

ST JEANNE ANTIDE FOUNDATION

The VINĊI Community Outreach Project in Haż-Żabbar - Supporting Vulnerable Families in the Community

Project financed by STRINA of the Malta Community Chest Fund

Report covering the period MARCH 2010 to APRIL 2011

VINĊI is a Community Work project initiated in the parish of Żabbar in close collaboration with the Parish. The project is partly financed by the STRINA initiative of the Malta Community Chest Fund (MCCF). As an approach, project workers undertake outreach work in zones with a concentration of families in difficulty as a means of identifying, building relations with and supporting such families.

The current team is multi-disciplinary in nature and is composed as follows: one Social Worker, 2 Community Workers, a Psychiatric Nurse, 2 Volunteer Learning Support Tutors, 2 Masters in Counselling students, and a Priest.

REFERRAL SOURCES

Referrals of vulnerable families are made through the following sources:

Parish priest: The Parish Priest of Żabbar, works closely with the VINĊI team and regularly refers families for support. Often the parish priest sends a note to the project leader requesting social work support for families.

Hard-to-reach families are identified through **outreach work** in the community carried out by the social workers, community workers and psychiatric nurse.

Radio: Following the introduction of a one hour programme on Radju Hompesch which aired every Thursday between 11.00am and 12.00 pm from September till January 2011, many approached and continue to approach to seek support.

State agencies: The Foundation has regular links with Aġenzija Appoġġ through which Appoġġ refers vulnerable families on the waiting list of their generic social work service.

Volunteer pastoral workers from parish Kummissjoni Djakonija, Kunsill Pastoral Parrokkjali refer individuals for social work support and/or counselling.

SJAF TARGET GROUPS

FAMILY CAREGIVERS of persons with mental health problems, disability, or any other chronic health conditions. These family members are often the primary caregivers who provide constant care and emotional support. They often bear the financial expenses associated with treatment and care. The VINĊI project has been running a Caregivers Support Group, runs family consultations every Friday, and undertakes outreach and follow up home visits to families where mental health problems are destroying the fabric of the family. Home visits by the Team Leader (a social worker) and a psychiatric nurse take place on Fridays and fortnightly on Saturdays (full day). **STATISTICS: 12 family caregivers take part in the Support Group; 50**

individuals out of 30 families are accessing this particular service each week since September 2010.

Grandparents who regularly care for their grandchildren: Between September 2010 and January 2011, the VINĊI Project ran a NannaKola Club at the Maria Bambina Centre. In February 2011 another Club was initiated at the Ċentru Nazzaret in the Housing Zone. Participation is encouraged through outreach work, parish announcements and referrals by the Kummissjoni Djakonija. **STATISTICS: 23 grandparents who regularly care for their grandchildren have benefited from this service.**

Families facing crises: the hard reality of families being supported include: teenage unmarried mothers living with their parents, sudden loss of a family member; very weak and often dysfunctional relations; sudden loss of a job of main provider; pain due to separation with children becoming aggressive and unresponsive as they insist on blaming one of the parents; children and youths grappling with their studies and generally failing; neglected elderly; youths with cognitive impairments and/or mental health problems who have never been diagnosed and generally left to become totally isolated and home-bound; children who dominate their single mother.

Frail elderly: lonely elderly who are on the waiting list to be admitted in a residential home/or need home support services.

INITIATIVES IMPLEMENTED TO DATE

Support Group for Family Care Givers: As from January 2011, a support group for family caregivers was started. It meets every fortnight. 12 persons attend. 2 others were helped to access the SJAF Depression Support Group.

Basic parental skills for parents – In March 2011, the community workers planned and led 6 sessions for parents being supported by the project social workers. Together with the social workers, they identified 5 service users who were invited to participate. Some of the themes were Kif Nifhem lili Nnifsi, Ir-responsabilità tal-ġenituri, l-Istima u l-Kuraġġ, l-kommunikazzjoni fil-familja.

Adult Education sessions for parents or guardians on parenting and learning support. Those invited were parents whose children attend the Żabbar primary schools. In November 2010, the community workers held a meeting for these parents with the theme of *how we can help children in their homework*. From this meeting, the parents expressed their interest in having specific sessions for each year and each subject. 9 sessions have so far been held, each repeated twice so as to reach fathers and working mothers in the evenings too. Completed sessions:

- 3 for parents whose children are attending Kindergarten (Nov 10 - Jan 11) – repeated twice.
- 3 for parents whose children attend Year 1 (Feb 11 –March 11) – repeated twice.

During the sessions, the parents were shown educational and fun resources which they can produce themselves in their own home at no cost in order to nurture their children's learning. Handouts with simple and direct information were also provided. 15 women attended morning sessions whereas 20 parents participated in the repeat evening ones.

Grandparent education: From October 2010 to the early January 2011, the Nannakola Club facilitators led a Nannakola Group in the Maria Bambina Centre. Since February 2011, another club is being led in Ċentru Nazareth, in the Housing Estate. The Klabb NannaKola focuses on the honing of such skills as creating educational resources, play work, craft making, effective inter-generational communication, managing stress, and other issues of common concern highlighted by grandparents themselves.

Children's Learning Support: Two Volunteer Tutors provide learning support to three very vulnerable children. A qualified teacher experienced in family learning support with a Masters degree in Early Childhood Education, on a voluntary basis, is supporting a very vulnerable 12 year old teenager. She is teaching her literacy through the synthetic phonics methodology. Another young Volunteer Tutor with a degree in Maltese and studying for her Masters in Maltese is also assisting 2 children with their homework and studies.

