

“Looking forward with hope...I can be free”

REACH’s 2009 South African Rural Women’s Day Campaign: The Road Show

The Road Show

On Friday the 4th of December 2009 REACH celebrated its infamous South African Rural Women’s Day campaign – a day that is celebrated on an annual basis to honour rural women and to raise poignant issues affecting farming communities. Each year’s campaign also launches a “Face of REACH” The 2009 campaign was named “Looking forward with hope I can be free...” (free of sexual violence, free of domestic violence, free of HIV, etc). Unfortunately due to lack of funding (mostly as a result of the World Economic Crisis) and other challenges we were unable to host the campaign in its usual format. Instead we decided to honour these communities by bringing REACH to them and so during the *16 Days of Activism* for No Violence against Women and Children, REACH took to the road! The aim was to visit 3 of REACH’s farming areas – to touch base with its existing beneficiaries while being able to meet new community members and raise awareness of sexual harassment, gender based violence and other interlinking factors as well as offer assistance to any community member who was experiencing or had experienced any of these issues.

During the road show REACH was also able to conduct surveys with community members from Gansbaai, Grabouw and Villiersdorp. The surveys asked pertinent questions about sexual harassment, sexual violence, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS and asked what services community members felt were needed to address these issues in their communities. The needs assessment would not only be used to improve our work in farming communities but also serve as a means to monitor and evaluate the work we had already done in these areas.

In the same spirit as all of REACH’s previous campaigns, REACH was able to distribute gifts from donations that had been given to us thanks to REACH’s supporters and donors.

A very big thank you...

We would like to thank the following REACH supporters and donors who helped us make this road show extra special:

- **Appletizer** for their continued support of REACH’s events
- **Clicks** for their donations of kitchenware
- **Community Chest & Mustadafin Foundation** for the sponsorship of clothes and other goodies
- **Eskom** for the printing of our S.A. Rural Women’s Day t-shirts
- **Elite Athlone Industria, FEDEX and Avondale Community** for their financial contributions
- **REACH board members** Ethne Davey and Glenise Levendal for their financial contributions



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2009 "Face of REACH" Claudine

In 2006 REACH initiated the concept of electing a woman from its beneficiary community who exemplifies empowerment and triumph in the face of adversity to serve as the "Face of REACH". This very special woman then serves a community ambassador and is tasked to represent REACH and our message within her community. For a full year she is also portrayed on all of REACH's documents and materials.

We first met Claudine and her two children in February 2008 at an awareness-raising project we held in Gansbaai. During a workshop Claudine opened up about the horrifying atrocities that she had suffered as a result of domestic and sexual violence at the hands of a man that she thought had been the answers to her prayers after she had already left an abusive husband.

During one fateful weekend Claudine was held captive; burned, beaten and raped by this man who can only be described as a monster. Claudine was forced to lie to her children about how she had gotten burnt as he threatened to kill her and her children if she didn't. Fortunately, her children realized the gravity of the situation and her young son was able to climb out of the window and called for help. Claudine was transferred by helicopter from her home to a burns unit in Cape Town but kept up the lie – she made a promise to herself to only give up the lie when she was strong enough to confront him. Claudine left the hospital a week later under the protest

of doctors as she felt she needed to be home with her children. The pain she experienced was excruciating but she slowly began to recover with their help until the day she felt strong enough to walk to the police station and finally revealed what really happened to her.

Despite Claudine's bravery and devotion to her family, she was on the brink of complete despair when we first met her.

Today, after much support and encouragement, Claudine is a force to be reckoned with. She is now an adoptive mother of two abused children who were rescued from their abusive father by Claudine and REACH; she has been elected the Chairperson of her neighbourhood's Health and Welfare committee; she runs a soup kitchen currently catering for over 70 children (with very few resources); oversees a safe house in her community and was elected Gansbaai's Woman of the Year out of 11 semi-finalists. Claudine also currently serves on REACH's governing board as the community representative.

Claudine is who she is today because she had the strength, determination, courage and hope to speak out and to stand up for her and her children's rights. Claudine was chosen as the Face of REACH not only in honour of who she is and what she has accomplished but also to share her stories with others as a means to encourage other women so that they too can be triumphant in the face of adversity.

Newsflash!

In October 2009 the Portfolio Committee on Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities called for submissions to review the 11th year of implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (116 of 1998). REACH together with a few key organisations worked together to present a joint submission to the Portfolio committee. Organisations such as Mosaic, Gender Advocacy Programme, RAPCAN, Saartjie Baartman Centre, Western Cape Network on Disability, Western Cape Network on Violence against Women, Womens Legal Centre formed part of the working group. The submission detailed the flaws in implementation of the Domestic Violence Act and focused on the role of the court, the police, the health system, the social welfare system and the lack of housing and shelter. The submission also made recommendations for changes with regards to each area. REACH went a step further and supported and encouraged Claudine to share her story with the Portfolio Committee as a way of illustrating the problems and gaps in the system around the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act. This submission was very well received by the Portfolio Committee and REACH will continue to engage with this portfolio committee to ensure that the recommendations made by the working group are followed up.

