

**Bishops' High School Old Students' Association**

**&**

**UNICEF**

**Adolescent Mentoring Project Report**

**Georgetown  
Guyana**

**March 2006**

# **MENTORING PROGRAMME ACTIVITY REPORT**

## **Background**

The Bishops' High School Old Students' Association (BHSOSA) and the Bishops' High School (BHS) collaborated on the development of a mentoring project for students of the school during the 2002-2003 academic year. They found the project useful to the students, their parents/guardians and the school. They determined that introduction of the programme at the first form level stood to be more beneficial to the students and other stakeholders and proposed introducing a new programme during the academic year 2005-2006.

BHSOSA extended an invitation to the Tutorial High School Old Students' Association (THSOSA) to collaborate on the introduction of the initiative at the Tutorial High School. After an expression of interest and discussion with the Headteacher, this potential collaboration was discussed with alumni of the THSOSA at its International Reunion in London, England in 2005. During the first term of the academic year 2005-2006, discussions were held between the two Associations and the relationship formalized.

The Bishops' High School Old Students' Association sought and received funding from UNICEF to implement the mentoring programme in the two schools beginning in the vacation preceding the academic year 2005-2006 to the end of the first term. It was agreed that consideration would be given to continued the financial support from UNICEF throughout the academic year to enable articulation of the model of mentoring which would be shared with other Old Students' Associations and secondary schools in Guyana.

This report presents a description of the activities undertaken, the achievements attained and the challenges faced. It concluded with an outline of activities to be undertaken during the remainder of the academic year to fully operationalize that the initiative and guide the articulation of the model. Annex 1 to this report contains a report of the financial disbursements, and associated bills are enclosed.

## **Management Structure**

The lead organization on the mentoring project is the BHSOSA. The BHSOSA has appointed a Management Committee to manage the project. The committee comprises three BSHOSA members, the Project Coordinator, the BHS Staff Liaison, three representatives of the Tutorial High School Old Students Association (THSOSA) and the Tutorial High School Staff Liaison. The Committee has overall responsibility for the design and implementation of the project and meets to discuss issues related to the project. The Project Coordinator reports to the Management Committee and is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the project. The Coordinator liaises with the mentors, parents/mentees and the schools.

## **Activities**

## **Preparatory Activities**

In readiness for the commencement of the project, the documentation describing the nature of the programme to mentors and parents/guardians as well as the forms needed for participation by mentors, parents/guardians and mentees in the programme were prepared. This documentation was as follows (copies are enclosed with the report):

### **1. Application Form for Mentors**

The Mentor Application form asks for personal and contact information of the mentor, information about the mentor's availability, past experience as a mentor, if any, and the reasons why the applicant wishes to serve as a mentor. It also allows the mentor to indicate whether he/she prefers female or male mentees and whether there were any other criteria to be considered.

The mentor application form allows the Management Committee facilitates matching with a mentee.

### **2. Mentor, Parent and Mentee Agreement Forms**

A separate agreement form was prepared for parents/guardians, mentors and mentees. The agreement form lists a series of conditions and requests that participants sign as agreeing to those terms. Terms include: participation in all programme activities, requesting support if necessary and supporting one another in various ways.

### **3. Brochure for Parents/Guardians and Parents'/Guardians' Application Form**

The Brochure gives the parents an overview of the mentoring programme and explains how it would be implemented, the role of the parent, and how students would be selected. It also contains an application form which interested parents completed.

### **4. Guidelines for Mentors**

The Booklet entitled "Guidelines for Mentors" was designed to anticipate and answer questions that prospective mentors might have about the mentoring experience in general and the BHS/Tutorial mentoring programme, in particular. It addresses a variety of topics including: What is expected of mentors, mentors' responsibilities, what mentors should avoid, communication between mentors and mentees. It also dealt specifically with practical issues that mentors might need to address such as where to meet with mentees, what activities could be planned, how a mentor should relate with their mentees parents, what the mentor should expect to result from the programme. Its contents were informed by the evaluation of the first initiative.

### **5. Profile of the Mentee**

The Profile of the Mentee form is a confidential document for use by the mentor. Mentors are requested to complete the form as they become more familiar with their mentee. It enables the mentor to keep track of issues which need to be monitored or discussed with the Programme Coordinator, Staff Liaison or parent; changes which occur and situations which need to be brought to the attention of other mentors.

## **Commencement of Activities**

Apart from the preparation of the documents, the commencement of activities under the agreement was delayed. It was anticipated that the notification of parents would have occurred during the orientation process during the vacation period at both schools. However, the BHS decided that this would occur during the first term. In the case of Tutorial High School, the final decision on involvement in the programme and the modalities of the relationship was deferred due to the unavailability of key personnel.

In addition, the process of negotiation between the BHSOSA and UNICEF proved to be lengthy. In fact, sequential requests for additional pieces of information from the BHSOSA and the signing of the agreement hindered progress.

## **Recruitment of Mentors**

The BHSOSA commenced recruitment of mentors during the vacation period. Tutorial, on the other hand, began its recruitment process [when?], once the details of the participation of THSOSA was articulated. Mentors were recruited via email invitations and personal contact. The process of recruitment continues as the demand for mentors currently outstrips the number of available mentors.

Application forms have been completed by 17 BHSOSA and 15 THSOSA alumni. Some BHSOSA potential mentors indicated that they would not be able to commence the relationship until January 2006 because of prior commitments.

## **Parents' Meetings**

The Management Committee attended meetings with parents at BHS and Tutorial to sensitize parents to the programme and to distribute brochures. Representatives of the schools introduced the programme and the Management Committee provided information on what the Mentorship Programme was trying to achieve and how relationship could develop.

