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**Interviewer:** Okay, it's the 28<sup>th</sup> August 2010, Portia thanks very much for making yourself available to do this. Just for the record can you state your full name?

**Mosia:** Okay, my name is Portia Mosia, I'm from Bophelong.

**Interviewer:** Bophelong? Okay and Portia just so we can get a little bit of information about yourself, when and where were you born?

**Mosia:** I was born in 1991 in Sharpeville.

**Interviewer:** Sharpeville, and have you lived in Sharpeville all your life? Where have you moved since you were born?

**Mosia:** Since I was born I've lived in Sharpeville and I have moved from Sharpeville to Bophelong in 2001.

**Interviewer:** And since then you've been in Bophelong?

**Mosia:** Yes

**Interviewer:** Tell us a little bit about your family bother, sisters, mother and father?

**Mosia:** I'm the first born in my family and I have my young sister and ... my mother is a single parent. Since I was born we are also living the three of us in an RDP house in Bophelong.

**Interviewer:** And what does your mother do?

**Mosia:** My mum she's a caregiver, she is working in the crèche in Bophelong.

**Interviewer:** What about your schooling? What kind of education have you had?

**Mosia:** I actually matriculated last year. I was doing my matric last year and I passed my matric with exemption. I was supposed to go to school this year, due to finances I failed to go to school but I hope next year I will be able to go to school.

**Interviewer:** Congratulations for getting the exemption and have you done any formal work or jobs or volunteer work or anything like that?

**Mosia:** No like I've never done any formal work. I was volunteering both at APF and Khanya College but last year December I was working with Khanya kind of like formal and informal work but I was getting a stipend.

**Interviewer:** Alright, just try to describe to me how you became politicised. When did you start paying attention to things and get involved?

**Mosia:** Actually when I started being involved in a social movement I was around 11 years, I was not having an idea about the politics then I became interested when I was 15 years ... understanding the issues, all the politics, that's when I became interested in politics.

**Interviewer:** Did you belong to any student organisations or groups at that time?

**Mosia:** Yes in Bophelong we have a Concerned Learners Committee which is a student organisation also including youths, so I am a member of it.

**Interviewer:** And any membership in political organisations outside the APF?

**Mosia:** No I don't have.

**Interviewer:** And just from your experiences, why is it that you became involved or just tell me the story about how ... is it BCC, correct which is community crisis committee? What is the exact name of the organisation?

**Mosia:** Actually in Bophelong when I was start to involved in BOCOSFO which is our umbrella in Bophelong ...

**Interviewer:** Just say what BOCOSFO stands for?

**Mosia:** It's Bophelong Community Service Forum. So then in short we call it BOCOSFO. Since I started in BOCOSFO there were a lot of committees which actually they agitate youth so that they can get involved so I became a member of BOSOCFO though cultural programmes. That's how they mobilised to get youth in their struggle.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what kind of cultural programmes?

**Mosia:** We normally do dramas but out of our dramas we educate, not only entertaining. Because the first when I was starting to join BOCOSFO they educate youth on the lifestyle in Bophelong, the politics around ourselves, what is happening around countries that sort of thing because they know that youth they like entertainment rather than to read or to go to the workshops to listen, that's the tool that they use to mobilise.

**Interviewer:** And when was BOCOSFO formed?

**Mosia:** It was formed in 2000.

**Interviewer:** Were you a member right from the beginning?

**Mosia:** No I started joining BOCOSFO in 2003.

**Interviewer:** In 2003, okay. Just tell us a little bit about BOCOSFO, how is it structured, how does it work?

**Mosia:** BOCOSFO, is a community organisation, it was formed with the experiences that we have around our community. Bophelong is like there is an old location then there is the RDP side so the services were very poor because in RDP side we have got 10 000 houses without clinic, without playstation, without library so we have to use the facilities at the old locations so also there was no community development. When it was raining you can't walk at the street you have to stay at home. So we fight for better service delivery then we include also people from the old location to come and assist us, that how BOCOSFO it was formed.

**Interviewer:** So you are saying there are 10 000 houses within the informal section of BOCOSFO?

**Mosia:** No, besides shacks there are old houses that was built because of the industrial and then the other Bophelong, they call it Muhvango, it's an RDP side and also we've got an informal settlement which is Joko Tea.

**Interviewer:** So there are three - pretty much three different section and what is the history of Bophelong in terms of people moving there? You said initially workers working in the factories but since that time have people just moved in from other areas or give me a sense of who is in the community, what kind of community is it?

**Mosia:** It's actually the old Bophelong that was built for the industrial site when the RDP houses were built people from old location register for houses, RDP houses because they were crowded. In one house you'll find that there is 10-15 people in one house, they also registered for the RDP houses also people from Sharpeville, Sebokeng, other areas they are living in RDP houses so there are different people from different communities.

