



Celebrating 21 years of *Stepping Stones*

1995-2016

Stepping Stones Stories from *East and Southern Africa*.....



ANGELA HADJIPATERAS

Organisation: formerly ACORD

Country: East and Southern Africa



When did you first come across Stepping Stones?

I came across *Stepping Stones* when I was working for ACORD, a pan-African NGO. Alice Welbourn came to ACORD, around 2000 or 2001 and gave a small presentation and video.



How did you use it and where and when?

After that, I attended a training of trainers workshop in Oxford. I then became an advocate for the use of *Stepping Stones* in ACORD I developed a project involving the implementation of *Stepping Stones* in 6 countries in Africa: Tanzania, Ethiopia, Uganda, Sudan, Mozambique and Angola. We applied to Comic Relief and were successful and implemented the project in 2004/5



Comments and experiences from users and trainers in several countries in Africa where Stepping Stones was implemented



➤ **Their comments from Tanzania:**

- The adaptation of *Stepping Stones* guided by trained Community Facilitators and support from local leaders enhances co-operation in problem solving as it builds trust and confidence between the local facilitators, peers, community members and local leaders hence leading to the sustainability of the project.
- *Stepping Stones* is an effective participatory learning methodology suitable for participants who are illiterate (especially women), who are shy to discuss sexual issues in front of men, or in laws resulting from

persisting socio-cultural barriers in discussing sexuality. However, *Stepping Stones* methodology needs to be complemented with other methodologies such as social exclusion analysis, participatory ethnographic evaluation and research, gender analysis and participatory poverty analysis.



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- *Stepping Stones* provides peer learning friendly atmosphere leading to identification of social and economic needs of each peer group linked to high risky sexual behaviour. The *Stepping Stones* methodology creates openness and supporting each other.

➤ **Changes in behavior and attitudes:**

- **Gulu District, Uganda**

Impact studies highlighted many positive impacts. For example, parents' views on the need to talk to children about sex changed markedly after undergoing the *Stepping Stones* process. Before *Stepping Stones* only one out of 3 said they think parents should talk about sex children, but after the training over 8 out of 10 parents were of the view that this important. A similar change was recorded in relation to discussions about sex between couples. Another significant change was in the attitudes towards people living with HIV. Prior to *Stepping Stones*, people with HIV were viewed as 'promiscuous' and lacking in morals. However, after *Stepping Stones*, attitudes changed and people were far more accepting.

- **Mucubai pastoral community in Angola**

The Mucubai pastoralist communities in Angola practise circumcision on young boys. It has long been part of the tradition to use the 'ancestral' knife for this ceremony. Through *Stepping Stones*, they learnt that this is risky and now this practice has been abandoned and each family brings their own razor.

- **Comments from *Stepping Stones* participants in Angola**

These are the words of some of the soldiers living in the barracks in Huila Province in the South of Angola where *Stepping Stones* was carried out:

"For me, the most important thing I gained from *Stepping Stones* was that it helped me control my alcohol problem. I used to get drunk all the time and when I was drunk, I would not be able to control my thoughts or actions and I would sleep around with every woman in sight and get violent as well. I realised that this behaviour was not only putting me at risk, but others also and have now stopped drinking the way I used to." (Soldier, aged 28 years)



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"*Stepping Stones* has completely changed me as a person. I am no longer the person I was. I used to be shy and I didn't know how to interact with other people. After the *Stepping Stones* training, I overcame my fear of people and I have learnt how to talk and share with others and to be able to help my peers in the way that I have been helped. I feel there is no problem I can not discuss or share with others". (Soldier, 21st brigade, aged 24 years)

"The training I received in *Stepping Stones* has transformed the way I relate to my family and neighbours. I did not used to feel the need to communicate much, but now I share my problems and I lend a sympathetic ear to theirs.....One of the things I liked about the training is that it always uses the word 'we' and it helped to bring home to me the fact that HIV/AIDS is not just a



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problem of a minority, we are all affected in one way or another." (*Stepping Stones* facilitator, Santa Clara, Angola)



"For me, the greatest thing I gained from *Stepping Stones* was that my relationship with my wife and family has been transformed. I used to behave completely irresponsibly and spend all my money on women and drink. Now, I bring my salary home and the money is shared to buy food and provide for the needs of all the family. I have stopped sleeping around and I am faithful to my wife as I do not want to put either of us at risk of catching and spreading the virus." (soldier, 21st military brigade, age 26 years)

