

WISDŌM FROM EVERYDAY DEVELOPMENT:

A COLLECTION OF VIGNETTES FROM SOUTH AFRICA

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A SMALL REFLECTION ON A BIG TASK

BY NOBHONGO GXOLO

Initially the task seemed daunting; doing extensive research as well as speaking to partner organisations, who have a lot on their plates, to gain their insights about the work they do and their exciting initiatives.

Not all the interviews could be conducted face-to-face as partners work in different parts of the country. Some were done over email, others over the phone or Skype. Generally face-to-face conversation yields the best results so the approach had to be amended to try and counter the eventuality of not having the opportunity to ask follow-up questions, if the responses were submitted over email, for instance.

Using four young writers to draw out the stories told by different voices provided diverse perspectives. It was also interesting for the writers to learn about partner organisations that lend a hand to struggling and vulnerable communities.

The editing phase has been thorough. More voices were added to the process to ensure the work is as comprehensive as possible. Working with young writers has been a good challenge. It meant negotiating a way of communicating to try and encourage them and extract their best work for these submissions. We supported the writers especially at critical points during the process and talked them through some of the basics of writing and research. We also got their input and reflections on the process. These discussions, as well as the one-on-one mentoring, were very valuable as it offered new insights and fresh perspectives.

We hope you enjoy these diverse vignettes or ‘snapshots’, and that they are thought-provoking and inspirational for the work that you do.

NOBHONGO GXOLO

I’m a freelance writer based in Cape Town. I’ve been writing for seven years and produced content for a Vodacom mobi-site, under Praekelt Foundation, as well as *mahal.co.za* and *dailyplanet.co.za*. I’ve also conducted video interviews with headliners at the Cape Town International Jazz Festival for *Rolling Stone SA*. My work has been published in *ELLE*, *Rolling Stone SA*, *Mail & Guardian*, *Marie Claire*, *dailyplanet.co.za*, *Rise* and *Edgars Club Magazine*. I’ve been living in Cape Town, a city with a throng of interesting characters. It offers good fodder for a writer to tap into – the different stories of the city and its people.

LINDA MASANGO

I recently completed my Social Science degree majoring in Political Science and History. Growing up, I always wanted to be a writer but I never put any effort into it. Writing for Oxfam has reignited that passion so I am considering turning writing into a career. I have since applied to Rhodes University for an Honours degree in investigative journalism.

MATTHEW MOLVER

I am 22 years old and graduated from the University of KwaZulu-Natal with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Management and Geography in 2013. I am passionate about the environment and development studies, and want to travel the globe doing volunteer work for conservation organisations. I am outgoing and sociable, so this project was very enjoyable for me because I was exposed to many different people who are involved in various things.

NIKITA SMITH

I recently completed a post graduate qualification in journalism at the Durban University of Technology and was fortunate enough to be a part of the university newspaper and part of the editorial team that was responsible for the inaugural hard copy of the student magazine, The Edge. Working with news agencies like Mr Newswire have earned me bylines in *The New Age* and News24.

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INTRODUCTION

Oxfam Australia (OAU) through the No Longer Vulnerable program works with over 40 local partner organisations in South Africa.

In our general program reporting we have noted the 'losing of knowledge' because we do not capture the small, regular and often significant changes that occur during the delivery of a partner program. In order to address this issue, the OAU team has developed a 'short format impactful case study' that we have called a 'vignette'. As the name suggests, these are snapshots of small, but significant occurrences in a program, that when viewed cumulatively provide a much richer insight into the success and unintended consequences of programs. These are not intended to be positive stories only as it is believed that a collection of 'failures' is as important to the learning and knowledge-creation process as are successes.

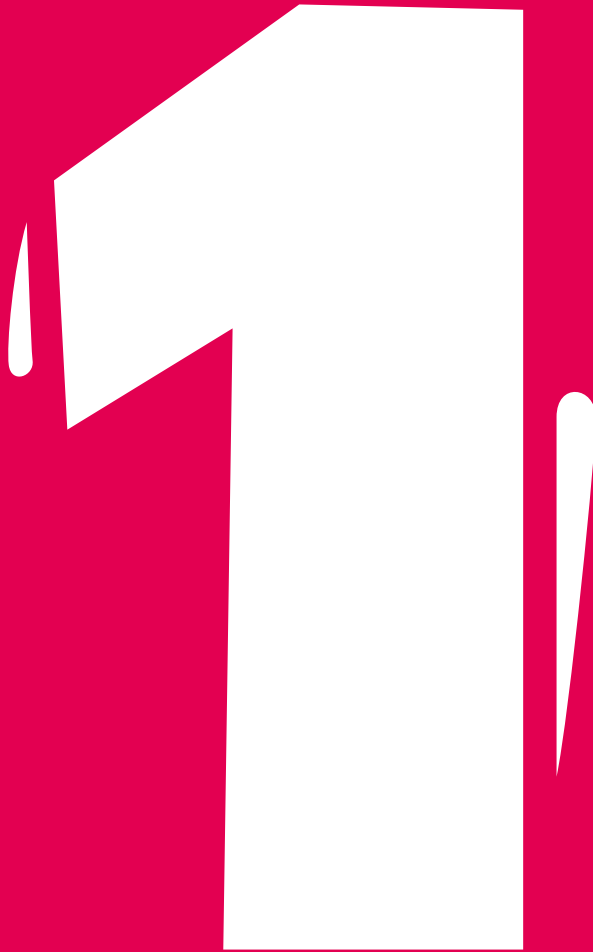
It was decided that this project would be done with a small team of young writers of mixed experience to bring in different voices while having a strong up-skilling dimension. The process included consultation with the OAU Programs team, and interviews with partners.

The key areas of focus of these stories, which were identified from the extensive No Longer Vulnerable Program Midterm Review, are:

- Food Security and Livelihoods,
- Active Citizenship,
- Gender and Vulnerability,
- Embracing Community Complexity, and
- Partnerships.

These are all crucial areas in terms of the way OAU works with partners in South Africa. It also goes without saying that these areas are closely interwoven and, although we have separated the vignettes using these as themes, many fit easily into more than one.

The overall aim of this work is to create a collection of high quality compelling stories that complement other sources of data, and can be used for learning and profiling.



FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS

Food security and livelihoods has been an important part of Oxfam Australia's work with partners in South Africa for many years.