The main issues/concerns that emerged during the sessions were as follows.

- In some cases, parents did not understand what mentoring was about.

- Some parents, particularly parents of girls, expressed concern that their child should have a mentor of the same sex.
- Parents were very concerned that their role not be usurped and that their wishes with respect to how the relationship should progress be respected.

## **Orientation Workshops for Mentors**

The BHS workshop for Mentors took place on Saturday, October 8, 2005. Despite an initial invitation and reminder calls the day before the workshop, only 6 of the 17 mentors who applied attended the session. Other BHSOSA mentors participated in individual and small group discussion sessions with the Programme Coordinator and a member of the Management Committee.

The Tutorial workshop took place on Friday, November 18, 2005. It was attended by 15 mentors.

The workshops for both schools were facilitated by members of the Management Committee and the Programme Coordinator.

The first sessions of the workshop provided Mentors with information about the programme and allowed mentors to meet members of the Management Committee, the Programme Coordinator and each other. Mentors who participated in the first initiative shared their mentoring experiences with new mentors, fielded questions and addressed concerns. Other sessions dealt with the mentoring relationship, the issue of confidentiality and a review of the *Guidelines for Mentors Booklet* with participants.

Mentors found the session useful in clarifying what was expected of them. Most felt better equipped to proceed with the relationship. However, one potential mentor indicated that she did not feel comfortable committing to the full mentoring experience. Instead she opted to support others by making her place of employment available to the programme for special activities. She was pleased to have been able to make that decision before being assigned to a mentee.

The main issues/concerns that emerged during the workshop sessions were:

- Expectations that the mentor would be seen as a potential financial contributor to the family. Mentors were assured that there is no expectation that they make financial outlays to the mentee or family. However, they were free to make contributions if they so desired. In the past, mentors have undertaken to buy school books, school clothes or to pay for their mentees' transportation to special meetings.
- Involvement of mentors in solving the personal problems of mentees and other family issues. Mentors were advised that the programme involves Staff Liaisons and a Programme Coordinator to deal with these issues among others. Mentors were also advised to lean on the support systems in the school and the Programme Coordinator if issues arise that are beyond the role of the mentor.

- The mentor-parent relationship. Mentors are not expected to have a relationship with the parents beyond ensuring that parents are apprised and approve of mentor-mentee activities. Again, in many previous mentoring experiences, mentors and parents have developed relationships in their own right.

## **Matching Mentors and Mentees**

Parent application forms were completed by 39 parents from the BHS and 15 from Tutorial.

BHS mentors and mentees were matched using a random system of selection. BHS has held a meeting for mentors to meet their mentees and the parents.

Except for those who had been advised that their mentors would be unable to attend, matched mentees and their parents attended. Some who had not been matched and their parents also attended hoping to be matched at that time. Unfortunately, despite initial invitations and reminders the previous day, only four mentors attended the meeting. The meeting proceeded as planned. Members of the Management Committee, the Staff Liaison and the Programme Coordinator facilitated the session. They updated attendees on project activities to date, reviewed the mentee and parent agreement forms which had been signed, and introduced mentors to both mentees and parents.

The mentors who attended then met with their mentees and parents to plan the way forward. Those whose mentors did not attend were advised that the mentors would contact the parents by phone to arrange a convenient time to meet.

Matching of mentors and mentees Tutorial took the community of residence of the mentee into consideration. As a consequence, as far as possible, mentees who live out of town were matched with mentors living in the same general geographical area, bearing in mind the cost of transportation. A meeting to introduce parents, mentors and mentees was held on January 27, 2006 and was attended by the 15 matches. The THSOSA arranged individual sessions for those parents who could not attend the meeting.

## **Challenges**

Introducing the mentoring programme at the level of the first form at the BHS and as a new initiative at the Tutorial High School presented challenges which were not anticipated when the proposal was submitted to UNICEF. The decision to delay the invitation to parents at the BHS until the school's meeting with parents in September meant that the forecast of effecting relationships in September was not attained. Additionally, the prolonged period of forging an effective collaborative relationship with Tutorial High School led to separate rather than collective activities as intended.

The shifting of the timeline resulted in a postponement of all workshops other than the orientation workshops for mentors. While meetings were held at which the mentoring “team” were struck, it is important to address issue which surface as well as monitor the relationships to ensure that all benefit as well as the components of the model as adequately examined.

The relationship between the BHSOSA and UNICEF with respect to information flow – both oral and written – and expectations of each other was not as seamless as desired. This was affected, in part, by a change in staff and lack of clarity with respect to UNICEF procedures. This had an impact on the disbursement of funds as well as access to a copy of the signed agreement.

### **Towards Articulation of a Model of a Mentoring Programme**

Now that the programme is operational in both schools, joint activities are set to be implemented. These are workshops for mentors, parents and mentees. The workshops will assess the experience of mentoring, discuss issues affecting and arising from transition from primary to secondary school and preparing for adolescence among other issues. Some of the issues related to the transition from primary to secondary school will be informed by essays written by first form students of both schools. All workshops will provide space of the stakeholders to raise issues which will be address and be noted for included in the documentation of the model.

End of Report 03 March, 2006

Annex 1 – Financial Report

**Annex 1 – Financial Report – BHSOSA Adolescent Mentoring Project**

<i>Item</i>	<i>GYD</i>	
1 st installment disbursed to BHSOSA	949,000	
Project Co-ordination	-210,000	
Balance in BHSOSA	<b>739,000</b>	
UNICEF Purchase of Stationary (bill enclosed)	28,659	

The BHSOSA was able to find cost sharing for some of the production of materials and the hosting of the first workshops for mentors.