



4 Chakras

ASSESSMENT REPORT

Mpilonhle – A good Life

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INTRODUCTION

4 Chakras Consulting was appointed by ApexHi Charitable Trust to strengthen capacity of a number of NPOs that were identified in need of this assistance. Mpilonhle is one of the projects that is need of strengthening.

This report is a product of:

- An initial assessment of the NPO application compared with their report
- A site visit and interviews conducted with the governance structure, management and staff
- An assessment form that was completed during this site visits.
- Analysis of the findings.

BACKGROUND

Mpilonhle, zulu for “a good life”, is a non-governmental organization dedicated to helping one of South Africa’s poorest communities, Umkhanyakude District in northern Kwa-Zulu Natal. Mpilonhle focuses on health promotion and social development of youth, sponsoring mobile health units that visit rural schools and their community to provide health education and HIV prevention services, HIV testing, curative services, and computer training.

Mpilonhle was registered with the South Africa Department of Social Welfare as a non-profit organization on 22 November 2006 (registration number 051-766-NPO), and its first staff - Slie Mkhwanazi and Khanya Mdletshe - were hired on January 8th 2007.

Mpilonhle was founded by Dr Michael Bennish and JP Sevilla, who through their previous experiences, recognized that although much is now being done for persons infected with HIV and have AIDS, much less progress has been achieved in preventing HIV infections. Adolescents are particularly at risk for HIV infection, yet are woefully uninformed about the risks and management of infection. Youth growing up in Umkhanyakude District have an almost 50% chance of becoming infected with HIV during their lifetime.

The organisation is run by Dr Michael Benish and Christine Ryckaert.

SITE VISIT PROCESS

Name of Organisation	Mpilonhle
Location	Mathubatuba Kwa Zulu Natal
Duration of visit	6 – 7 March 2014
Attendees	Michael Bennish , Christine Ryckaert, Slie Mkhwananzi, Lindiwe Nene, Beni Williams, Dudu Maoea , Nathi Xhakaza, Xolani Mtekayi, Shso Myeni, Sbongiseni Maybuyakhudo , Siph Mtshau, Njabulo Gumede, Mpi Lebekhulu, Sakho Mngomezulu.
Activities Per Day	<p>Day 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit to Kwagiba High School, Interviews with Thapelo and Sakho and a few other field workers at the site, • Interview with Lindiwe and Benni back at Mpilonhle offices. <p>Day 2 :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit to the Mandlesiwe primary school in Mathubatuba to see the Pulse Learning programme Interview with Mpi at the site • Returned to Mpilonhle and had an Interview with Ms Dudu the Chairperson of the Board, • Witnessed the new HIV awareness programme where HIV positive children are made aware of the HIV status and counselled through learning • Interview with representatives from the KZN Health Dept • Interview with the Staff from the TOMS 1 for 1 programme • Interview with Michael and Christine.

FINDINGS

Compliance

Mpilonhle is registered as a NPO and PBO with The Department of Social Development and has developed a constitution for the organisation. There is Board comprising of five Board members that meets four times a year. Board Members are headhunted and voted on by the current Board. Mpilonhle complies with all the reporting requirements and develops both the narrative report and annual reports for the Departments.

Strategy

Tactical and operational planning at the organisation is extremely good. This allows management to maintain tight control and direction on day to day programme activities and delivery. This is typical in NGOs who need to focus on shorter term survival rather than long range plans. Although management have some ideas regarding future direction, there is no documented long term strategy that articulates this. This strategy needs to be developed. The timing is opportune since Mpilonhle has just been awarded a multi-year project which allows some stability and the opportunity to grow.

Programmes and Services

Mpilonhle are involved in a host of different community based projects in the Umkhanyakude District in the Kwazulu Natal province, these projects range from basic health education, HIV and TB screening to computer literacy and their TOMS one for one shoe programme all these programmes are run by Mpilonhle using staff.

The following is a list of Programmes offered by Mpilonhle:

1. School Health Programme -Testing and counselling for HIV & TB in rural Areas
2. Pulse Academy -Utilising the Khan Academy Computer Modules -Computer Lab where grade learners from Grade 5 upwards are taught Maths and Science
3. TOMS 1 for 1 Shoe Programme - over 500 schools receiving 2 pairs of TOMS shoes per year across the district
4. School Food security Programme
5. Outreach programme for children with HIV/AIDS

The evaluators were fortunate to spend time observing all of the programmes in action and they are all truly impressive to say the least. They are all incredibly well set up, resourced and managed. This is testament to the management capability demonstrated by Michael and Christine as well as the passion and commitment of the staff.