During the most recent three-year No Longer Vulnerable Program cycle (2012-2015), it was recognised that there was a need to support more explicit consciousness-raising in connection with livelihood work to bring people together to explore questions such as 'why is our situation like this?' and 'what is our capacity to create change?'. This is aimed at creating more holistic strategies for addressing vulnerability. The five vignettes included here start to answer some of these questions and hopefully encourage stakeholders to do the same.

AGRO ECOLOGY:

SOUTH AFRICA'S SAVING GRACE

MATTHEW MOLVER



WATER

COMPOST




South Africa is rich in biodiversity and natural resources. Food security, however, remains a significant problem in many areas of the country. Agro-ecology has been promoted amongst small-holder farmers as a method of farming that builds on the rich body of knowledge and practices that these farmers have passed down for generations.

Some of these methods are composting, mulching, fertility beds and the use of grey water¹. Synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides, herbicides and genetically modified seeds are not used as they are harmful to both plants and humans. These practices ensure that the crops grown are healthy and organic, and that the land stays arable, yielding good harvests year after year.


Biowatch South Africa is a non-profit organisation that works with small-holder farmers, civil society organisations and government to ensure that people have control over their food, agricultural processes and resources. They encourage the practice of agro-ecology, household seed banks and seed exchanges amongst farmers. This enables community members to live independently off their own produce. It also prevents a reliance on the industrialised farming systems that are currently using land and resources in an unsustainable way, compromising current and future generations' food security.

“Biowatch South Africa encourages the practice of agro-ecology, household seed banks and seed exchanges amongst farmers. This enables community members to live independently off their own produce.”

¹ Grey water is household waste water that is cleaned using wood, coal, sand, ash and stones.




Using agro-ecology, small-holder farmers are mobilising and sharing their knowledge and seeds with each other, and taking a stand against the unsustainable use of land. Talking about promoting agro-ecology in farming communities, Rose Williams, Biowatch Director in Durban, says: "Being in control of their land and resources is inspiring farmers; not only are they able to be self-sustainable, but they are also able to sell their surplus produce in the market. Biowatch-supported farmers are building on the knowledge of key members in their communities and support for agro-ecology is spreading."



The surplus produce sold in the market is important in improving the quality of life of the community members involved in its production. Biowatch encourages farmers to maintain a community garden with vegetables that are meant for the marketplace as well as a household gardens. In 2014, Zimele, a rural women's empowerment organisation near Mtubatuba, and one of the five farming groups with which Biowatch works, sold over R20 000 worth of vegetables to the local Pick n Pay.

"Biowatch encourages farmers to maintain a community garden with vegetables that are meant for the marketplace as well as a household gardens."

Water tanks and fencing are especially important for small-holder farmers. Fencing is needed to prevent cattle from destroying crops. South Africa is water-scarce which means that water sources are lacking, especially in more rural areas, making water tanks a necessity. In a process that began in 2013, farmers in the uMkhanyakude and Pongola districts in northern KwaZulu-Natal engaged with national government and requested support. This request finally



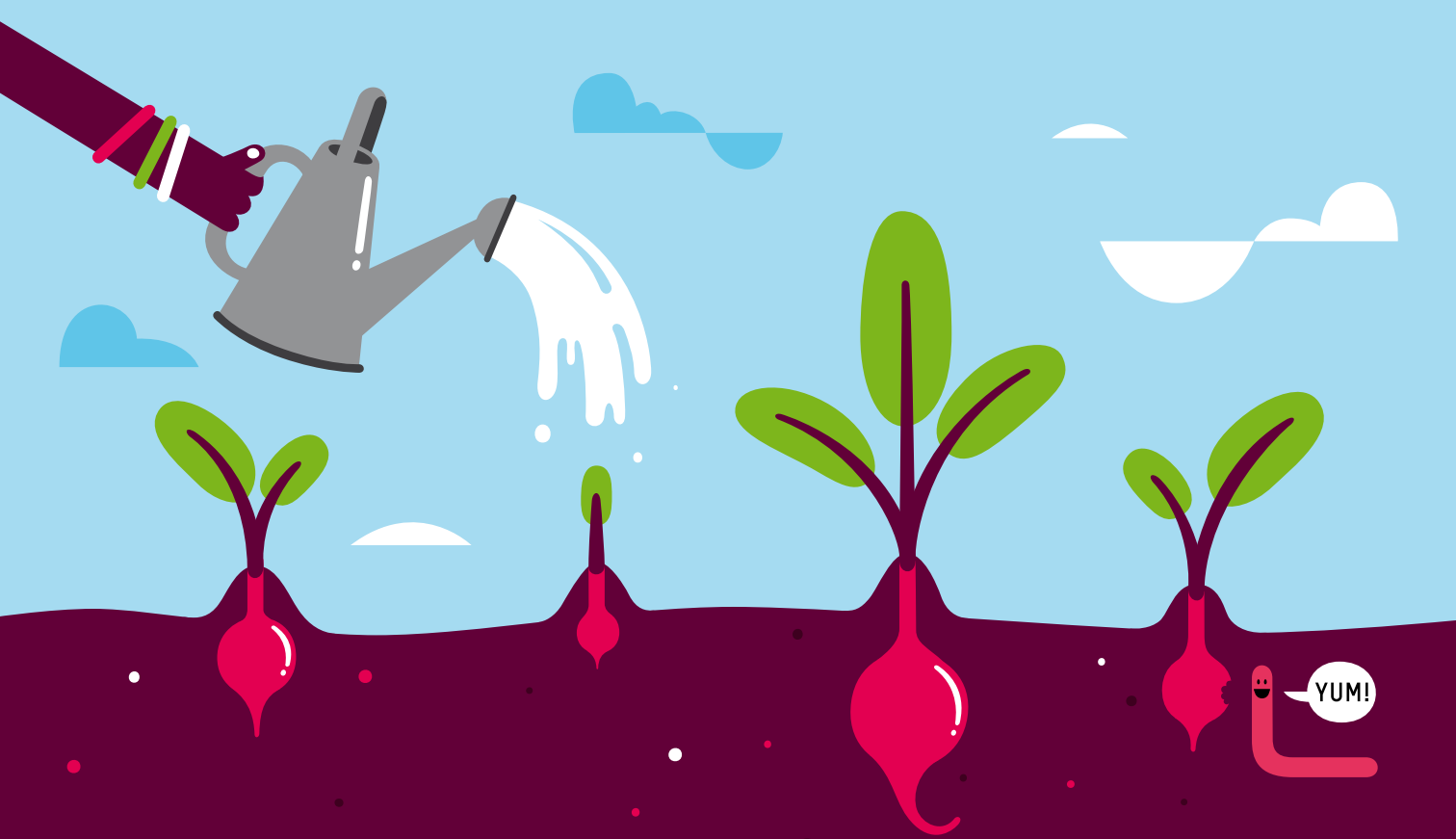
resulted in 50 water tanks being distributed in five areas in the first year. From 2013 to 2018, all 600+ Biowatch-supported farmers should receive water tanks as part of this promise of government support. Biowatch facilitated a process with representatives from each of the five areas whereby criteria were developed for the selection of the first 10 recipients of these tanks. Through these processes, and equipment secured through liaisons with the government, farmers' livelihoods in these areas have greatly improved.

