



Selected community members are trained to perform the role of LL, using tools developed by UNICEF.

- Refers/links abused children to royal Swazi Police, traditional leaders, social workers, medical doctors and teachers for immediate attention.
- Meets as a group every week in the Sigodzi, to discuss issues, learn from each other and prepare reports:
  - exchanges information about children at risk in the community;
  - helps with counselling of abused children;
  - develops strategies for controlling behaviour of potential and actual abusers and;
  - keeps records of group meetings and decisions.

### Qualities of LL

- Community members without a record of child abuse.
- Men, women, and youth of integrity
- Men and women with love for children

### Training of LL

- Relevant service providers are engaged to train selected community members, using curriculum developed by UNICEF and partners.
- Training content include an introduction to the LL concept; role and responsibilities of LL; child rights;

child abuse; child sexual abuse; Life skills and home based care; HIV and AIDS; and counselling.

- Other subjects include, basic legal information and legislation pertaining to children, and business management skills.
- Tools like the Child Rights Tree, the String Game, Brother Snake story and case studies have been developed and are extensively used in LL training activities.

### Achievements

- A cadre of 8,000 men, women and youth have been trained as LLs in 47 communities.
- Links have been established between LL and the Domestic Violence and Child Protection Unit of the Royal Swaziland Police, at police stations in the communities to facilitate early reporting of cases of abuse.
- The Swazi Government recognizes the project as a critical component of the national effort at protecting the rights of children in Swaziland, and pledges its continued support.
- Other organizations, such as NERCHA have adopted the initiative and are providing funding for a roll out the LL at the national Level.
- Most children in the communities are now aware of the existence of the LL and report cases of abuse to them.

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**LIHLOMBE  
 LEKUKHALELA**  
*a shoulder to cry on*

**Swaziland  
 2007**

For every child  
 Health, Education, Equality, Protection  
 ADVANCE HUMANITY





LL with children at a Neighbourhood Care Point

## What is Child Abuse

- ☉ Child abuse is defined in the context of Lihlombe Lekhukalela as:
  - sex with a minor;
  - emotional abuse;
  - neglect and abandonment;
  - child labour;
  - child slavery;
  - physical abuse (corporal punishment) and;
  - denial of education, shelter and food

## What is Lihlombe Lekukhalela?

- ☉ Lihlombe Lekukhalela (LL) is a community driven child protection initiative, introduced by the Government of Swaziland and UNICEF in response to daily newspaper reports about the worsening situation of child abuse in the country, especially sexual and emotional abuse.
- ☉ Lihlombe Lekukhalela, a SiSwati term which means “shoulder to cry on”, was coined by the youth during engagements at community level to break ground for the introduction of the child protectors initiative.
- ☉ LL is a component of the “Safety Nets for Child Protection” programme coordinated by the Ministry of Regional Development and Youth Affairs, and supported by NGOs and civil society.
- ☉ A community survey carried out in 2001 indicated that there are men in the communities, oftentimes

in their own extended families, who prey on children, taking advantage of the ignorance, fear, poverty and the breakdown of the traditional family structures.

- ☉ Through the LL initiative, selected community members (child protectors) are trained to protect children from all forms of abuse, and to provide psychosocial support to the abused and traumatized.
- ☉ LL is implemented at Sigodzi (home cluster) level, with the support of Chiefs and the Inner Council.

## Objectives of the LL

- ☉ Protect children from all forms of abuse as defined above.
- ☉ Educate and sensitize communities to fulfill the rights of children, especially orphaned and vulnerable children.
- ☉ Provide an avenue for children to report abuse at the community level.
- ☉ Reduce child abuse and exploitation by providing a ‘Shoulder to Cry on’ within the communities and schools.

## Role of the LL

- ☉ Raises awareness among adult leaders and parents to act against child sexual abuse:
  - explains the psychological and physical damage abuse can do to children; and the subsequent damage to the community through the spread of HIV;
  - how to recognize the signs of a child who has been abused and;
  - how to talk with and counsel the child who has been abused.
- ☉ Reaches children, in and out of school with information and knowledge about sexual abuse, and what to do to prevent it:
  - why it is wrong for children to have sex;
  - how to read the warning signals about an adult with an evil intention;



LL's meet as a group every week to discuss issues arising from their activities in the community.

- the importance of finding someone to talk to about threats of abuse and;
- how to find help from the LL and others in the community.
- ☉ Serves as a “Shoulder to Cry on” for abused children:
  - identifies children who have been victims of abuse;
  - comforts and draws the child out to speak about what has happened;
  - seeks further help for the child from the LL group, leaders of the umphakatsi (Chieftdom), the health system, the police, the school and;
  - monitors closely and ensures that the child is removed from the risk of further abuse.
- ☉ capacitates the Chief and Inner Council with information and knowledge on how to stop abusers and how to ensure the abused child is protected from further suffering:
  - talks to and educates community members who pose a risk to the child;
  - discusses whether such “threats” require further action from Chief and Council;
  - refers suspected cases of sexual abuse to the police;
  - advocates for “best interest of the child” in handling cases of abuse and;
  - discusses ways of helping the abused child in school with school authorities.