

MEN'S RESOURCES INTERNATIONAL

Educating, Consulting & Organizing for Positive Masculinity

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LOCAL MEN'S GROUP CONDUCTS GENDER SENSITIVITY TRAINING IN ZAMBIA

(Springfield, MA) Men's Resources International (MRI), a non-profit organization in Springfield, recently conducted a 3-day Men's Leadership Training in Lusaka, Zambia in the southern part of Africa. The training, hosted on June 12 – 14, 2006 by the Zambia YWCA and funded by private U.S. donors, sought to increase awareness of gender-based violence, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS among members of the newly-formed Zambia Men's Network.

MRI executive director, Steven Botkin of Pelham, MA and program director, James Arana, of Florence, MA, facilitated the event, which was attended by 20 young men from Zambia, 4 female YWCA staff members and 1 delegate from the Ebonyi Men's Group from Nigeria.

"It was particularly helpful to have the diverse perspectives of the women participants and our visitor from Nigeria," said Steven Botkin. "Their combined stories helped reinforce both the personal and universal aspects of gender-based violence. It was a very powerful experience for all of us."

Botkin and Arana, both with over 20-years experience of working with men and boys, chose to employ a combination of ritual, story-telling, consciousness raising, and team building throughout the training.

"It's important to create a safe space for participants to share their own stories and recognize the effects of sexism on their own lives," said Arana. "This provides a personal context for discussing sensitive gender issues, and gives relevance to more practical lessons on community outreach, leadership skills, organizational development, and financial sustainability."

While it is too soon to judge the long-term impact of the training, unsolicited responses from the participants have universally described the experience as powerful, illuminating and motivational. As a result, there is a renewed commitment among participants to the success of the Zambia Men's Network.

Botkin and Arana were also especially pleased with the strengthened relationships among like-minded groups in Zambia, Nigeria and Rwanda as a result of the training. "While the challenges in Africa are daunting," said Botkin, "there is clear evidence of an international men's movement towards gender sensitivity. When individual programs begin to connect with men's groups from other areas and to form alliances with women's groups and human rights organizations, then we all begin to feel a palpable momentum towards positive change. It's very exciting and rewarding to be a part of it."

Men's Resources International will host a slide-show presentation and discussion of the Zambia Leadership Training this Thursday, July 13, 2006 from 6:00 – 7:30 P.M. at the MRI Office, 1695 Main Street, Springfield, MA 01103. All are invited. For more information or to RSVP, please visit www.mensresourcesinternational.org or e-mail info@mensresourcesinternational.org.

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