“Biowatch facilitated a process with representatives from each of the five areas whereby criteria were developed for the selection of the first 10 recipients of these tanks.”



The types of crops planted are just as important as the methods used to grow them. Traditional variety crops that are preferred over commercial ones are grains such as maize, sorghum, and millet; a variety of legumes such as mung beans, cowpeas, peanuts and juko beans; members of the gourd family, such as pumpkins and melons; indigenous leafy vegetables such as morogo; and other crops such as sesame, and Zulu potatoes. These traditional crops are much hardier, yield good harvests, have a natural drought resistance, and have a high nutritional value.

Traditional crops and the practice of agro-ecology go beyond food security because South Africa has so much arable land, and farming is a huge part of the country's history which has tied communities together for generations. Farming is an integral part of the culture, heritage and identity of most South Africans. It is important for improving livelihoods and in maintaining a sense of community, which in the 21st century's modern, fast-paced, individualistic lifestyle is becoming increasingly difficult.



REBECCA'S FOOD GARDEN

NIKITA SMITH

In an effort to improve the lives of community members in the Xitlakati Village in the Limpopo province of South Africa, an organic food garden was started.

Rebecca Maluleke is a project coordinator at CHoiCe Trust, an organisation in Tzaneen, Limpopo which works to benefit rural communities under three core programs, namely: Management and Support, Training and Development, and Outreach Activities.

Their many projects have impacted the lives of children, the elderly, health workers, farm workers, persons affected by and living with HIV, and rural community members in villages around Tzaneen.

In 2010, Rebecca was invited to attend a three-day learning and practical event in Richards Bay, a small town in the KwaZulu-Natal province, as part of an Oxfam exchange visit to Biowatch South Africa.

The event was hosted by Biowatch South Africa, an environmental non-profit organisation that works with small-holder farms and other civil societies to ensure that people have control over their food, agriculture processes and resources. It taught the importance of agro-ecological planting. "We went around looking at gardens and I was so impressed by what they do in their communal gardens," says Rebecca.

Lawrence Mkhalihi, an agro-ecology manager at Biowatch, gave Rebecca a different outlook on food gardens and the many benefits. "At the visit Lawrence explained the theoretical part of what organic planting is and how to keep the soil fertile with organic waste. He also mentioned how you don't have to buy anything, you can use what you have," adds Rebecca.

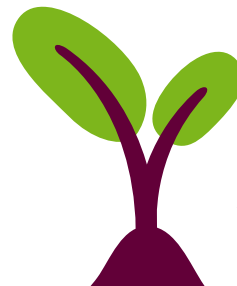
He also informed the attendees at the learning event how to use manure and gave them helpful tips on how to mix their own manure. One way of doing so was to “dig a hole up to your knee. Put in all green weeds, then fill it up with dry grass, leaves, bones and tins (except beer and coke) and then top with manure”. The importance of looking after the gardens by watering and cleaning them in order to reap the benefits was emphasised.

When Rebecca returned home, she eagerly wanted to share the exciting information she received with the people living in the Xitlakati village. With the help of the local clinic, CHoiCe recruited a support group to start the village’s own food garden. The support group consisted of people living with chronic diseases, including HIV and tuberculosis, in the Xitlakati village.

They met on a daily basis to plant, water and clean the garden. “When we initially taught the group about organic planting and food gardens they looked miserable and as if they didn’t want to be there. It was good to see a change in their attitude when the food garden started flourishing. They were happy,” says Rebecca.

In a matter of months, the food garden was producing enough crops to feed community members and sell to others. Locals “reaped nice fresh vegetables from their gardens”.

The garden produced vegetables such as onions, beans, beetroot, cabbage, chillies, okra and other seasonal crops.



People would travel from all over the region to purchase crops from the food garden. The first chillies were exported to Johannesburg and many boxes of okra were bought. "Word got out and many people started buying our vegetables. We even sold to three local schools which used the vegetables for their feeding schemes," Rebecca says.

Some of the profits from the food garden were used to buy 16 goats which helped in the farming process. "Goat manure is the most organic and fertile. At the conference we were taught this and how we should treat the soil like our skin. Keep it hydrated and remember that if you don't look after it then it won't look after you," adds Rebecca.

The food garden flourished and even the Induna (Chief) and schools from the village donated tanks and pipes to maintain it. It became known in the community as 'Green Paradise'.

Rebecca believes it was the collective effort by community and support group members which made the food garden a success. "Training was provided and the participation of community members was great. Support group and community members maintained a good working relationship and this is what made the garden a success," she says.

Of course, the maintenance of a food garden is not easy, especially in communities with limited access to water. Some of the difficulties that face such gardens include pipes and tanks breaking which can eventually result in gardens being dissolved.

The people of the Xitlakati village are committed to improving health and good nutrition. They now know how to grow fresh vegetables for themselves and other community members.

$$E = mc^2$$

$$pv = nRT$$

$$E_K = \frac{1}{2}mv^2$$

$$K = 7 + \sqrt{\frac{2m}{h^2} (E - K)}$$

YOUNG WOMEN GET A SHOT AT STEM

LINDA MASANGO

$$\sqrt{2eUme}$$

$$E_x B = \frac{hk^2}{2m}$$

The Wilderness Foundation, according to its website, “is a project-driven conservation and leadership organisation that encourages, plans and protects wild lands and wilderness, uplifts the knowledge and lives of citizens and stimulates an environmental ethos among current and future leaders”.

