In the year 2000, aged 16, I received a scholarship from the Spanish United World Colleges Foundation, to study International Baccalaureate at United World College Waterford Kamhlaba, in Swaziland. In Africa I discovered my passion for acting, in a culture where theatre is a valued ritual space where communities come together. Through my involvement in different social services, I got a close view of the country in its strengths and challenges. 14 years later, trained as an actress and psychologist in the UK, my connection to Swaziland and interest in its culture is even stronger. The dramatherapy project I here present, in collaboration with psychologist Silvia Rubaki, offers a creative healing space, to communities in situation of particular vulnerability, such as people living with HIV, women who have suffered abuse and orphaned children. Our initiative emerges in response to a palpable social demand for psychological care, to deal with the emotional consequences of AIDS, in the country with the highest rate of HIV in the world. The loss of loved ones, the fear or the social stigma attached to the virus, are some of the issues we will be dealing with in our dramatherapy workshops. Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP), relaxation and meditation, will be some of the tools introduced to participants alongside the drama-therapeutic work, as techniques contributing to the psychological wellbeing of individuals and communities.
Index

1. Executive summary of the project
2. Dramatherapy: definition an application
3. Objectives
4. Actions
5. Results
6. Human and material resources
7. Links and contacts
8. Calendar
9. Budget
10. Evaluation system
1. Executive summary of the project

BENEFICIARIES
People in one or more of these social groups: People living with HIV, women who have suffered abuse and orphaned children. The minimum number of participants will be 80, split into four groups. Each community will receive a weekly workshop over six weeks. Additional training workshops will be offered to NGOs workers, reaching a minimum of 120 direct beneficiaries.

OBJECTIVES
To contribute to the mental health (decrease of both anxiety and depression levels) of communities in situation of special vulnerability such as people living with HIV, victims of abuse and orphans, providing a space where to deal with grief and fear, while acquiring practical empowerment skills.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES
Weekly workshops with four different communities over an 8-week period, in collaboration with local NGOs. The dramatherapy workshops will include techniques of physical awareness, emotional release through vocal work and singing, as well as relaxation and visualization techniques from a mindfulness perspective, including neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

PERSONNEL INVOLVED
Ximena Vera; actress and director (a Royal Central School o Speech &Drama, UK graduate). She is nearly a Psychology graduate by Open University and is trained in NLP (Instituto de Potencial Humano) and Hypnosis (Erickson Institute). Her connection to Swaziland dates from the year 2000, as a former Waterford Kamhlaba student. Silvia Rubaki is a social psychologist, experienced both in private therapy and group intervention with women, as part of Doctors without Boarders, in African Central Republic and Morocco. All the activities will be held with the assistance of a translator to Siswati, the local language.

REQUIRED RESOURCES
Flights to Johannesburg, accommodation, transport and basic expenses in Swaziland for the two facilitators, as well as interpreter’s fees with a total cost of 6.700€.

EXECUTION PERIOD:
An 6-week programme between August and September 2014.

CONTACT PERSON: Ximena Vera, No.(+34) 652573863, Ximena.garcia.vera@gmail.com
Dramatherapy or psychodrama, is a unique form of psychotherapy in which creativity, play, movement, voice, and storytelling take a central position within the therapeutic relationship.

Acting out biographical events, participants revisit personal conflicts, in a safe space where they can deal with different issues, cognitive and emotionally, in exercises and improvisations. Playing out fears, lived or desired situations, the group supports the transformation of a staged reality, becoming empowered in its ability to explore different perspectives to bring about change. With imagination as a vehicle, the voice and the body release whatever needs to be expressed. Loss, yearnings, uncertainty about the future, find a place on stage, lightening their emotional weight.

Gestalt therapy techniques and social theatre tools such as forum theatre are used in this process, as well as skills developed from meditation and neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), in order to reinforce a positive concept of self.

This methodology is highly appropriate both to the cultural context and the logistic limitations of psychological intervention in the rural areas of Swaziland, and is currently extensively applied and researched in South Africa.
Living with HIV, abuse or growing up as an orphan, presents psychological challenges such as dealing with loss and rebuilding self-confidence as well as a hopeful perspective of one’s own present and future.

