

CMI Diploma making a difference at Love Botswana Mission

Kate Winter discovers how the CMI Diploma in Programme and Project Management has enabled the delivery of information on HIV/AIDS in Botswana to become even more effective

When Zimbabwe's economy went into meltdown in 2003, Munyaradzi Katumba moved to neighbouring Botswana in Southern Africa. He settled in the remote urban village of Maun in the Okavango Delta, a thousand km from Gaborone, Botswana's capital city.

Munya, 31, started working for the Coping Centre for People Living with HIV/AIDS. 'I had so much passion about the HIV and AIDS work I was doing in the community and I wanted to gain more knowledge and skills to effectively provide better services,' he says.

In 2004 he joined the Love Botswana Outreach Mission, which provides support and information about HIV and AIDS. He researched qualifications on the Internet and found the CMI's Diploma in Programme and Project Management. The first training company to respond to his emails was The Projects Group (TPG) in the UK.

Instead of the usual induction process, which involves a face-to-face interview, Jan Underdown, DPPM course director at TPG, talked to Munya on the phone. 'We quickly established that he was a suitable candidate and would benefit from the qualification,' Jan says.

The Mission is dedicated to helping the people of the Ngamiland district, where one out of every three people is infected with HIV/AIDS. The situation is so dire that the President of Botswana said: 'We are facing a situation where everyone is either infected or affected; having lost a relative, friend, workmate or an acquaintance to the pandemic.'

Munya is a leader, educator and mentor for the youth of Botswana on HIV/AIDS care, support and prevention. It involves going out to schools and villages as well as managing a large team of employees and volunteers.

He is also responsible for ongoing assessment, planning, development, implementation and internal evaluation. There are many challenges – but none more so than the lack of resources to implement projects and programmes.

'All the projects and programmes I manage are donor driven, and donors can change their scope at any time,' Munya says. 'Sometimes donors specify how their resources should be used. This can conflict with organizational, community or cultural norms. It can be frustrating when agreements are not followed, but that's what project management is all about.'



He is not one to be put off by hurdles. Born in 1976, he never met his father, who died when his mother was pregnant. His father was 100 years old when he died and Munya was therefore born into an extremely large, extended family.

He gained seven O levels and two A levels, but didn't go to university as his school was not able to offer a very wide range of subjects. He studied bookkeeping and accounts by distance learning and a certificate in Systemic Counselling with Connect Zimbabwe Open University, before getting a job in Botswana as a project coordinator.

'I then became interested in project management,' he says, 'although I wasn't too sure what it entailed.'

He confesses that he started the Diploma because he wanted a document that proved his capability to manage projects and programmes. 'I had no idea that the course would be so interesting – I thought that project management would only fit into investment projects with monetary benefits.'

At first, he found it difficult to fit an HIV and AIDS project into the management methodologies. 'At one stage I asked Jan, my tutor, if I could use a case study, but she insisted that I use my own project – which I did and it was very rewarding.'

Munya says working remotely was sometimes difficult. 'I had to be dedicated and push myself, but studying became easier with time. Although, ideally I would have liked to be with other students, I had a lot of support from my tutor. We did have a few setbacks – for example, the integrative assessment was done over the phone because our Internet services in Maun couldn't provide facilities for video conferencing.'

Jan says: 'We had a bit of difficulty sending him the work package at the beginning, thanks to Botswana's postal system, but once his assignments started arriving by email, we found they were very well written and structured.'

'Munya clearly researched each assignment very extensively and both the assessors from APMG and The Chartered Management Institute commended the high standard of his work.'

Jan says his final assignment was inspiring for all the assessors. 'We know what a difference the course has made to him and his organization,' she says.

The Mission was so impressed with Munya's development that he was promoted. 'They felt I had proved my competence and promoted me from project manager to a programme director,' Munya says.

He continues: 'I now have the opportunity to share my knowledge with other staff. It is part of my job to align other projects and programmes to MSP and PRINCE2 and I have really enjoyed teaching staff about implementing these methods.'

The impact of his work has spread well beyond the Mission which operates as the secretariat for a Council of 20 NGOs in the Ngamiland district. Munya was appointed by the Council to be the project manager for a Capacity building project.

'I developed the project initiation document, work breakdown structure and a budget for presentation to the national board for funding approval! The project was approved and the board acknowledged the quality of the work and his documents were used to demonstrate best practice at a workshop.'

He sees the Diploma as a stepping-stone to attaining Chartered Manager status and membership of the Chartered Management Institute. It also gives him the opportunity to proceed to an MSc in Project Management.

Adrian Dooley at TPG says, 'The best feedback that any training organization can receive from its students is that we have made a difference. All too often the emphasis in training is on exam passes rather than whether someone can now do a better job.'

Further information about the diploma is available at www.pmpdiploma.com

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