The Foundation envisages “a world that has sufficient intact natural ecosystems and wilderness areas that are valued and effectively protected for the benefit of all species”.

Umzi Wethu is one of the youth development programs of the Wilderness Foundation and its goal is to fulfil the employability potential of resilient, motivated youth displaced by HIV and AIDS, and poverty by using the healing power of the wilderness, promoting personal wellness in a nurturing home context, providing credible training, and securing sustainable job placements in hospitality and eco-tourism establishments, while extending the program’s social outreach to others.

The Umzi Wethu Training Academy was established in 2006 in Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape and trains youth in hospitality and conservation, covering both theoretical and practical training suitable for finding employment in the eco-tourism industry.

Umzi Wethu has incorporated personal development into their initiatives. The wellness program trains students on issues like sexual and reproductive health. “Wellness taught me that where I come from should not limit me to where I am going. It taught me how to deal with challenges; how to express feelings, it even taught me basic skills like time management, financial management, and work ethics,” says Mantho Sehapi, Umzi Wethu graduate. The program does

not only seek to increase employability, but also places emphasis on improving self-awareness and confidence, which can be valuable attributes to have in the workplace and in life in general.

The success of Umzi Wethu has allowed the Wilderness Foundation to explore other avenues. The STEM initiative aims to expose young women to science, engineering, technology and mathematics (STEM).

Paul Longe, former Umzi Wethu Academy manager, mentions: “In September 2014, the Wilderness Foundation was approached by a funder who wanted to explore the opportunity of adding a STEM-enrichment aspect to the Siyazenzela² Livelihood Program”. The initiative focused mainly on women, simply because they are underrepresented in the field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics.

The organisation selected new and previous graduates who were still looking for career opportunities. Portia Kibi, STEM student, says: “I had mixed emotions about the program, simply because I expected hard-core maths and science, but when the program started everything was slightly simple and doable.” This year, 49 young women were selected for the STEM Program and 45 completed the course. This venture also included siblings of graduates. “My brother was so happy about the technology and science day. He got a lot of information. He was so happy to learn Excel, Microsoft word and PowerPoint.”

Since this was a pilot phase and students were relatively new to science and technology, the initiative focused on introducing students to fun rather than hard-core science, allowing them to generate interest in the field. At the Nelson Mandela Bay Science and Technology Centre, students experienced a fun science show with a range of chemistry and physics experiments. STEM student, Laurissa Jooste says: “The experiments were interesting and I enjoyed every minute of the excursion.”

² Siyazenzela means ‘We are doing it for ourselves’ in isiXhosa.

This excursion showcased the everyday uses of science by explaining and showing young women how things such as elastic bands are made. "At the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University science faculty we were taught how to make hand lotion. We were shown the ingredients and I didn't know that it is easy to make. It was exciting and I am very happy that I was part of the experience," says Portia. The science excursion did not only introduce young women to the field, but allowed them to develop an interest in science and technology, engineering and mathematics. It permitted students to deconstruct preconceived ideas they had about the field. The university also offered the young women computer literacy. They then received certificates which will make a valuable addition to their respective CVs.

As vehicle manufacturing is one of many male-dominated industries, the STEM initiative partnered with Volkswagen Auto Pavilion offering students a complete 'behind the scenes' look at the industry. "I always thought that the industry was designed for men, but after the tour I realised that women can also work in the industry," says Portia.

Other activities introduced to STEM students were computer lab sessions at the Wilderness Foundation. A science and technology day for peers was also introduced allowing STEM students to bring along siblings who have an interest in science and technology and are still in school. The idea behind this was to afford young pupils the opportunity to improve their marks and enter the STEM program.


South Africa is a country that needs a wide spread of career opportunities, and the Wilderness Foundation continues to do its part in making this possible. The Wilderness Foundation not only introduces the youth to opportunities in the ecotourism industry, but opens up potential new fields to youth who previously viewed these fields as closed to them.



MILK

GOAT'S MILK CHANGING LIVES

NOBHONGO GXOLO




HIV and AIDS statistics in this country are overwhelming. It is estimated that one in 10 South Africans are living with the virus. In other words, 11.2% of the population, which is just over 6.19 million people, according to Statistics South Africa³.

People living in rural areas are most affected, which threatens food security, among other things. As access to clinics and antiretrovirals (ARVs) is limited, and stigma and discrimination are still very real challenges, many villagers struggle to get or stay on their medication – losing their lives to the virus. This extensive loss of life threatens agricultural systems and affects food security as fewer people are left physically able and with the capability and know-how to maintain productivity.

A resident of Venda, Limpopo for over two decades, with a devotion to the community, Sue-Anne (Susie) Cook co-founded the Centre for Positive Care (CPC), the area’s most enduring non-profit organisation, in 1993. Vhutshilo Mountain School (VMS) was also founded by Susie. Initially a pre-school for children from the local timber company, Vhutshilo started getting referrals from CPC and the local clinic of children living with HIV or AIDS or affected by the pandemic. Susie started a rural community pre-school in 2002 in the Thathe Vondo village. She converted her mobile home into two large classrooms and her truck into the school bus, and with friends donating toys, supplies and food, Vhutshilo Mountain School opened its doors. The pre-school offered underprivileged orphans and vulnerable children, many of whom had lost their parents to AIDS-related illnesses, high-quality care, stimulation and education. The Church of Scotland heard about the project and funded the building of a school at its present site in Tshikombani village in the Nzhelele Valley.



³ Accessed from www.allafrica.com/stories/201507241654.html



According to Susie, the needs of the members of the support groups and the community have dictated the way forward for the school outreach program and VMS has evolved over the years to accommodate these needs. Now workshops are held for children on ARVs to teach them the importance of taking their medication consistently and how to do this when they are at home. “A lot of these children are raised by their elderly traditional grandparents because their parents have passed because of AIDS. Often, when a child defaults on their ARV treatment and then gets progressively sicker, their caretaker will take the child to see a traditional healer. Teenagers defaulting on their medication is a major issue. We’ve found this happening all over. They should be taking their medication responsibly but often that isn’t case,” says Susie. In neighbouring villages, the teenagers and caregivers were encouraged to form their own support groups.

“In some instances you’ll find that guardians and family members discourage teenagers from taking their medication because of a hanging stigma. They don’t want other people to know that the teenager has HIV.”