To receive a positive HIV diagnosis, implies fear for one’s own life and, in Swaziland, a degree of social stigma as well as the loss of loved ones. All this trying experiences, can easily trigger mental problems. Depression is furthermore, a risk factor not to adhere or abandon treatment.

At the same time, some antiretroviral treatments can, as side effects, trigger psychological disorders such as psychosis and suicidal ideation.

From a holistic understanding of health, this project aims to offer communities a space where to address psychological issues related to AIDS, abuse and orphanhood in collaboration with local NGOs. The focus will therefore be on:

- Dealing with grief.
- Physical and vocal empowerment.
- Acquisition of psychological tools.
4. Actions: 3 Workshops

❖ **Workshop 1. Living with VIH**

Living with HIV constitutes an existential challenge, altering the perception of present and future, as well as one’s agency to alter their reality. Relaxation techniques, visualization and emotional anchors, often applied with cancer patients, are here used alongside dramatherapy, to help people maintain a hopeful attitude throughout the different stages of the virus, with a direct impact on their health and general wellbeing.

❖ **Workshop 2. Female empowerment**

This workshop will be designed in collaboration with Swagaa (Swazi Action Group Against Abuse).

It aims to contribute to women’s confidence and self-esteem, through a creative process including singing, dance and theatre, inviting them to explore and rediscover their voices.
This workshop will be developed in collaboration with Young Heroes, to provide psychological support to orphaned children. Children dramaplay is a safe and welcoming space where, through their imagination, children can freely and spontaneously express whatever is on their minds and hearts. In their play, they tend to symbolically represent their inner world, intuitively going back to issues that need to be addressed. This offers a unique opportunity to revisit conflicts with them, providing adequate support; helping them make sense of events, in order to integrate their experience in psychologically healthy ways, for an emotionally secure growth.

All the activities encompassed within this project, abide by the British Psychology Society Code of Ethics and Conduct*, including protection of participants data and anonymity, and the responsibility to ensure further psychological support to participants if necessary.

5. Results

The measurable results aimed with the dramatherapy workshops are:

- A decrease in anxiety and depression levels in participants.

- An improvement in the resolution of conflicts and traumas through dramatherapy.

- To equip participants with relaxation and visualization techniques applied to health issues.

- To contribute to the empowerment of communities and individuals by enhancing both individual and group confidence and trust.
6. Human Resources

Ximena Vera


While completing her studies and musical training (Cello Grade), she gets involved in community service visiting the orphanage Ward 8 (Mbabane Hospital), and organizing activities with children for SWAGAA. She volunteers for Cáritas Mozambique, during the floods of the year 2000. During this time, Swaziland becomes a second home where she develops strong bonds. In 2000 she meets Barbara Braun, founder of Swaziland Homeopathy Project, through whom she accesses a context of health issues determined by HIV, perceiving its physical, psychological and emotional impact among Swazi society.

She becomes a Royal Central School of Speech & Drama (UK) graduate in 2007 after which she begins her career as an actress, director and acting coach. Projects include productions in Edinburgh Fringe Festival and Madrid Fringe Festival. She is currently developing Nobilmente, a theatrical piece based on cellist Jacqueline du Pre’s struggle with multiple sclerosis. She has recently joined the cast of Cuéntame, Spain’s longest and most popular ongoing TV series. Here is a link to a recent job for Channel 4: http://vimeo.com/88974421

Alongside her artistic career, she is finishing her BSc (Honours) Psychology through the Open University (UK), having completed an NLP Practitioner Course at Instituto de Potencial Humano, and an Specialist in Ericksonian Psychotherapy and Hypnosis Course, in the Erickson Institute (both in Madrid). She has explored different meditation techniques, regularly attending Vipassana meditation retreats.
Born in Madrid to a Spanish mother and a Rwandan father, Silvia graduated in Social Psychology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She specialized in group theories and techniques through an Imago Clinic’s postgraduate program, before completing her Masters in clinical and psychoanalytical psychotherapy for children and young people at ELIPSIS, between 2004 and 2008.

