011 and January 2012.

Hiring of a consultant facilitator: The consultant was called upon by the project leader for an initial reflection on how to launch the initiative and how to facilitate both the initial two-day workshop in February 2011 and the second face-to-face workshop in October 2011 for a total of six days of work.

Face-to-Face workshops: The initial face-to-face launch on Feb. 22-23, 2011 was supported by Crossroads' current programming funding. As explained previously in the methodology section, we decided it was worth investing in this first meeting/workshop in order to lay down the foundations of our group. Four representatives from Ghana and nine from Canada spent two working days together with two social gatherings to assist in relationship building.

The second face-to-face opportunity on Oct 27-28, 2011 took a different shape than originally envisioned. We had imagined back in winter 2010 when developing the project, that we would organize a learn and share round table to share our experience about our Community of Practice with a targeted audience towards the end of the project which was scheduled for early fall 2011. However, as our collaborative work concretely started in February 2011 and we were later granted an extension until March 1st, 2012, in the fall 2011 we were still at an implementation stage rather than a conclusive one.

Furthermore, it had been very challenging to schedule a face-to-face opportunity with very busy organisations both in Canada and Ghana and while we did attempt to invite some external guests, we did not have the capacity within our group of organisations in Canada to organize something more formal. Nonetheless, five participants from Ghana joined ten representatives from Canada for this *in-house* learn and share workshop.

Reference tools: A virtual platform on Ning was created as a tool that would allow us to gather the material we would find relevant over the course of the project. It was also envisioned to be a resource external people could consult. We also filmed the first two day face-to-face workshop in order to allow external members in the future to see the process of how the project was launched and for the CoP members to refer to it to review specific techniques, etc.

Learning and reflection

A significant learning in terms of implementation and management of the project's activities was that no matter how interested participants were in the topics and the experience, it remained difficult for them to carve time in busy schedules for activities/interactions outside the sessions as such, including time to provide feedback on session notes, agenda or surveys. Despite learning from the initial session from the facilitator that it was the work between the sessions that would feed the Community of Practice and keep it relevant, and that the online and face-to-face sessions would only synthesize and reinforce the practice, it proved very hard for everyone to dedicate more time than the sessions themselves to this project.

Therefore, a very important aspect of the project implementation for its success was to have an external, super organized and methodological learning coordinator. She was very thorough in consulting the members on the topics to be covered at the session, in setting the agenda, researching the best methodology to facilitate the session and finally, compiling the notes and making them available on our Ning site. Her constant preoccupation was to ensure, in collaboration with the project leader, that the learning momentum created in our first face-to-face meeting remained despite the challenge of having productive working sessions at a distance with unreliable connectivity and insufficiently sophisticated technology. The initial resources invested in relationship building also proved important for the success of the project as despite a clear frustration with the intercontinental communications, participants remained engaged and committed towards each other and the project.

Another important learning was that in order to introduce a *new* information and communication technology (NTIC) such as a virtual platform a project needs a dedicated champion that will encourage and support others to demystify this type of online tool and feed the platform on a regular basis to incite users to visit. We were obviously missing that individual and the result was that the full potential of such a tool was not reached. For some, it was also seen as another place to go, to keep up with, another login and password that was competing with other platforms such as Facebook where several members login on a regular basis.

vi) Project Outputs

Four main outputs of the project are as follows:

- Young Women's Mentorship Program Facilitator Manual: see appendices B for content details;
- Sixteen participants were introduced to a dozen key SaS2 tools and some techniques selected by the consultant to support the learning needs component: Socratic Wheel; Social Domain; Ranking; Rating; Weighting; Free List and Pile sort; Attribution and Contribution; Ranking; Stakeholders analysis; Timeline and Force Field; Sabotage technique, etc.
- A virtual platform on Ning with the project documentation;
- A community of practice; this may seem like a redundant output but considering setting up a Community of Practice was a pilot project it is worth noting that this output in itself was achieved through the various activities during the project implementation.