Defaulting on taking medication is not the only issue threatening people living with HIV. Khathu Nemafohoni, the outreach co-ordinator, says: “The goats’ project is about food security and nutrition. Women living with HIV were struggling with breastfeeding their children because they were afraid of infecting them since the virus can be passed on in the milk.” She adds: “We learnt that goat’s milk was more nutritious than formula, which is not always available at the clinics and is expensive to buy. So we did some research and spoke to farmers to find out more about goat’s milk. We then got a goat so that the milk it produced could be used to feed the children as well as to sell for an income. Good nutrition is especially important for children living with HIV. Goat’s milk is far superior in this regard to cow’s milk.” Faced with the food security threat, which was beyond what they were already doing for HIV prevention and treatment, Vhutshilo sought to find a solution. By directly integrating the issues of health and food security, they were able to be more holistic and responsive in their approach. It wasn’t conventional but it worked.



Susie explains that each caregiver was given a mother goat and a baby goat (kid) and that the first born had to be ‘carried over’ to another caregiver. Hopefully this will ensure healthier children and become a small income-generating project for the family. A small herd of goats stays at the school which brings in an income and the school children love the milk on their morning porridge. This project has been more difficult than the team anticipated and they encountered problems that they hadn’t considered. “The initial goats were bought from another area. They weren’t from here and it was difficult for them to acclimatise. They’d eat the bark off trees and subsequently died, and often got into the vegetable garden,” says Susie. The team was very grateful when a good Samaritan from the Virgin Islands who was very keen to help out, sent money for fencing and to help with the running of the project.

The team had to learn a lot about breeding and taking care of goats which was completely new territory. Some of the new insights Vhutshilo gleaned from research, conversations with farmers and people ‘in the know’ including the information that getting a Swiss Alpine goat for breeding with the female goats would lead to the production of good quality milk. “Initially we were worried about inter-breeding but we learned that you can use a ram for breeding for at least four years before you need to bring another one in.”

Besides the goat project, every year Vhutshilo holds workshops for 12 caregivers and their children. To date there are 30 home gardens that the children work on with the assistance of their caregivers when necessary. The food gardens help in two ways: seedlings from the school nursery are used to generate an income for VMS and they also help to put food on the table.

Vhutshilo turned a dire situation into something both sustainable and profitable with a few goats and seeds. Food security threatens numerous households but its solution can be found in one’s own backyard – using simple projects that are well-researched and implemented with determination and care. The goat’s milk project together with community gardens have started to shift the food security balance and made for healthier eating, which is especially important for people living with HIV.

GMOs, FARMERS & COMMUNITY ACTIVISM:

THE FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

MATTHEW MOLVER

South Africans are caretakers to one of the most beautiful and plentiful places on earth. The land, the water and the sky, along with all their natural assets, are the common heritage of the people of South Africa, who are equally entitled to their enjoyment and responsible for their conservation.

Monsanto, an extensive multinational corporation specialising in genetically modified (GM) seeds, has deep roots in South African agriculture. With support from the South African government, Monsanto has introduced genetically modified maize, soya and cotton onto South African farms. Much of South Africa's staple food of maize is genetically modified. However, there is increasing evidence of GMOs creating environmental and health risks and despite promises, crop yields are failing to materialise. Another negative is the increased dependency on pesticides, and possible contamination of farmers' traditional seeds with GM seeds.

Corporate control of seeds and the food system in South Africa by large companies like Monsanto is making farmers and society dependent on a technology that is proving to be more harmful than helpful. By replacing traditional farming methods, such as seed saving (the act of saving seeds from each crop to ensure food security), that are ecologically safe and culturally appropriate, GMOs are making communities vulnerable to hunger and putting the entire food system at risk of collapse. When there are outbreaks of disease or environmental changes due to climate change, South Africa's dependence on expensive commercial products will work against the farmers.

Farmers in South Africa are fighting back against the monopolisation of their food supply with the help of Biowatch South Africa, an environmental justice non-profit organisation. Biowatch works with small-holder farmers, other civil society organisations and government to ensure



that people have control over their food, agricultural processes and resources. They build on and support farmers' traditional knowledge and provide them with a space to share this knowledge. By promoting environmentally safe, organic methods of farming, or agro-ecology as it is known, they are helping small-holder farmers ensure that they have food security and alternative income streams. Biowatch is playing a part in leading the charge against the use of GM crops and the cornering of South Africa's food industry.

Rose Williams, Director at Biowatch, says: "Many people are uninformed about GM crops and how harmful they can be because there is little knowledge about them in the public domain. Biowatch seeks to right this by raising awareness about these dangers and inspiring people to take back their right to safe food and to seed sovereignty."⁴ Biowatch has also been one of the very few to have successfully taken on Monsanto in court and won.⁵ The South African Department of Agriculture refused to give out information on the GM crop seeds they had approved.

Biowatch fought for this knowledge in court against the Department of Agriculture and Monsanto, and although it drained their resources, they eventually won. This victory was very important for both Biowatch and the people they help, providing inspiration to many to stand up for their right to information, and their right to food security.

⁴ According to Biowatch's website, seed sovereignty means allowing small-holder farmers "...to maintain and develop this [seed] diversity, along with their rich knowledge of and practices in traditional agriculture and agro-ecology..."

⁵ Biowatch served papers on the National Department of Agriculture in August 2002, and in February 2003 Monsanto (and others) joined the state against Biowatch to protect information they considered confidential. In February 2005 Biowatch was granted the right to information, but was ordered to pay Monsanto's legal costs. Biowatch lost the appeal and then approached the Constitutional Court. The judgement was set aside in June 2009 in favour of Biowatch and against the state. For more information see *A Landmark Victory for Justice* by Rachel Wynberg and David Fig [available www.biowatch.org.za].



The farmers with whom Biowatch works have made their voices heard by holding marches against GM crops and Monsanto. They supported the first international call to March against Monsanto (MAM) in 2013. Since then the movement has grown and marches are held all over the world every year. In 2015, marches were held in Pongola, Mtubatuba and Ingwavuma by local Biowatch-supported farmers who called for a boycott of genetically modified seed and food and other harmful agro-chemicals. In their fight to save their natural seeds and traditional farming practices, these farmers have refused government 'gifts' of GM seeds.