During discussions with staff at the site the following was highlighted:

- System very reliant on technology if technology (tablets and server) is offline field workers cannot get through the number of students.
- Training on new developments in the HIV and TB sector is needed for field staff
- Field staff cannot attend all training offered by management due to commitments in the School health Programme

The impact of the school health programme and the computer programme is huge. Both have been developed in such a manner that they can be replicated and scaled up to increase reach and impact. The TOMS shoe programme is equally impressive and is a machine that is well oiled and run.

We were able to observe the first work session with children with HIV/AIDS. This programme is run in conjunction with the Department of Health. The structure and delivery of the programme is very good and allows these vulnerable children the opportunity to deal with their situations whilst having some fun. Our understanding is that this programme will be expanded in time and reach out to more children. This bodes well for the community and the organisation.

All of the above programmes have been developed internally by management to meet the needs of the communities and are delivered by Mpilonhle staff and volunteers. All programmes are thoroughly documented and systems are in place to be able to monitor the impact. Programmes are formally reviewed annually (the first two weeks of January) and necessary changes are made.

Policies and Procedures

The organisation has a process to develop their own policies and procedures. Most policies and procedures have been developed, well documented and communicated to all staff. These are reviewed annually by the Director of the organisation. Non compliance with policies and procedures is dealt with through the Director conducting one on sessions with the offender. When new/revised policies or procedures are developed, staff are notified through sms followed by a workshop where management explains the contents to staff. It is clear that management and staff operate according to this strict policy and procedure routine enabling the operations to run smoothly. In this respect Mpilonhle is an organisation that others could learn from.

Systems

Mpilonhle uses the QuickBooks programme to manage their finances. Their filing system is both electronic and paper based. Mpilonhle has developed systems to run and manage their programmes. These systems are electronically based and developed in conjunction with their external IT consultant. The systems to run the school health programme is very innovative. Information is captured and managed electronically by all staff and links to other service providers / functionaries is integrated. Staff have been trained on the system and in-house support is provided by the IT team.

The system that runs the Kahn Computer Academy is also very innovative and allows Mpilonhle to deliver a meaningful and impactful programme.

An asset management system is also in place to manage the organisations assets. This system together with the stock control system is reviewed annually and revised.

It is fair to conclude that the operations of the programmes and management of Mpilonhle is underpinned by innovative and sound systems that contribute to the impact of the organisation.

Resources Human

Mpilonhle has documented their Organogram that details the structure of the organisation. There is 39 permanent staff at Mpilonhle. All the positions on the Organogram are currently filled with exception of a qualified nurse. Every position has a detailed job profile and all staff has a job description which has been communicated to them as well.

Due to financial constraints the organisation does not provide training and development for staff, but an induction programme is run for new employees. Due to the location of the organisation management also experiences difficulties in attracting professionals and because Mpilonhle is an NGO, staff turnaround is high with regards to fieldworkers finding better jobs in the bigger towns around Mpilonhle.

There currently is no succession plan for critical positions as well as a retention strategy to keep staff at Mpilonhle, an EAP programme will also need to be developed. This is critical to ensure that the fieldworkers (who are exposed to very stressful working conditions) are supported and counselled when necessary.

Performance appraisals are also formal at all levels and this guide's development; increases and promotions.

In interactions with staff it is clear that they are committed and passionate about what they do and enjoy working for Mpilonhle. This points to the fact that management are doing things right in terms of how they deal with their staff.

Resources Financial

Funding for Mpilonhle comes from both local and international donors the KZN Department of Health also funds a percentage of the Mpilonhle School Health project. Historically the management have been able to establish many high-profile relationships with international funders and local luminaries. Moneys have been received from Oprahs Network and Charlize Theron's Foundation.

Mpilonhle has just been awarded a €828,294 (approximately ZAR 12,300,000) contract from the European Union to implement a program to improve school health services in the Umkhanyakude District, KwaZulu-Natal Province, where Mpilonhle is based. The project is entitled "Increasing the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Department of Health School Health Teams in Umkhanyakude District", and was funded under the EU's Primary Health Care Sector Policy Support Programme.