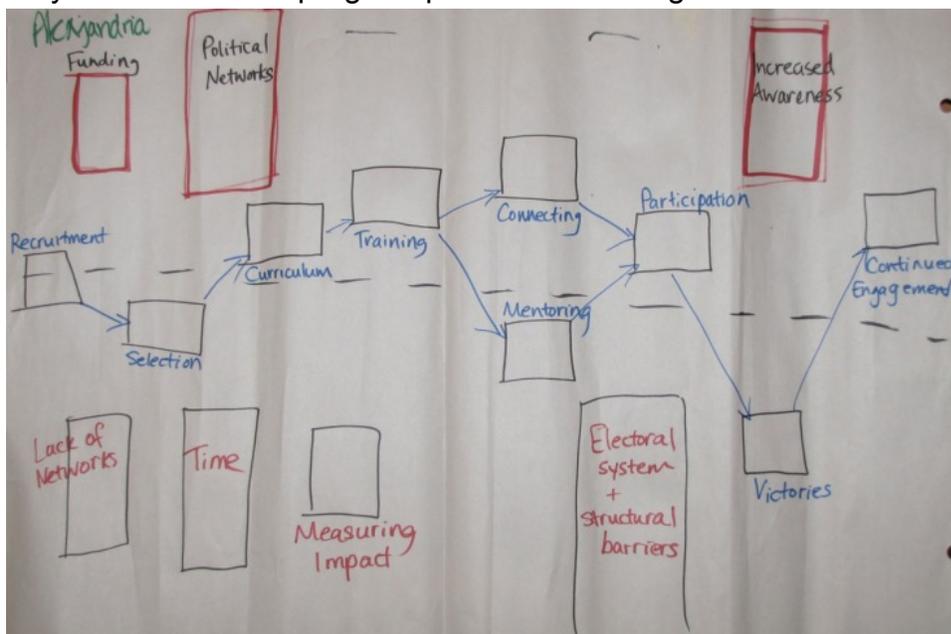
In terms of capacity building and practice influence, the main achievements could be summarized as an increased institutional capacity of half a dozen organisations both in Canada and Ghana to design, implement and evaluate mentoring and engagement programs or initiatives focusing on young women's leadership and empowerment. Through their participation in the Community of Practice, participants from both countries were able to learn from each other as well as learn from their own practice by using, amongst other means, some SAS2 Dialogue tools enabling them to analyse their programming from a different perspective.

For example, during the initial two day workshop, participants were introduced to and used two tools to present the key aspects of their mentoring or leadership program in a concise and visual way that enabled everyone after to compare, learn from and comment. The Timeline and Force Fields tools examined in a sequential way the components that contribute to the programming either as strength (above the middle line) or a challenge (below the middle line). See next page for illustration. This exercise yielded interesting insights and questions amongst participants when comparing the drawings:

- Consider next year's mentoring walk in June – mentoring program in June; walk itself in November on the same day as the vital voices one...MWG
- Equal Voices – consider having women politicians as mentors - work with Parliament (write to them) and political parties. Talk to Susan Evans Quayson and AFIA who are the other women politicians.

- Can we contract someone to do the evaluation? Should we send evaluation forms online and have mentor/mentees fill them?
- Consider the flexibility – depending on what mentors and mentees are interested in doing
- Who is doing the choosing? Use Board Members and alumni
- Mentees should find out mentor’s schedules and fit themselves into it. This should be imparted to mentor/mentee during the orientation.
- Selection question: “What does making progressive social change mean to you (as a woman?) “
- For measurement/evaluation purposes: Create a list of indicators of impact/outcomes - contribution not attribution, outcomes rather than systemic impacts (successful outcomes)
- Can we stipulate the various experiences mentees should have over the one year period?
- 90% of what you have learnt if not applied immediately with practical training is lost – training should be followed immediately by the mentoring experience or simultaneous training & internship

Maytree Foundation program presentation using Timeline and Force Field tools



Another tool that was used to improve their practice in a variety of ways by several participants was the Socratic wheel. Mentoring Women Ghana used the evaluation wheel at the beginning of its mentoring program this year, which was launched in March 2011 to discuss expectations from mentees and mentors. After the year into the program, they will use the wheel again to assess whether or not expectations were met. This will be the first time the organization plans for the evaluation ahead of time – which they acknowledged makes more sense than trying to back-track and remember what happened after the fact.