In Pongola, farmers carrying placards with the words “Monsanto Stop Poisoning Us”, marched to the local Department of Agriculture offices and handed over a memorandum demanding their farmers’ rights to seed sovereignty, and that their indigenous knowledge and traditional seed be honoured and protected.

“These marches received lots of local coverage in the media. Mtubatuba’s march made it into the Zululand newspaper, Ingwavuma’s march got airtime on Radio Maputaland, and Pongola’s march got coverage by local media outlets,” says Rose. This coverage helps spread the news about GMOs and is waking up South Africans to what is being done to the farmers and the land.

With organisations like Biowatch, and the continued mobilisation of farmers, who are the caretakers of the land, Monsanto and other similar companies have a real fight on their hands.





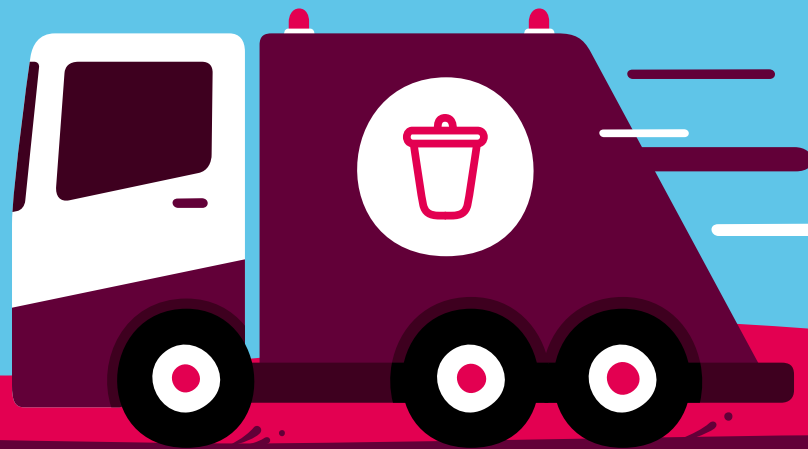
ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



Active citizenship has been a core crosscutting theme throughout Oxfam's work in South Africa.

The latest No Longer Vulnerable program strategy defines active citizenship as where "...the broader population of the country holds duty bearers to account for the delivery of quality social services..." We identified that it is important to articulate a multi-pronged approach that can be targeted at national level or within a particular community to link organisations across a particular issue. The 'snapshots' below demonstrate the challenges, lessons and approaches of a range of organisations in differing contexts.

COMMUNITIES TACKLE WASTE DISPOSAL

MATTHEW MOLVER







Rural communities in the Mopani District of Limpopo face many daily challenges. CHoiCe Trust, a dynamic health-based NPO, has adopted a community-centred approach to tackling these issues. Community members are encouraged to solve problems instead of relying on outside help.

In the Mavele and Nkambako villages, located in the Greater Tzaneen area, this approach is being facilitated by CHoiCe Trust. Their focus is on community development, where they provide outreach programs and training to people, thereby empowering them to take responsibility for their own well-being.

CHoiCe Trust facilitators work with the community to identify and explore concerns, as well as establish action plans to address these. In order to ensure implementation, community task teams are formed to take the plans forward. Ward councillors are invited, but their attendance is not required unless they are needed during the action-planning phase, after the problems have been identified.

Nikki Stuart-Thompson, the organisation's director, says it's beneficial to have the local dialogues because they "aim to show the people in the communities we work in that they are capable of finding resources and building social capital themselves. They can utilise these resources in identifying and solving the problems they face. No one but them can really know the problems they face daily and what they need to resolve them."

These dialogues give the community a platform that they control, which is independent of external government support. Governmental help is often slow and because of limited people on




the ground, and the administrative red tape that people have to go through, often months go by before solutions to the problems are implemented. In facilitating these dialogues, CHoiCe Trust has provided a common space for people to voice their issues and opinions.

Having this platform can really make a difference, especially with women, who make up 75% of the attendees at these dialogues. Women are often the most vulnerable in these communities and so their increased ability to engage with, and solve, everyday challenges inspires confidence in themselves and significantly boosts the morale of the attendees. The only concern that is faced within these dialogues is that the same group of people is required to attend the scheduled sessions, and sometimes not everyone can make it.

To deal with this, CHoiCe decided to meet with community members for a full day where lunch is provided, rather than for just two to three hours per day.

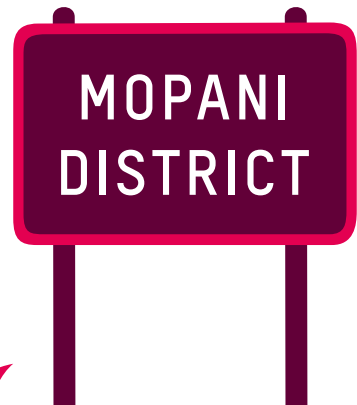
These dialogues have led to many successes, one of the most notable being the formation of a cleaning and sanitation project that is generating income and providing jobs. “It [the project] was started and is run by community members. This cleaning project originated from a discussion held by community members during one of the dialogues. One of the problems identified was how the safe disposal of nappies was becoming a problem in the village of Mavele. People were throwing them away in the river, ultimately polluting their water supply. Children would also play in the river, and so it was an issue that needed urgent attention.”