**Interviewer:** And how would you describe the age make up of the community in terms of from young to old?

**Mosia:** Actually like in the RDP side there is people, there is lot of youth, then adult who are mostly single parents. Then there are those who are having husbands but the majority of the people are the youth and the people who are single parents.

**Interviewer:** And the jobs, the employment situation in Bophelong?

**Mosia:** Unemployment is high in Bophelong. There are no jobs for youth including old people there is no jobs for them. But we are surrounded by a lot of industries but they are not doing anything for youth in Bophelong who are unemployed so there is a lot of consequences of unemployment, crime is high in Bophelong.

**Interviewer:** And what are the kinds of ... you said consequences ... what are the challenges of unemployment on the youth, problems that are there in the community?

**Mosia:** Like the challenges that are we are experiencing now is the young guys who are using drugs that they call nyaope its an ARV drug, they smoke it. And also teenage pregnancy is high in Bophelong and HIV and AIDS and also sex workers mostly youth in my area are selling their bodies so that they can survive at the end of the day.

**Interviewer:** When you joined BOCOSFO in 2003 was BOCOSFO already a part of the APF?

**Mosia:** Yes it was already part of the APF when I joined BOCOSFO.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Tell us a little something about your initial introduction to the APF and what you found out about it at that point?

**Mosia:** Actually like when I joined BOCOSFO I was still at school even when I joined APF I was still at school. And then I took APF as an information centre for me because they were discussing things like I've never heard or I've never seen. Then another thing is that I meet different people from different areas, networking with them seeing how do they live in their

area and then like networking about the different situations in other areas. So like APF was very interesting on me by that time.

**Interviewer:** And what kinds of ... just describe some of the things that you learned and some of the things that you got involved in, in the APF?

**Mosia:** Basically like when I joined APF, APF itself it was encouraging BOCOSFO in terms of cultural programmes. Like each and every event APF had they will call us to perform based on the thing of workshop or that event so I became more interesting because it shows that the APF were also encouraging and supporting to us.

**Interviewer:** Is BOCOSFO a membership based organisation or is it volunteer where people can just ... can anybody join?

**Mosia:** Anybody can join, we don't have a membership.

**Interviewer:** And how is it structured? How is BOCOSFO structured? Does it have formal structures or it's very loose?

**Mosia:** It's a community like, we've got like few structures, we had a committee which was Concerned Learners Committee, which was formed out of BOCOSFO - it was dealing with issues of students and schools. Also we have a health committee cause there were our members who were disabled so we decided to form a health committee and then we call it multipurpose disabled centre. We also got ABET, Adult training, we also got that. That's how BOCOSFO was formed.

**Interviewer:** ... the time you joined and became active, what were the main struggles? You mentioned some of the issues but what were the main struggles and campaigns that BOCOSFO took up?

**Mosia:** Actually when I joined BOCOSFO the main issue that was burning at that time it was the issue of students cause in Bophelong there was a policy whereby when paying you go and deposit the school fees and then you go to school with the receipt so that they will be able to give you the stationery. So we formed BLC which is concerned learners committee, we fight for that cause. You find that we are from different families we can't afford to pay school fees all of us that one the burning issue in Bophelong, the majority of the community support us. In terms of that including old people cause they were hearing our point, what we are trying to say and then that was the most burning issue in Bophelong and in 2005 we got a, we call it a victory for us because in 2005 ... we got stationery free of charge without paying school fees.

**Interviewer:** What kind of tactics or activities did you undertake as part of these struggles and campaigns?

**Mosia:** Actually we were doing poetry sessions we were doing mass meetings sometimes we were doing like festivals but our festival will be based on what we want to reach in terms of like school fees. We would be doing like a drama trying to highlight both issues like people don't have anything like they haven't got like something to eat at the end of the day the tactics that we used and they were useful to us .

**Interviewer:** How was the response of the government and the authorities to that particular struggle?

**Mosia:** Actually there was confusion amongst the authorities because there were others who were on our side and others who did not want to understand what we were saying but knowing that it's true what we are fighting for. So like we got support from the Department of Education they were with us on that side, also we got support from Educational Rights Project ... it was based at Wits. So those were the initiatives who were involved working with us based on that campaign.

**Interviewer:** And then once you say you succeeded in getting what you were looking for ... what other things happened in the community because you were mentioning basic services problems and other things?

**Mosia:** Other thing we were fighting for were schools and RDP houses because there were no schools. The school were only in old location and there was overcrowding, you'll find that in one class there is +/- 70 children in one class so we pushed the government to build a school in RDP houses and currently now we are having three schools in our side which is two secondary and one primary.

**Interviewer:** What about the struggles around electricity, water and sanitation and roads, those kinds of things?

**Mosia:** We also like In terms of electricity and water we don't have any problems at the moment. But in terms of like roads we also fight the government so environmental justice help us to fight Arcelor Mittal which was known as ISCOR to put something in the community to develop the community because they pollute the area but at the moment Arcelor Mittal is contributing something because they do tar road in our areas.