Another example is the Free list and Pile sort, a rather simple exercise in itself but one that proved to be surprisingly efficient in setting priorities within a fair size group in a short period of time. Priorities of the CoP were identified (topics) and grouped under the following categories:

Category: Comparative analysis / comparing enabling environments initiatives

Topic: similarities and differences in strategies used in specific context, i.e. countries/target populations, etc.

Topic: Impact/compare of intersectionalities: class, race, religion, sexual orientation on women accessing power

Topic: equipping

Category: Training facilitation, tooling

Topic: Best practices for facilitating relationships between mentors and mentees

Topic: Young women in leadership and decision making in politics – best practices

Topic: What are the inherent structures that prevent women's participation?

Category: Gender issue barriers

Topic: Strategies for overcoming gender specific barriers long term

Topic: Ideas for component of a national mentoring in a large country (geographically)

Category: Recruitment and retention of mentors and mentees

Topic: Recruit and sustain young women's interest in political participation

Topic: How to bring more women to power and politics

Topic: Recruitment and selection: how to identify participants with view to success

Category: CoP usefulness

Topic: What are the key factors for success in partner engagement in CoP at a distance?

Category: Evaluation

Topic: Evaluation of mentoring program

Topic: Indicators of a successful program

We were not able to cover every single topic identified but did accomplish some work in each category. We soon realized that it was not about documenting knowledge or good practice in a repertory fashion but rather building our own knowledge together through reflecting on our experiences using, when relevant, materials we had found on the topics.

Although there were surprisingly more similarities between the various programs than major differences, it was sometimes a subtle aspect that participants would notice and mention as key learning that could make a positive difference in their program.

For example, under the topic of recruitment and retention of mentors and mentees, some good practices or strategies that were outlined after discussion could be listed as follows:

- Consider one day orientation and training for mentees – expectations to be stated
- Follow up on the program after the year
- Stipulate least number of interactions between mentor and mentee
- Crucial to respond to the need of mentees – doing some evaluation before having them state their expectations and objectives i.e. what they would like to give and what have they got to offer
- Approach mentors and educate them about the need - why it's important so as to have their commitment. Consider having women politicians as mentors - work with Parliament (write to them) and political parties
- Outreach and consultations – talk to young women about their needs and interests and what they would be looking for in the mentoring program and their interests (in politics)
- Organize national summits – bring all mentees and mentors to attend
- Bring mentees together – physically or virtually – list serve, blog etc.
- Maybe try evaluation forms online and have mentor/mentees fill them out?
- Consider the flexibility – depending on what mentors and mentees are interested in doing, flexibility, choices, structure & timeframe – needs to be spelt out clearly
- Consider an orientation for new mentors orientation
- Consider having the mentors/mentees list available to give them a chance to choose their pairings (first choice, second choice, third choice)
- Instil a *Pay forward* type of initiative
- Peer mentoring – have alumni of MWG mentor new mentees and gather for problem solving
- Mentees should find out mentors' schedules and fit themselves into it. This should be imparted to mentor/mentee during the orientation.
- Create a list of indicators of outcomes that are expected of the relationship for measurement/evaluation purposes (including various experiences mentees should have over the one year period). The Wheel could be used to plan what mentors/mentees would expect, like and love.

Under the category *Gender Issue Barriers*:

- Design and implement a campaign such as “TAKE YOUR GIRL TO VOTE” in which women voters are encouraged to take their underage daughters or other girls with them to the polling station or an “I COMMIT” campaign, targeting young women 18-25
<http://twibbon.com/join/i-commit-campaign>
- Create a more formal, organized political network to support women with their family obligations
- Lobby to have nomination fees for women discounted
- Continue to encourage women to run because “You didn’t win but you paved the way for others...” This changes the perspective from being an object to being a subject
- “You need to have fire in your belly” because as a woman, you get outcry for now staying home with children
- “Pick a time, pick a goal and it can happen!”
- Show girls the advantages you have to run for politics because you are a woman! We should harness advantages instead of focusing always on barriers
- “Politics is a winner take all game” and taking this attitude challenges us as women who are often more focused on collaboration

“Prior to our partnership with CCI, GYWSE approach to mentoring was just to get mentors and mentees and offer a program not necessarily matching the needs of mentees and mentors. Since our partnership with Crossroads, our approach to mentoring young women to sit on boards is more relevant.” Ama Pooma, Founder of Ghana Young Women Social Entrepreneurs.

vii) Project Outcomes

Although the project implementation as such unfolded over a relatively short timeframe of 12 months, some outcomes can still be identified even if they could be considered in their early stages.