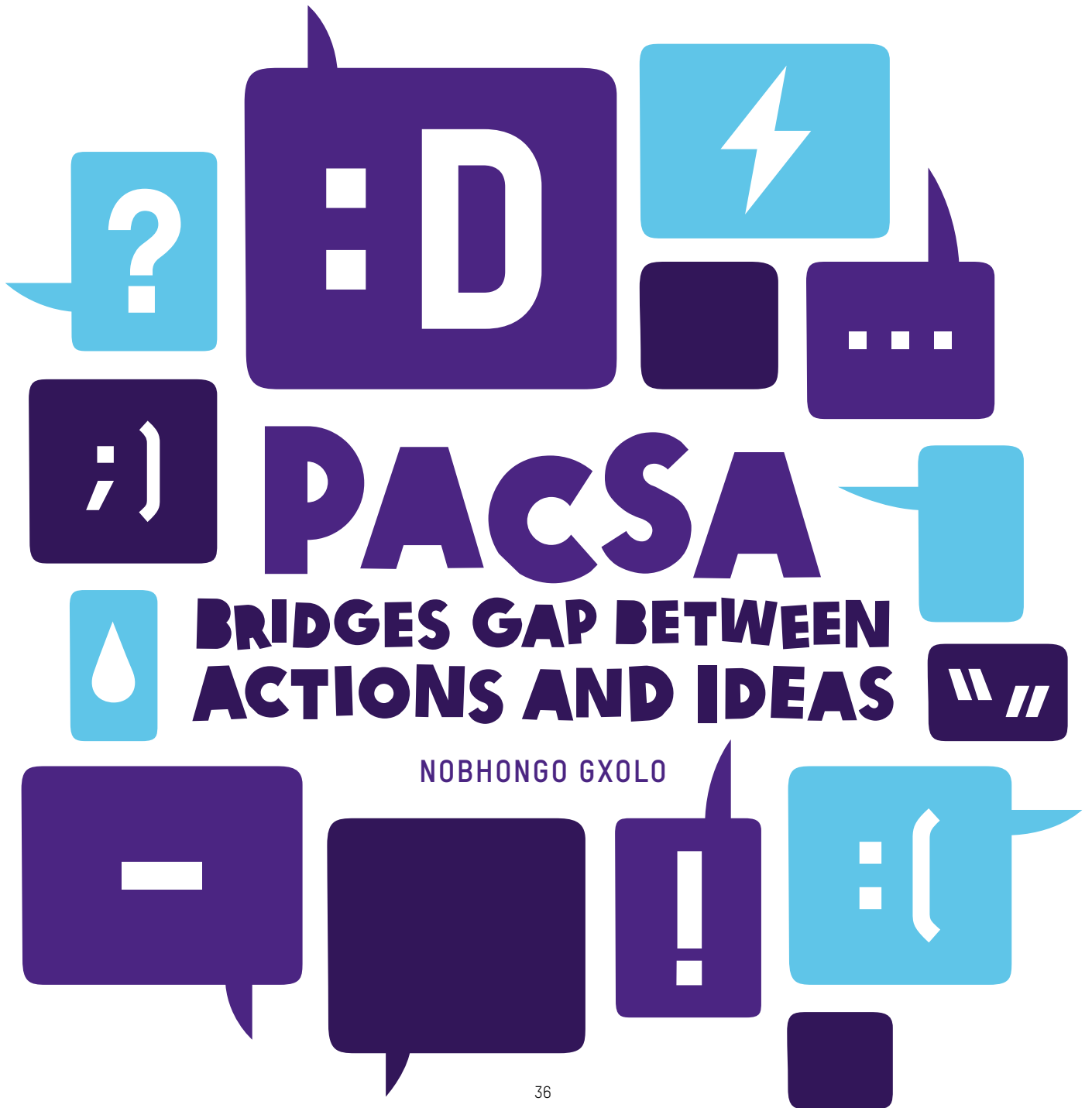


CHoiCe Trust provided education and information to people to discourage the practice of disposing of nappies in the river. This, however, did not solve the problem of where to dispose of the used nappies, hence the establishment of the cleaning and sanitation project. Nikki explains that people who needed to dispose of their nappies would pay a R20 monthly fee. Each month a truck would collect the used nappies and take them to a landfill. This proved to be an innovative way of turning a large health issue not only into a solution, but into an asset to the community.

These dialogues are a big step forward in making rural communities increasingly self-sufficient. Nikki believes that this cleaning and sanitation project will result in an increase in attendance at these meetings as there are visible benefits to the community and improvements in people's quality of life.

According to Nikki, the reason fewer men attend these dialogues is because they do not see them as an avenue that could potentially bring about income opportunities. "But now, because of the employment provided by the cleaning and sanitation project more men will start to attend. There is now also the possibility of more income-generating community-driven projects being created as more problems are identified and solutions proposed."





Over the past three decades the problems faced by ordinary South Africans have shifted. When the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA) was formed in 1979, the organisation confronted a lot of the issues people faced, which stemmed from the violence of apartheid.

Now, 30 years later, the legacy of oppression is still at play but the challenges vulnerable communities around the country experience have changed. HIV and AIDS, and the lack of economic and gender justice are just some of the daily struggles that have come to be considered the norm.

PACSA works towards attaining social justice. The director, Mervyn Abrahams, breaks up their strategy for achieving this into three aspects. "Firstly, we ensure that we're a learning organisation. We want to help groups implement social change in their own communities but we realise that it starts with us. Secondly, it was important for us to have Developmental Process Facilitation at our core. This means being able to support groups and organisations at grassroots level so that they can act of their own accord. Thirdly, we wanted to build social justice activism in the broader arena."

In terms of whether PACSA has effected real change, Mervyn responds: "It depends on what we quantify as change." He shares an anecdote where three women approached them complaining that the price of electricity was too expensive. Research PACSA had conducted found that it was more expensive to own a metre than to be on a grid. Based on these facts and continuous dialogue with the women, the two parties approached the local municipality with the issue. A by-law was proposed for households who owned pre-paid metres to be provided with free basic electricity. It looked like victory was within grasp.



The community was excited. The elections were held. The law wasn't passed.

"It's been three years since and these women have struggled, marched, stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the mayor. Have they won the battle? Have they gotten the free electricity they were promised? No. Have they built their own power? Have they organised and sustained their group? That's a resounding 'yes'," says Mervyn. For PACSA that's an important distinction.

"We want organisations to have the capacity to think strategically. We want to contest power with power. That's a big step in people claiming victory over the structural inhibitors of politics and economics."

Mervyn describes PACSA's approach to creating change in communities: "Those who suffer it, lead it." He illustrates this with an example of how PACSA gets a group to identify its own vision without influence from the organisation. With the members gathered in a room he would write up on the board a fundamental question such as: 'What are you about?' or 'What do you want to achieve?' and then walk out leaving them to process and pen their own goals. "It's only when they have their own reasons about what they're doing that they can have agency...The decisions that come out are dominated by the people in that space."