Series of Radio Programmes using community channel: Between September 2010 and January 2011, a weekly one hour programme on Radio Hompesch was aired every Thursday between 11.00am till 12.00pm. with two weekly repeats. Various topics of interest to vulnerable families were tackled in depth: family relations, knowing oneself, understanding one's emotions and knowing what to do with them, spirituality, prayer and forgiveness, mental health problems and what to do about them as a family, communicating with children, supporting children's learning and growth, role of grandparents in a child's life, and other topics.

Informal Creative Group – In August 2010, the two project community workers organised informal fun and creativity sessions for a group of 8 vulnerable children whose families are being supported by project social workers. In these sessions, the development of creative work was nurtured and activities included cooking, art, and crafts with an underlying emphasis on respect for one another, teamwork and communication.

Various talks: Different organisations continue to request project team members to run sessions for their members: the Elderly Social Club (15 participants) on *L-importanza u s-sehem tan-nanniet fil-familja*; lenton sermon on *emotions and spiritual development* (around 500 persons in two churches); the Parish Pastoral Council on the project aims and services; etc.

Diaconia Commission: The Team Leader is now a full member of the Parish Diaconia Commission. This ensures that the project works closed with parish pastoral workers who support vulnerable families. She attends the monthly meetings.

FUTURE INITIATIVES

Participating in the Ħaż-Żabbar Notte Bianca: The project will set up a stall during the planned Zabbar Notte Bianca. At the stall, handouts with useful information for parents and grandparents will be disseminated. Simple crafts will be done on site with children in the presence of their parents. Face painting will also be available.

Summer activities for children of families using our service: 2 different age groups of children will be formed and will meet once a week. The programme will enable vulnerable children spend informal learning time with Volunteer Tutors and community workers. Educational topics of general knowledge will be chosen. Children will be given interesting information combined with hands-on activities and maybe outings related to topic.

Basic budgeting skills sessions: 6 sessions on budgeting skills will be held with identified service users at the Centru Nazareth in the Housing Zone.

OUTREACH, COMMUNITY PROFILE & COMMUNITY CHECK LIST

The social workers, community workers and the psychiatric nurse visited each household within the identified depressed zones with a concentration of social problems. The zones where outreach work has been completed in the Housing Zone, tal-Biċċieni, and Sqaq L'Arji. The main objective of these home visits is to identify and support those persons who are not reached by any service and to discuss with them their personal necessities as well as those of the area they live in.

As essential community work and community social work tool is being developed by one of the community workers - **the Ħaż-Żabbar Community Profile**. The community profile describes the locality, its characteristics, groups and formal parish and local council structures, infrastructure, resource persons, books and articles on the locality, the geography and history. The community profile is updated regularly.

NETWORKING WITH DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS AND ENTITIES

The VINĊI team members have made contact with the following organisations within the Ħaż-Żabbar Community:

- Members of the Kunsill Pastorali Parrokjali: On the 14th October 2010, a presentation about SJAF services focusing on VINĊI project was held. 38 members from different organisations in Żabbar participated; 27th January 2011: a short presentation on the VINĊI project was held to brief Archbishop Pawlu Cremona.
- Members of Catechism Group: 15th October 2010 - a presentation about the VINĊI project was made. Contents included different behaviours that children might exhibit during catechism classes. 25 catechists from the 5 zones of Żabbar.
- Local Council: a meeting was held with 3 Councillors on 4th October 2010.
- St. Margerita College: a number of meetings were held with representatives of the College, including the Principal (31st August 2010, 8th March 2011, ecc.)
- School Social Worker and School Counsellors: (6th October 2010).
- APPOGG Generic Social Worker.
- Jesuit Refugee Service (24th March 2011)
- Poala Community Mental Health Clinic (21st April 2011).

STATISTICS TO DATE

- an average of 8 new cases per month
- 140 vulnerable individuals from 102 families supported through the community-based social work, counselling, and mental health consultations services.
- 8 children from vulnerable families supported participated in the Summer Crafts group.
- 23 grandmothers participated in two NannaKola Clubs held in the Ċentru Bambina and Housing zones.
- 1 Support Group for Family Caregivers of mentally ill persons and persons with a disability; 12 participating.
- 2 service users from Ħaż-Żabbar are participating in the Tarxien Depression Support Group.
- 1 series of Radio Programmes on community radio Radju Hompesch every Thursday for an hour between 11.00am and 12.00pm between September 2010 and January 2011.
- Joint work between the Psychiatric Nurse and the Social Worker (Team Leader). 18 families with chronic mental health problems in one or more family members are being followed by both workers aiming to meet the family's holistic needs.
- Regular participation in Diaconia Commission meetings at parish level.

Persons provided with a service to date:

As at the start of period (March 2010)	47 families were referred by the Parish Priest. Of these, 19 were not interested in being supported and 28 were provided with support
New cases – March to January 2010	102
Office-based Social Work interventions	218 of which: 40 Social Worker 1; 29 Social Worker 2; 5 Social Work

March 2010 – April 2011	student; 35 Psychiatric Nurse, 15 Counsellor
Home-visits March 2010 – April 2011	300 of which: 115 Social Worker 1; 59 Social Worker 2; 35 Social Work student; 31 Psychiatric Nurse, 60 by 2 Community Workers
Accompanying service users to offices, departments, court, hospital appointments	15
Community Outreach Hours	95hrs
Educational sessions for parents	35 parents of children in kindergarten and Year one
Grandparents who care for their grandchildren	23 grandparents attended 2 Nannakola Clubs