**Interviewer:** What kind of pollution, what kind of conditions does the community suffer from?

**Mosia:** Actually like most people in my area got T.B. and got bronchitis because like Arcelor Mittal is polluting like we are close to it maybe it's +/-15 minutes to Arcelor Mittal from where I'm staying so most of the people are suffering with T.B., bronchitis and then others have got skin problem.

**Interviewer:** Alright. Now just shifting towards the APF, what positions have you held in the APF?

**Mosia:** In APF since like 2008 I was APF media coordinator that's the position that I have.

**Interviewer:** And what other specific activities ... has it been mostly media or other things and also how have BOCOSFO members been involved in the APF?

**Mosia:** Ya I think most of BOCOSFO members were involved and two of our members were having positions in the APF as elected office bearers which was Cde Noxolo and Cde Mai were both Secretary other one Deputy Secretary.



**Interviewer:** What would you say if you were to identify the main things that the APF brought to the organisation, to BOCOSFO? Or in other words what advantages did BOCOSFO receive as being part of the APF?

**Mosia:** Actually what we have received it's like the information about like the economy, about like the policies of the government. But we did not know before because like BOCOSFO most of its youth we were still at school by that time even now some of us still at school. So like APF we were learning from APF so that was the advantage that we have from APF. Also like in terms of resources when we have event at our community, APF will be able to provide some funds for us to assist us so that our event can be successful.

**Interviewer:** And to what extent did belonging to the APF and being part of a larger organisation allow you to liaise, work with other communities and other people in similar situations?

**Mosia:** I think like the workshops is whereby we meet with other communities where we can talk. I think that was the platform we have from the APF even when we've got a march as the APF we will be able to meet the communities, different people.

**Interviewer:** You've painted a picture so far of a fairly successful campaign so far. Has there been anything on the other side ... what have been the problems, the challenges that you faced as BOCOSFO with regards both not just the organisation but the community, and the state how are they responding to you?

**Mosia:** I think like the challenge that we have, the serious challenge that we have regarding our community is that sometimes you find that we have a mass meeting in the community and the community will understand our issues but when the ANC councillors come again they will understand the other issues of ANC councillor. So sometimes you find the confusion within the community not knowing where to go, whether to go to our side or the councillor's side obviously because the councillors will promise them many things blah, blah, blah. All those things so that was the confusion that we have in the community.

**Interviewer:** The APF is now ten years old and BOCOSFO has been a member for seven years ...you've been part of that for a long time now. What would you identify as the main strengths and weaknesses of the APF itself because the APF has changed over the years as well?

**Mosia:** Well I can say for the past few years the APF was strong, the APF was able to challenge the government even when we were at our area when you're wearing APF t-shirt, they will support you. And then APF was supportive to the communities and APF was having a lot of affiliates. Now after APF have got like ten years, things have become very difficult, APF they don't have the members that they normally have like the previous years and in terms of the resources also APF is lacking in terms of the resources because of the misuse of funds by the comrades, even the thefts that we are experiencing as the organisation. I think now APF is totally different from the 2005/2006, it's totally different so I think it's a serious weakness that we are having as the APF because we didn't manage to get hold of our comrades that we lost as APF.

**Interviewer:** And how would you ... the APF has always been made up of communities that are predominantly unemployed and poor communities as opposed to workers and people that have formal jobs ... do you coming from a community like that and the kind of situations that people find themselves in, quite desperate at times, do you think that has an impact on the kind of organisation like the APF?

**Mosia:** Yes I do think like it has an impact because most of the comrades are unemployed and that they need money. But like before the ex-office bearers they managed to hold comrades accountable even though comrades chow other money but they doing job, they were doing ground work. But now there is nothing, people are just misusing organisation money without doing any job so there is a difference there. I understand the comrades are unemployed but they have to do job,

**Interviewer:** We just took a little bit of a break ... you were talking about some of the problems present at the APF?

**Mosia:** At present now there is no ... since like March last year we have never had like a big event as the APF. Even now in my area there is no like APF because APF was bordering us we are free at last, they think that APF is dead but APF is still there people are still there, but there is no communities there is no affiliates. That's the problem that we have in APF. Also in APF we have a lot of ghost affiliates - we know that these affiliates have never attended maybe several meetings but we see a pro-forma saying this affiliate needs money to do 'this' do 'that'- a proforma it's a form that we use when we apply for a fund from the APF so we used to call it a proforma. So there are a lot of difficulties in APF at the moment.

**Interviewer:** And how much do you think that the changes in the last two or three years in the ANC and the government, the Zuma phenomenon has affected both the APF but also the communities themselves in terms of how they see their struggles and their politics?