Fundraising is done by the organisations directors and there is a detailed fundraising plan. The organisation does not generate any of its own revenue. In 2011 Mpilonhle had some financial difficulties and was forced to retrench its entire staff, funding picked in 2012 again and most staff were reemployed. The current award affords the organisation a degree of stability.

Resources Infrastructure

Mpilonhle are renting the property where they are situated. Assets that belong to the organisation are the vehicles, computers, generators and mobile health units used in the field. None of the assets are used to generate any income for the organisation though,

there is an asset management system in place and drivers fill in log books for each of the vehicles. There is enough capacity to manage assets as well.

The facilities, premises and infrastructure make it very conducive for the organisation to deliver its programmes. The premises on which it operates is large, spacious and has plenty of office and warehousing space. Mpilonhle have been fortunate to get this property at a very reasonable rental.

Operations

Mpilonhle has a management committee in place that meets every Monday. This committee comprises of the organisations Director, COO, HR, Finance, IT Coordinator, M&E, Psychologist the transport, security and facilities coordinator the CLO and the special projects Coordinator. There is no documented term of reference for this structure buy there is sufficient management capacity and capability for the structure to manage the organisation efficiently.

The organisation involves the nearby communities in their projects and programmes and beneficiaries are involved at Board level in the management of services.

Due to the well developed foundation (policies, procedures, systems, and infrastructure) of Mpilonhle together with the tight management control by the Director the operations of the organisation can best be described as slick, efficient and effective.

Governance and Leadership

On meeting with the Chairperson of the Board, it was clear that there is commitment and drive from her perspective to sustain and grow Mpilonhle and the beneficiaries it reaches. The delineation between Board and Management is clearly understood and the roles and responsibilities of the Board are captured in the Board Charter. However, Board members do not receive any induction or orientation and this process needs to be developed. There currently is no leadership profile for the Board but the Board complies with all of its statutory requirements. During discussions with the Director, he confirmed that the Board is functional and committed but submitted that “there needs to be fire” implying that the drive, energy, roles and visibility of the entire Board needs to be elevated.

Financial Management

Mpilonhle complies with the codes of good practice, there is no internal audit function but regular external audits are conducted through an appointed auditor. The financial management of the organisation is overseen by the Director and is tightly managed.

Sustainability

There is no sustainability plan in place and one needs to be developed.

Other issues and Challenges.

Other issues and challenges that were raised during the course of discussions were:

- Need to reinvigorate the Board - get new Board in place by end March
- The organisation needs an in-house trainer supervisor

- Counselling for counsellors is required - no good councillors in the area
- Training on HR
- Training and development needs to start again - e.g. drivers to go on Land Rover refresher course
- Long distances that field workers have to travel and long hours
- Financial management training for the Finance manager
- Regular updates for everyone on legislation and regulation changes

CONCLUSIONS

Mpilonhle is an example of a well established, innovative and efficient NGO delivery services/programmes of value and having a large impact on a large sample of the population. The foundations of the organisation are sound and the organisation operates like a “well oiled” machine. The organisation has gone through some financial hardships and has had to focus on short term survival but with the new multi-year funding, can start to focus on longer term growth.

The current state of the organisation is testament to the drive and commitment of the Director and COO. Much of what is in place is due to the tireless efforts of Michael and Christine. The committed and passionate staffs enable the impact that the organisation has and will continue to have. A continuation with what they are currently doing will ensure that Mpilonhle continues to be a beacon and example for other organisations in the sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the organisation is currently on a growth path, this path has been crafted by the current Director and COO, however, they have to plan for the organisation to have a life of its own and be in a position to continue even when they are no longer at the helm. The need to transfer knowledge and skills to others in the organisation is an imperative in order for the legacy of the founders to live on. It is thus recommended that;

- Embark on a programme to transfer knowledge and skills to the next cadre of management that they must groom for these positions
- Develop a long term plan for the organisation
- Increase their sector expertise
- Engage in stakeholder relations in order to share their successful model

There are a few areas that need to be addressed to take Mpilonhle to the next level. These are listed in the next section.

AREAS FOR WHICH ASSISTANCE WILL BE PROVIDED

1. Children's Act Training
2. Strategy
 - a. Sustainability plan
 - b. Marketing Plan
3. Succession Plan
 - a. Including building middle management capability
4. Connect with GLN
5. Mentor for HR person