For more information go to: <http://www.pmg.org.za/report/20091029-11-year-implementation-domestic-violence-act-public-hearings>



Claudine 2009 "Face of REACH"

"...I feel for the first time in my life that people really do care about me. REACH is every day on the phone with me. REACH takes my problems to heart. And I really believe that REACH will and can make a big difference in people's lives because they've made a big difference in my and my children's lives. And I firmly believe that I am not the only one, there are many more people that REACH has helped that feel the same way I do."

Claudine & Children



Claudine and children with REACH staff member Claudia (April 2008)

The Gansbaai Road Show

In the early hours of Friday morning REACH headed to Beverly Hills, an informal settlement in Gansbaai that is challenged by many social problems, amongst them unemployment and severe alcohol abuse and gender based violence.

Our first mission was to attend an event where REACH and the 2009 Face of REACH, Claudine, had been asked to talk at hosted by the Department of Social Development, BADISA and the Department of Correctional Services.

Claudine used this opportunity to talk about her experiences in an abusive relationship and how she had managed to

overcome what happened to her. Claudine also spoke of how REACH had played a role in the healing process. Claudine's speech was very moving and we were once again left with a sense of wonderment and awe at this woman's strength and dedication.

Catherine Foster, REACH's advocacy officer, spoke about the work that REACH does in farming and rural communities and petitioned government to help make Beverley Hills a healthier community.

Following this event, REACH went back to Beverley Hills where we held our own event catering to about a hundred

community women, men and children.

Our road show in Gansbaai was very positive. REACH was able to spread its message and was able to meet many new community members who were pleased to meet an organization that was interested in their community and dedicated to help empower them. We were also pleased that over 70 people participated in our needs assessment survey.



Kids loving the Appletizer

“It was an inspiration to hear from the farm owner that cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence had dropped since REACH began working on his farm”

The Grabouw & Villiersdorp Road Show

While REACH's team number 1 was in Gansbaai, team number 2 headed to Villiersdorp. REACH has done quite a substantial amount of work in and with beneficiaries from this area since 2006 in fact two of REACH's Faces of REACH – Susan (2007) and Paulina (2008) were both from this farming area.

The road show commenced at the farm that Paulina works and lives in. We headed that way to give Paulina a gift for all her continued hard work for REACH and for her community. Paulina is currently running Adult Based Education Training (ABET) classes and as played a great role in improving the lives of many people. For REACH it was also a pleasure and indeed an

inspiration to hear from the farm owner, Peter Frost, that cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence have dropped since REACH began working on his farm.

Our next stop was at a farm called Boradyn where REACH met up with another REACH beneficiary Diane who has started a farm committee on this farm. There were over 50 women waiting for REACH at their community Hall. The REACH team distributed t-shirts, appletizers and other goodies while REACH's trainer, Nannette Flamming held a short presentation on sexual harassment and gender based violence primarily aimed at those that REACH had not worked with yet. Another 50 surveys were completed at this

congregation.

REACH's last stop was at Molteno Brothers in Grabouw. Once again REACH delivered a short presentation on sexual harassment and gender based violence this time to over a hundred farm working women and community members. All were pleased at having been invited and thankful for the gifts. In total REACH received 43 completed surveys from this group.



A Farmworker from Molteno

In conclusion

REACH is proud to report that the Road Show was a success. We managed to reach out to over 200 people and the cherry on the cake was being able to make their Christmas just a little better by distributing gifts thanks to the support of our donors.

The road show was a fantastic opportunity to bring REACH and its message to its beneficiaries. It was a means to remind them that we were still working in these areas and still ever willing to assist and empower community members. It was also a great platform to meet new beneficiaries and share our knowledge on sexual harassment, sexual violence

and other interlinking issues. The outcomes of the needs assessment survey (in total 158 surveys were conducted) will go a long way to assisting REACH in identifying what the main issues in these areas are and what needs to be implemented or adapted to address gaps. Preliminary results indicate that a significant proportion of respondents do not have knowledge of their rights as well as do not know what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence. This provides motivation for continued awareness raising and capacity building of communities as part of the empowerment process.

About REACH

Rural Education, Awareness & Community Health (REACH) is a registered non-profit and public benefit organization that was founded in 2005 by Joanie Fredericks and Claudia Lopes to address sexual harassment and sexual violence, amongst other interlinking factors such as domestic violence and HIV/AIDS, on farms and in farming communities of the Western Cape.

REACH adopts a holistic approach that incorporates awareness raising, counselling and legal support, campaigning, research and policy advocacy. REACH's vision is that of an empowered community that is socially aware, independent, responsible, self-caring and free of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

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