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## MY EXPERIENCE AT THE MOPANÉ LEADERS' EXPERIENCE RETREAT

Not so long ago a very close friend that I respect invited me to the Mopané Leaders' Experience Retreat. I was hesitant, I thought to myself who just invites you for a retreat. That is what came to mind. When I read through the profile, I honestly needed it. But I did not know how it was going to work out. I told my friend I was keeping my fingers crossed because, I didn't know who I was going to leave my children with, I didn't have a contingency plan. In my heart of hearts, I prayed that I get an opportunity to go. And God listened to my prayer. I wanted rest. A time to refresh and start again, especially the thought of that I was going to be home schooling [my children] thereafter, for some time.

My bags packed, I was set and all ready. However, even though I was ready, I did not know who to ask about what to expect. I simply decided to open my mind to a nice time. I opened my mind to new friends, new things and to learning. The day goes by, and it was almost time to set out. Most people knew someone, but I only knew the person who had invited me, and she was already at the venue.

The trip was on a boat, to an island with complete strangers who were very welcoming. Smiley faces on the cruise, a little chit chat here and there, my mind and heart were still open. An hour later, we were at our destination. My oh my!!! The place was exceptional, beautiful, and breath taking.

We were welcomed by people who took our temperature. The welcoming team ensured that all Ministry of Health, Standard Operating Procedures [SOPs] were put in place. A glass of Juice was served to all of us. We were welcomed as very special guests. This made me feel very welcomed and thought about.

See, I had been doing life with a busy, up and about character. I had not stopped to see 'ME'. I had not in a while, just stopped to appreciate and tap myself on the back. But when we got the retreat venue, I was overwhelmed by the feel and new atmosphere.

First forward I was given a key to my room, as the receptionists took my luggage to my room, I remembered that I did not know anyone in the place. I should get to know my neighbours! This I did. They were awesome people. People that made my weekend. I learned so much from them. And am glad I reached out to them.

From the first session, I appreciated that I was and is still under 'construction'. I got to know that whatever good thing we build or end up building, ought to be motivating!

I was inspired to learn how to look at myself with much attention. The love I was given by the Mopané team, reminded me to tell myself that "Patricia you are very important, and It is high time you regard you're self as very important".

At the retreat, my eyes were opened to the things that I had closed out, thinking that maybe I didn't deserve them, yet I was and is deserving of good things. I realized that there is only one me and I am unique, with so much that I can influence the world. I also learnt that if I am more grounded, then I flourish and the people I lead get to be celebrated.

I encountered the realisation that I would always trust and respect myself, listen to my needs and desires, to stop, pause, reflect, and give myself time. I learnt that I have to speak the right words, because words are apart of the way we construct our lives.

The Mopané retreat was worth going for. I did not only meet greatness, but I sat face to face with 'ME'. It made me appreciate 'ME'. I learnt that I need to take good care of myself. I am much of what I take in, and I mind what I take in.

Thank you CivSource Africa for this opportunity. I am so sure one day the Mopané Experience team will be proud of the things that are being birthed, the ideas, and the transformations.

You have given hope to many. You have encouraged and started a spark.

Thank you for being a ray of Hope.