Networks:

This project undoubtedly contributed to the creation of a small scale global network of organisations sharing a common goal of increasing young women's leadership and representation in decision making spheres, including political office. Members have occasionally called on each other for specific support and as they have decided to remain involved beyond this pilot phase, there are good reasons to believe this collaborative aspect will continue to flourish.

At a more local level, this initiative has certainly strengthened an Accra-based network in Ghana of four organisations focusing on young women's empowerment. Various collaborations amongst themselves have taken place in parallel of the project such as trainings and event participation. For example, Mentoring Women Ghana plans to call upon CoP partners Abantu to help them run an evaluation of their mentoring program.

As for Crossroads, this project allowed us to get to know new civil society organisations involved in a key area of our programming, both in Canada and Ghana. This is important for us as we look towards specific collaborations with organizations that have expertise to share to further our common programming in southern countries. As an international cooperation organization that believes in the valuable contribution of volunteers, whether from the north or the south, we are now in a position to establish a more formal and longer term collaboration with some participating organizations in the project. For example, after visiting Mentoring Women Ghana and WISE in Ghana last fall, it was jointly determined that their organisation/programming would benefit from the contributions of Canadian volunteers in specific areas of institutional strengthening.

Programming initiatives:

Ghana High-Tech Women (GTW) and its sister organization, Ghana Young Women Social Entrepreneurs, plan to start a project targeting young women for public office under their portfolio of Advancing Women Leadership and Mentorship program.

Women's initiative for self-empowerment (WISE) representative reiterated at the end of the project her intention to set up their own Community of Practice in Ghana around the theme of violence against women, their primary focus. Yet, their involvement in the Moremi Initiative¹ rightfully bridges the elimination of systemic discrimination towards women and girls as a key cause of violence towards them and the importance of supporting women's leadership in order to affect policy and cultural changes that will support women's equal participation in decision-making.

Last but not least, a significant outcome is the reinstatement of the Toronto Regional Champion Campaign, a mentoring program set up in 2008 and aiming to increase young women's representation at the municipal level. A protégée from the first cohort and member of our CoP decided to lobby and convince the local government to reinstate this program that had shut down in 2010 after only two cohorts of mentees had the opportunity to participate. Emerging stronger as a result of the confidence she gained from participating in the CoP project, she succeeded! The program is currently recruiting and will be hosted from now in the Office of Equity, Diversity and Human Rights with the hope that it will bring more institutional stability than when hosted in a particular councillor office. Please see Appendices C for the full story.

What is of particular interest in that story is that a young woman felt engaged and empowered to act with the support of the Community of Practice. In a sense, it is as if she felt informally mentored by other, more experienced participants. Despite having fewer young women than initially anticipated as members, this intergenerational dimension was present as a backdrop to our work and definitely a plus.

¹ **Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa** strives to engage, inspire and equip young women and girls to become the next generation of leading politicians, activists, social entrepreneurs and change agents: Leaders who can transform and change institutions that legitimize and perpetuate discrimination against women. We envision a society where African women and girls thrive and participate fully in the transformation of the continent. <http://moremiinitiative.org>

viii) Overall Assessment and Recommendations

The Community of Practice brought together Ghanaians and Canadians organizations who are all invested in advancing girls or women in leadership positions. The international aspect of the project really enriched the overall experience; participants shared their experiences from different cultural contexts, different circumstances, but also observed many similarities in working with women and youth.

While it is too early to speak about a development impact per say, this project contributed to laying the necessary foundation to improve current or future engagement and mentoring programs amongst participating organisations and within their network in Ghana, Canada or elsewhere. The process itself, i.e. the CoP mechanism might also inspire different ways of working within a specific network.

