

WAR Camp GLOW 2011

In December 4th - 12th 2011 Women Against Rape organised a life skills camp (Guys and Girls Leading Our World) for 31 young people from Okavango and Ngami areas in Botswana.

GLOW (Guys and Girls Leading Our World) is a programme under WoMen Against Rape (WAR), a non-governmental organisation based in Maun, Botswana. Camp Glow was an initiative by the American Peace Corps and is now pioneered by WAR. It is now an annual event organised by WAR. Young people are brought together at GLOW, so that they can learn, share knowledge, experiences on various aspects of life skills, reproductive health and career guidance.

Camp GLOW aims to develop young leaders who will be part of the nation – wide grassroots movement that educates, empower and support their peers in the prevention against HIV and AIDS and GBV (Gender Based Violence). This youth empowerment programme was started by Peace Corps in Romania in the early 90s but has since grown in leaps and bounds due to its effectiveness. In Botswana, it was first started in 2006 solely run by the American Peace Corps volunteers. In 2007 they partnered with WAR as a way to sustain the program and in 2008 WAR decided to take over the program.

For the past year's camp, participants were drawn from Ngambao, Popagano, Shakawe, Okavango, Sekgoma and Ngami junior secondary schools. These schools are from remote areas of the Ngamiland district in Botswana. The Ngamiland district has a high rate of illiteracy, poverty, defilement cases and HIV prevalence. All these factors have negatively affected young people from these areas.

Some of the topics that were discussed during the camp included communication skills, understanding one's goals and values, benefits of delayed sexual activities and intergenerational sex, violence against women, power as a root cause of violence against women and children, dangers of alcohol and drug use, condoms and how to use them and how to help someone who has been abused.

The 2011 camp was also meant to expose these young people to a new world so they get to know that there is a world full of opportunities waiting for them to explore. It is for this reason that the camp was held in Botswana's capital city, Gaborone. The camp was a thrilling experience to participants whom most of them it was their first time in the capital city.

Refilwe Theresa Phillip, a 14-year-old form two student at Okavango Junior Secondary School from Gumare has this to say about the camp. "I have learnt a lot of things to do with reproductive health, having a vision and working towards achieving that vision and the consequences of engaging in early sex and these are lessons that I will be taking back to my friends and schoolmates back in Gumare," . She also said she had a lot of her unanswered questions before coming to GLOW camp such as where to go after she completes her school. But the Camp has given her the answers as she now has a roadmap of what she wants to be in life.

“I now want to be a human rights lawyer who will be dealing with issues related to women and children. Back in the villages people are less informed and don’t know their rights. I would like to make a difference one day,” she said.

For Lopang Disho, a 24 year old volunteer from Seronga Village, his dream is to see a decline if not total wiping away of teenage pregnancy and giving equal opportunities to the girl child.

“In most villages in the Okavango and Ngami areas there is a lot of poverty and the girl child seems to be hard hit as they are forced into early marriages for the benefit of the parents but I hope and I am sure that with the information that we are giving out there, things will change for the better,” he said.

Teachers were also delighted to be part of this camp which they believe is a good effort to empower young people and reduce their vulnerability from HIV& AIDS and abuse.

A teacher from Ngambao Junior Secondary School, Amogelang Mokgobye paid tribute to WAR for having Camp Glow programme which she described as a strong platform for the future leaders to learn about life skills.

“A lot of young people especially from remote villages are less informed about various issues but this camp is making a big difference in bridging the information gap. I will definitely make sure that students who participated share the information and life skills that they learnt with their peers,” she said.

After the camp, participants are expected to continue with the GLOW movement by forming GLOW chapters/ clubs in their areas so as to plough back what they have learnt and empower their peers. WAR believes developing and empowering young people is a very important step towards bringing positive change in our society.

We are looking forward the GLOW 2012 camp and we hope it will be bigger and better!