Comments from me

From the experience of implementing *Stepping Stones* in these countries, arose the idea of developing a *Stepping Stones* Implementation Manual based on lessons learned about the challenges and most effective ways of implementing *Stepping Stones*. The report drew on lessons from all these countries and was translated into Portuguese from the original English language version. The report was launched in 2004, marking the 10th anniversary of *Stepping Stones*. Another offshoot of my experience with *Stepping Stones* was the making of a short film in Angola. The main idea behind the making of the film was to set *Stepping Stones* in a more familiar context, specifically for Angola and Mozambique, to which they could relate more easily than the Ugandan context in the existing *Stepping Stones* training video. The film was launched in London in September 2006. Finally, after leaving ACORD, I was involved with the redesign of the *Stepping Stones* website. In my current work, which is managing a community-based tourism project in Zambezia Province in Mozambique, I am very keen to implement *Stepping Stones* as part of the community work we are doing. I first applied for funding in 2012, together with a local partner working on HIV/AIDS with prior experience of *Stepping Stones*, but the project was not funded. I since applied again for funding from another organisation in the Netherlands, but was again unsuccessful. I am not giving up! I hope one day to be able to implement *Stepping Stones* here as HIV prevalence is very high and issues of stigma, taboos, poor communication between men and women and parents are children all contribute to the spread of the virus and I am convinced that *Stepping Stones* would have a very strong and positive impact.



Thank you Angela!



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ELLEN BAJENJA

Organisation: formerly ACORD, now Salamander Trust

Country: East and Southern Africa



When did you first come across *Stepping Stones*?

I learnt about the *Stepping Stones* methodology way back in 2004 to 2007 during my work as Technical Support officer for the HIV and AIDS program at ACORD.



How did you use it and where and when?

During this period, *Stepping Stones* was adopted for a three year operational research project funded by Comic Relief and aiming to integrate gender in community-based HIV and AIDS projects in three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Stepping Stones* was adopted in three different contexts to assess its feasibility in addressing gender issues in community-based HIV initiatives. In Angola it was implemented by the armed forces, In Uganda it was in a displaced community in Northern Uganda and in Tanzania it was implemented in a settled urban community.



Can you give us an example of something that you liked about it or that had a positive effect on you or the community where you used it

As one of the coordinators of the *Stepping Stones* project, I was particularly impressed by the impact of this highly community-centred methodology. It effectively integrated gender in HIV



initiatives in different contexts. One outstanding positive outcome of the *Stepping Stones* training was a noticeable improvement in relationships and more communication among different age groups during the training. The approach of dividing the community in peer groups to build their confidence in sharing their views was particularly impressive. The process enabled women, girls, men and boys confidently to share their likes and dislikes with regard to how they want to be treated. One strong result in all the three communities was the major and

observable improvement in communication between different community groups. In Uganda, better communication between spouses about issues of sexuality was reported; in Angola, relationships between the army and the community in which they lived; and more particularly their respect for women's rights and integrity improved greatly. In Tanzania *Stepping Stones* enabled women living in an urban community to understand their vulnerability to HIV and AIDS. Consequently they collectively developed coping mechanisms to address these susceptibilities.

In general, the use of the *Stepping Stones* programme among the peer groups resulted in increased community-wide awareness of and responsibility for vulnerable persons living with HIV and AIDS.



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★ Is there anything else you would like to tell us about yourself or about *Stepping Stones*?

As someone who has used the *Stepping Stones* workshop in my programs, I recommend the use of *Stepping Stones* methodology as it effectively addresses the needs of various unconventional settings and enabled communities to not only understand and challenge cultural and social norms that affect their well being, but it also enables dialogue and collective community approach to solving problems.

Thank you Ellen!

The film, 'Condom Commandos' (*Farda de Combate* in Portuguese) was made for ACORD in Angola by Lucinda Broadbent of media co-op.

To view "Condom Commandos" © media co-op in English click [here](#).

To view it in Portuguese, click [here](#).

The report 'Joining Hands' by ACORD is available [here](#).

To receive a copy of 'Implementing *Stepping Stones*' please contact us at Salamander Trust via our website.

www.salamandertrust.net
www.stepsstonesfeedback.org



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