An anticipated result was that this project would inform the ongoing practice of CoP members as well as contribute to relevant knowledge generation within their respective networks; while this result can be reported, it remains at the same time a work in progress. In a similar light, the introduction to some SAS2 tools allowed the participants to reflect on their practices from a very different and new perspective, which in turn might eventually lead to innovative new programming. However, it would be over optimistic to think that this knowledge symbiotically turns into competency. Organizations will have to use those tools over and over again to master them and benefit from their full potential.

If we were to do a similar project again, it would certainly gain from being designed with the following in mind:

- Allowing sufficient time to select/invite participating organizations avoiding summer time in Canada for this step
- Ensuring participants have full support from their organizations
- Ensuring the majority of participants are actual practitioners, i.e. implementing programming in the area of interest
- Focusing the concepts or topics of *research*
- Ensuring that the proper and relevant technology is in place before the project start
- Ensuring participants are joining the project at the initial stage of the design rather than being invited to participate in something already designed in terms of *deliverables*

Nevertheless, from the point of view of most participants, the investment of time and effort in this project was definitely worth it. This was an important pilot project, with a good balance between knowledge sharing and capacity development opportunities. The social capital that was built over the last eighteen months is obviously hard to quantify but already opens doors to further collaborations towards concrete goals and results.

From Crossroads' point of view as the grant recipient, the value of this project resides mainly in its pilot nature, i.e. something we had never attempted to do before to further our programming.

The time and effort required was very close to what was estimated while allocated financial resources had to be increased to meet the unfolding development of the project. However, the overall ratio of costs/benefits still seems like a worthwhile investment. It is important for us to explore new ways of working together with partners as we profoundly believe real change is achieved when people with great ideas, who see the world in different ways, come together as equals to develop solutions.

The Community of Practice will continue under the leadership of a revolving convenor. Danielle Masanto will be the first to assume this role. We will keep the Ning platform active and look for ways to make it richer in terms of content and accessible to a wider audience. Existing members will discuss inviting new members and Crossroads will continue to support the collaboration with our Ghanaian partners.

“Going forward it’s definitely something I would do again in a heartbeat.” Ambar Aleman,
Coordinator, Programs and Projects, YWCA Canada

Appendices A

Community of Practice Participants List

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Appendices B

Proposed Agenda for April 4th

1. 20 minutes. Looking Back. Did the Launch Session have a specific or general impact on your work? If so, Members tell about one-two impacts.

2. Up to 90 minutes. Main topic.

- Two (or three) Ghanaian, two (or three) Canadian organizations prepare two stories each in collaboration with their own stakeholders or partners. One is a truthful story about something successful in their recruitment or retention (something specific, something they would like to “brag” about). The other story is a lie about something they have NOT been successful in but would very much like to attain in a given time frame. The Lie must be convincing!

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE ONE OF THE STORY TELLERS, PLEASE CONTACT AGNÈS

- The other Members must guess which story is the truth and which is a lie
- After guessing, members feedback to the Story Tellers, sharing strategies to help them develop strategies to change the lie into the truth.
- Members name one thing about recruitment or retention they learned from the discussion they can apply to their practice
- Reflection & agreement on what Members will do and how they will do it in the inter-session to complete the learning on recruitment and retention

3. 20 minutes Preparing for the next online session in May

- Principal topic (TBC): overcoming barriers to young women’s participation
- Proposed methodology: Troubleshooting. Ann and Ambar communicate with Members to identify 2-3 persons to prepare and share with Members through Ning, before the next session a specific case of a barrier (or two at most). They must be real issues for which they have not been able to find strategies to overcome.
- Members’ responsibility is to review the case studies ahead of time, consult colleagues and partners to prepare themselves to suggest strategies to overcome the barriers & share during the online session.
- (Additional items (short time frames) could be suggested to each other through the use of the Ning Forum)

4. 20 minutes. Other tasks, activities CoP could undertake between this session and the next: What and How?

5. 5 minutes. Synthesis of feedback re. using Ning Platform, payment

6. 10 minutes. Auto-evaluation of our group session.