**Mosia:** I think for like in the past ... even the ANC itself they know that the APF is challenging - if they take a decision they have to think carefully because APF will be there. But now it seems like there is nothing that we are doing it seems like we are being affected by the ANC because they have managed to get rid of us because in the past three years we had a problem with NIA investigating some of our comrades. So now APF like on a serious note is not doing anything and according to my personal view APF now is the same as the ANC because at the APF people are fighting for money, yes people are fighting for money, people are fighting for positions ... we are doing the opposite way that we don't want but we are doing that thing at the moment.

**Interviewer:** And why Portia - as a youth and a young person, you've been around now - why do you think that has happened? If you were to try to explain that to somebody and say these are the reasons ...?

**Mosia:** You know in APF there are those people who are like good in politics you understand and like myself I'm not good in politics. So they are fighting their personal issues by other people. So I think that's another thing that makes the organisation to split because they put other people into their own personal issues so that's another thing that makes like people to give up on APF.



**Interviewer:** What role now ... I mean the APF as you've just described has weakened a great deal in the last while, it's still there and you're saying the organisation BOCOSFO is still there ... but now where do you think an organisation like BOCOSFO in the community, where do you think it's going now?

**Mosia:** I think like in BOCOSFO like now we are in the process to register our organisation as an NPO cause like we have seen that we are going nowhere with APF cause like APF has got a lot of things to deal with. So after we got our NPO number we are going to raise funds so that we can be able to continue with our struggle.

**Interviewer:** And then when you say struggle does that involve ... because there is so much unemployment because there is so much poverty ... being able to at least make some kind of living or do some productive activities? Is that part of your plan?

**Mosia:** Yes it's also part of our plans because we want to be self sustainable because at the moment we are having this part of us, what do we need like jeans, sewing jeans and also we have realised that when we are having our festival maybe we shouldn't do it for free maybe say like R5 so that we get something at the end of the day, not relying only at the funds.

**Interviewer:** ... so the plan is to continue with present struggles but to seek other sources in other areas for doing that? And the same question for what you see as the future for APF? And please feel free and honest to talk as much as from your experience what you feel.

**Mosia:** Like currently in the APF like since this year, I don't see any future for APF now cause like there are no people that we used to know, the people who used to know how to handle the struggle. Because in APF the problem that we have is that if you don't know something you don't want to admit you lost and then close the opportunity for other people who can run the organisation. So that then there is no future in APF in a serious note, there is no future.

**Interviewer:** Unless things possibly change?

**Mosia:** Unless things possibly change or we bring other people back in the organisation.

**Interviewer:** Okay. As you look into the future what do you see as the main challenges for organisations like BOCOSFO and other community organisations which have been around now for long time? They have struggled, managed to win some victories around particular campaigns with an ANC that is a little bit more responsive than it used to be from the early days so what would you see as the main challenges moving forward?

**Mosia:** I think the main challenges that we have as like BOCOSFO is that the main members that we have who form BOCOSFO they are no longer there and then others are now working, working for the government that we are fighting. So sometimes it's little bit difficult for us to challenge them cause like we got a youth advisory centre in Bophelong and they are not pressing the issues of youth and if you go there some of our comrades who were members of BOCOSFO are working at the youth advisory centre so it seems like they are playing with us because if you are much active in our organisation they will come to you and they will offer you a job or they will promise to offer you something so that you can be out of the organisation. So that's the challenge that we are having and then we have a

weakness as comrades because we are unemployed. If they came to you, you can't say no I don't want that offer - sometimes you find that you need money to go to school and you accept the offer. So it's a serious challenge that we are having.

**Interviewer:** Those are most of the questions that I had to ask you. Is there anything else? Please feel free to tell me anything you think is important either about - you know this is about a history, I'm trying to get a sense of the history of the APF and the community - something that you feel we haven't talked about?

**Mosia:** I think you know like from the APF side what has changed I think I can count in terms of funding because the past years if our funder will say okay we are funding you for this thing normally we will do that, we know that we will do that. But like these days the funder will give us money for a specific programme but when it reach us it will shift, totally to do other things that were not part of the plans. So in APF there is a lot of misunderstanding people who want to be above the organisation and those people who are above the organisation - they don't work, they don't do the ground work but they are closing the opportunity for people to do the ground work. Like for instance now we want to launch, actually we don't want to launch, we want to revive the 'Right to Work Campaign' but the office bearers of the APF they don't want us to revive that campaign so we fail to understand what is happening inside the organisation cause right to work it's part of our aim as APF. What do we want to achieve as APF and more so most of the people inside the APF are not working so we feel that it is important to have that campaign as APF. So the APF now is totally different, things are not going the right way they are going the other way round so I don't think the next coming two years APF will be still around or what, I don't think so.

**Interviewer:** Alright.