She started as an individual and group therapist in a day-hospital in Madrid, while gaining experience in private practice, as well as collaborating with different organizations as a volunteer. She designed and executed the Bitácora Programme for adolescents, taking an intercultural and gender-based approach. She got involved in the Programme for Psychosocial Intervention with Immigrant Women, focused on migratory grief and identity, with Espiral Association in Zaragoza, Spain.

Her clinical and social background merged in the humanitarian action field, as a psychologist for Doctors without Boarders. With this NGO, she coordinated, supervised and assessed two mental health intervention projects. The first one was developed in Central African Republic, working with victims of the armed conflict over a year. The second one took place in Morocco, providing psychological care, both individually and in groups, to immigrant women in transit, victims of human trafficking and prostitution.
Founded in 1962, challenging the segregated education system imposed under the apartheid, **UWC Waterford Kamhlaba** became the first multiracial school in the south of Africa. In 1982 it joined the United World Colleges movement, receiving ever since, students from all around the world on scholarships awarded by their own national committees. Academic excellence coexist with a strong commitment to community service. Among her alumni are Barbara Braun founder of S.H.P, Amy Burnett, founder of Young Heroes and Ximena García, prime mover behind the project here presented. [http://www.waterford.sz/](http://www.waterford.sz/)

**Swaziland Homeopathy Project** operates since 2008 in Mbabane, reaching the rural areas of Swaziland through weekly mobile clinics. It provides homeopathic treatments for a variety of health issues including the strong side effects of antirretroviral drugs. As well as researching traditional medicine plants, SHP runs a homeopathic training programme validated by British distance learning colleges, to ensure the sustainability of the project. [http://www.kbraunweb.com/homeopathyproject/](http://www.kbraunweb.com/homeopathyproject/)

**SWAGAA** (Swazi Action Group Against Abuse) has been fighting gender based violence and human trafficking for the last 20 years. Actions include prevention programs and psychological care for people who have suffered abuse. It is one of the NGOs linked to Waterford though the community-service program. [http://www.swagaa.org.sz/](http://www.swagaa.org.sz/)

**YOUNG HEROES** is an NGO founder by a former Waterford student ([http://www.uwc.org/our_impact/alumni_initiatives/young_heroes.aspx](http://www.uwc.org/our_impact/alumni_initiatives/young_heroes.aspx)). They support families of orphaned children through an international sponsoring program, providing resources for nutrition and education, so that families of children can remain together. [http://www.youngheroes.org.sz/index_home.php](http://www.youngheroes.org.sz/index_home.php)
### 7. Calendar

#### August

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<td><strong>TRANSPORT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Return flights Madrid-Johannesburg + 2 Return coach seats form Tambo International Airport to Mbabane</td>
<td>(Subject to possible donation by airlines)</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<td>Vehicle rental+ fuel for 6 weeks</td>
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<td>1,500</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ACCOMODATION</strong></td>
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<td>House rental in Mbabane for 2 months for 2 people</td>
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<td>600</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EXPENSES</strong></td>
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<td>150 allowance x 6 week x 2 people</td>
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<td>1,800</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Our evaluation system has the following objectives:

1. To compile demographic data of participants including age, sex, HIV status and family structure.

2. To assess the impact of the workshops in both quantitative and qualitative ways:
   - **Quantitative data**: Before the first and after the last workshop, participants will be asked to complete an CORE-OM test (*Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation-Outcome Measure*), commonly used in Psychotherapeutic practice in the UK. It comprehends 34 questions covering 4 different aspects: well-being, symptoms, functioning and risk.
   
   - **Qualitative data**: At the end of each session, there will be a group circle to share impressions, answers questions and address concerns. Themes emerging in the sharing sessions will be included in the final report.

3. To generate an evaluation report including the analysis of the data and development of the project, in order to improve its efficiency and reach in future workshops.