Appendices C

ABANTU FOR DEVELOPMENT YOUNG WOMEN'S MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FACILITATOR'S MANUAL

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Chapter One: The Purpose of ABANTU's Young Women's Mentorship Program

Chapter Two: Overview of Program

- a. Program Objectives
- b. Program Targets
- c. Key Program Phases & Components
 - i. Education
 - ii. Meet a Mentor
 - iii. Experience
 - iv. Skills-Building Activity
- d. Program Structure, Objectives, Key Activities and Timelines.
- e. Program Terminology

Chapter Three: Role of the Program Coordinator

- a. Your Role as Program Coordinator
 - i. Preparation & Coordination
 - ii. Oversight
 - iii. Support
 - iv. Evaluation
- b. Common Challenges and Rewards for Facilitators Working With Youth

Chapter Four: Phase One - Program Launch

- a. Creating an Effective Outreach and Marketing Plan
 - i. Getting the Word Out
 - ii. Outreach
- b. Information Sessions
- c. Letter of Intent
 - i. Selection Criteria
 - ii. Guidelines for Writing a Letter of Intent

Chapter Five: Phase Two - Orientation

- a. Group Introduction
 - i. Hopes & Fears Activity
 - ii. "Terms of Reference" for Participants
 - iii. Letter-Writing Activity
- b. Introduction to Gender and Development
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
- c. Introduction to Leadership
 - i. Exploring the Meaning of "Leadership"
 - ii. The Universal Characteristics of Leadership
 - iii. Good and Just Leadership
 - iv. Leadership Styles
 - v. Leadership Styles Activity
- d. Wrap-up Discussion Guide
- e. Phase Two Handouts
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
 - ii. Leadership Styles Chart

- iii. Leadership Styles Activity

Chapter Six: Phase Three - Gender and Governance

- a. Education: Gender and Governance
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
- b. Meet a Mentor
- c. Experience
 - i. Experience Reflection Questions
 - ii. Additional Notes on Phase 3's Experience
- d. Skills-Building Activity: The *Young Women's Manifesto*
 - i. Background on Young Women's Manifesto Activity
 - ii. Introducing the Manifesto Process
 - iii. The Process of Creating a Manifesto
- e. Wrap-up Discussion Guide
- f. Handouts
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
 - ii. Meet a Mentor: Topic Guidelines
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Chapter Seven: Phase Four - Peace-Building and Security

- a. Education: Peace-Building and Security
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
- b. Meet a Mentor
- c. Experience
 - i. Experience Reflection Questions
- d. Skills-Building Activity: Conflict Negotiation Workshop
 - i. Understanding Conflict
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- e. Wrap-up Discussion Guide
- f. Handouts
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
 - ii. Meet a Mentor: Topic Guidelines
 - iii. Behaviours Used in Conflict Negotiation
 - iv. How to Find out the underlying Needs/Interests in a Conflict
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Chapter Eight: Phase Five - Climate Change

- a. Education: Climate Change
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
- b. Meet a Mentor
- c. Experience
 - i. Experience Reflection Questions
- d. Skills-Building Activity: The "One Small Change!" Project
 - i. Step One: Individuals Can Make a Difference!
 - ii. Step Two: Brainstorming for a Campaign Idea
 - iii. Step Three: Planning the Campaign
- e. Wrap-up Discussion Guide
- f. Handouts
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
 - ii. Climate Change Pretest
 - iii. Meet a Mentor: Topic Guidelines
 - iv. The One Small Change! Campaign Planning Process

Chapter Nine: Phase Six - The Media

- a. Education: The Media

- i. Curriculum Breakdown
- b. Meet a Mentor
- c. Experience
 - i. Experience Reflection Questions
- d. Skills-building activity: Reporting on a Story
 - i. Step One: Searching for a Story
 - ii. Step Two: Gathering Information and Research
 - iii. Step Three: Writing the Article
 - iv. Step Four: Revisions and Edits
 - v. Step Five: Finalize and Publish
- e. Wrap-up Discussion Guide
- f. Handouts
 - i. Curriculum Breakdown
 - ii. Meet a Mentor: Topic Guidelines

Chapter Ten: Phase Seven - Internships

- a. Introduction
- b. Internship Preparation and Planning
 - i. Step One: Researching Organizations
 - ii. Step Two: Write "Internship Opportunity Request"
 - iii. Step Three: Follow-up
 - iv. Step Four: Develop Internship Contract
- c. Common Issues With Internships & Possible Solutions
 - i. Common Problems
 - ii. Key Problem-Solving Skills and Techniques for Interns
 - iii. Role Play
- d. Internship Evaluation Forms
- e. Handouts
 - i. Key Problem-Solving Skills and Techniques for Interns

Chapter 11: Final Report, Graduation & Evaluation

- a. Guidelines for Final Report
 - i. Critical Thinking and Analysis From a Gender-Based Perspective
- b. Graduation Ceremony
- c. Group Evaluation
 - i. SWOT analysis

Appendix

- Appendix A: Resource Person Checklist
- Appendix B: Tips for The Resource Person!
- Appendix C: Meet a Mentor Checklist
- Appendix D: Meet a Mentor General Guidelines
- Appendix E: Thematic Phases Evaluation Form
- Appendix F: Proposed Program Budget

Appendices D

Stories from the **COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE:** *Driving change*

In 2008-2009, Toronto-based Danielle Masanto was a protégée with a pilot mentorship program designed to advance young women's political leadership in her own city government. She was paired with Toronto City Councillor Gloria Lindsay-Luby. Two years later, the completely positive experience came back to haunt her during her participation with the Community of Practice organized by Crossroads International, Abantu for Development and YWCA Canada.

"I realized that there were a lot of questions I couldn't answer because I was no longer connected to my mentorship program." In fact, changes in the municipal government and the passage of time had led to the program itself being shelved.

Through ongoing discussions and regular meetings with her Community of Practice partners, Canadian and Ghanaian women sharing their experiences and challenges promoting young women's leadership, Masanto became convinced that the pilot mentorship programs should be revived.

"The Community of Practice taught me how important it is having a mentorship program where you get women involved politically," she explains.

Masanto also realized that sometimes, it takes just one person to make a come alive. "[It gave me] the idea that you have to have someone who's passionate, that you have to have a driver ... There's no driver right now, I'll have to be that person." So, while touching base regularly with her Community of Practice cohort, Masanto began making calls.

"I'm on this Community of Practice," she told staff people who had been involved in the city mentorship program two years before. "I have support from lots of ladies from this Community of Practice, I'd love to get it up and running again and I'll do it for free."

While most of the former staff people were tied up with other things, Masanto's energy, determination and commitment encouraged them to give the ok. Together with a former worker with the program, Masanto is now in the process of interviewing 35 candidates for thirty protégées positions (two per each of the Toronto City Hall's current slate of fifteen female councillors). A landmark program (originally spearheaded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities as the pilot for an eventual Canada-wide drive to use mentorship to increase women's participation in political office) is about to be re-launched.

"Had I not been inspired by talking and working on the various Community of Practice projects for six months [this wouldn't have happened]," Masanto says. "That inspired me to say 'This is a great program, this has to run'".

Appendices E

Stories from the **COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: Selection & Retention**

Although the mentorship program at Ghana-based Abantu for Development, a partner in the Community of Practice, is not new, for board member Susan Osam, structured interaction with global partners gave her new insights to improve her organization's work.

"With the Community of Practice, we listened to selection of mentees," she says. "We are all interested in what criteria would contribute to the good selection of mentees who will participate in the program and not just drop out."

In a series of chilly February meetings during the first of two encounters that brought Osam and her compatriots to Canada to work face to face with their Canadian counterparts, the women worked together on the issue of mentee selection.

"[Back in Ghana after the face-to-face CoP meeting], there was one meeting we had with mentees of Abantu to share factors that would help, such as the timing of the program and the structure."

In fact, as a result of the group-work in the Community of Practice, Osam became sensitized to other specific factors that Abantu needed to consider to make the program work. For example, from now on, before even setting the dates for the mentorship program, program planners are careful to take into account special events that might detract from participation, and to consider when young women who are potential mentees will be in or out of school.

In terms of retention of mentees, Osam also found the Community of Practice pushed her to new ideas of how to keep young participants engaged. An early exercise in which participants worked together to develop an agenda for the Community of Practice that would actually meet their learning needs inspired her to ensure her own leadership mentees play a role in program design to maintain a high level of interest.

"We are using the information to improve on our programs."