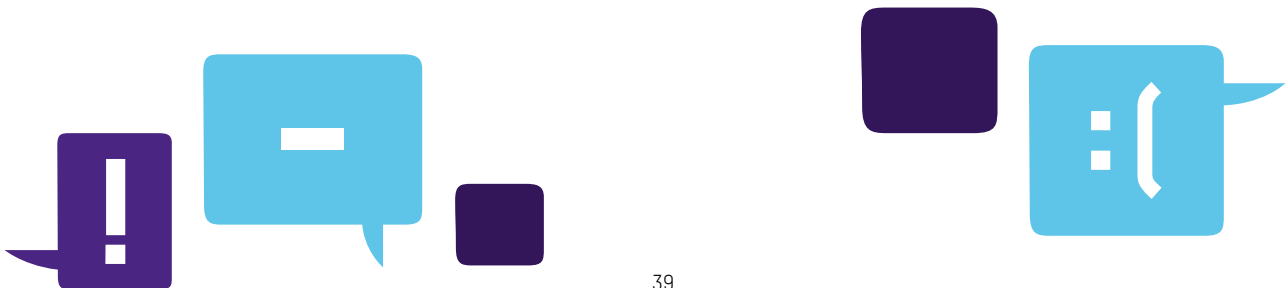
Mervyn explains that PACSA isn't big on training alone as they find it too prescriptive. He says that the way these processes are often managed can sometimes defeat their purpose. This is because often when the government puts out a policy, their representatives will go to communities to spread the word. They'll explain in detail what the policy is about and what it means for the people affected. PACSA doesn't agree with this prescriptive method, which is generally perceived as an expert talking down to the people. It's exclusionary and takes away agency, autonomy, and the freedom to imagine.



Instead, PACSA focuses on facilitating conversations with communities. Abrahams explains: “We ask people: ‘What is the world you imagine? How can we get there now?’ and they start speaking about their immediate experiences. They identify the steps they need to take to accomplish this.” It’s only then that the policy is introduced to them with questions about how, if at all, they believe it will help them achieve what they’ve imagined. This is how PACSA encourages the community to take ownership of the actions they want to perform – those they see as being beneficial to the community at large.

Access to water, electricity, sanitation and food are basic needs and PACSA believes that everyone should have access to these resources, and that they should be set at affordable levels.

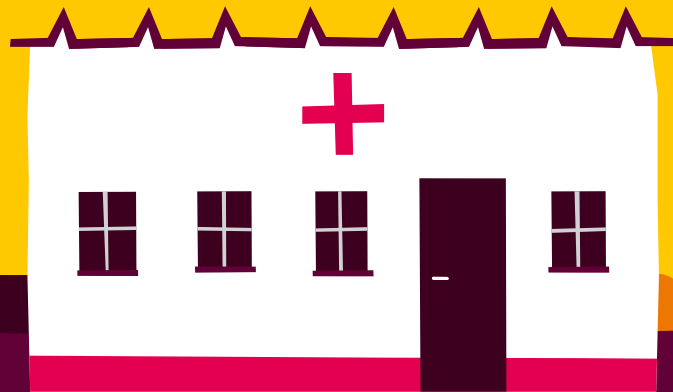
PACSA does not have specific programs that they impose on communities. They tackle issues as they arise from their agency and solidarity-building initiatives by trying to support these actions. The result is that PACSA has many issues on its plate which has its own challenges. However, when an organisation is truly centred on meaningful social action and has a history of learning, they are not led by their own agenda and are always willing to change and grow with the communities in which they work.



CLINIC COMMITTEES:

THE STRATEGY OF COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

MATTHEW MOLVER



In South Africa, good quality and accessible healthcare is a constitutional right. Unfortunately, because of the shortage of healthcare professionals and resources, combined with the high rate of disease, the healthcare in many communities leaves much to be desired.

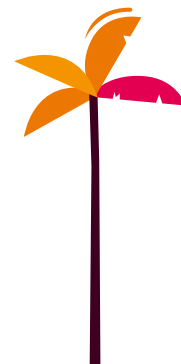
Clinic committees are health governance structures that enable communities to give their input and feedback into the planning, delivery and organisation of health services. They also play an oversight role in the development and implementation of health policies and provision of equitable health services.


Within communities, non-profit organisations work with clinic committees to improve overall healthcare. Many of Oxfam's partner organisations, such as CHoiCe, CATCH, Project Empower and Sophakama, do this.

CHoiCe recently began work with clinic committees after starting a project to improve mother and child health in rural communities in the Capricorn District in Limpopo. In addressing various aspects relating to the low uptake of clinic services, they realised that this required them to work with these committees by mobilising community members to get more involved in order to ensure an effective accountability mechanism for the community to tap into. While much of their work centred on cultural practices which affected women's uptake of services, they also learnt that women struggled to access clinic services when they needed them urgently. Working with the clinic committees became essential to ensuring that women could continue to use this structure effectively to access the mother and child health services.

Project Empower, a South African non-profit organisation registered in 2001, is based at the Diakonia Centre in Durban, which is in eThekweni Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal. Its focus is on strengthening and supporting civil society's responses to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, both formal and informal. An important part of their work has been to facilitate more user-friendly clinics through empowering young women to address their health concerns on clinic committees. Teams of young women meet with clinic staff on a monthly basis and they sit in on clinic committee meetings to discuss issues of mutual concern. As many clinics are short-staffed, these local groups have also been given permission to hold open talks at the clinics, addressing women on a range of health issues. In general, healthcare workers initially have tended to assume that small task teams are there to spy on them and report them to more senior staff, but they've come to understand that everybody is trying to attain the same goals. Project Empower's approach is to encourage women to get involved in clinic committees and get organised. This is giving them more power to facilitate change in their lives and to give other women in the community information which encourages them to make informed decisions, helping them avoid taking dangerous and unnecessary risks.

CATCH Projects is an NPO that works in the community of Mzamomhle in the Eastern Cape. Initially they provided care and shelter to orphaned children. They have since branched off into projects that involve social work. Over the past six years there have been many complaints in Mzamomhle regarding the expense and quality of available healthcare. CATCH liaised with the community and the Department of Health and organised two meetings offering 100 community members a platform to air their grievances. As a result, clinic committees, which included three CATCH members, were formed. These members played an important mentoring role for the other committee members with regard to interacting with official entities and identifying issues in the community and coming up with solutions. This has enabled them to serve their community more effectively, airing concerns and improving healthcare. CATCH's goal is for CATCH members to eventually leave the committees, handing them over completely to the community members.



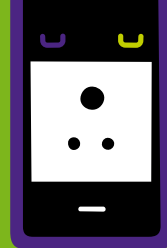
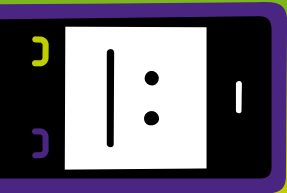


Sophakama operates in Joe Slovo informal settlement in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, and provides a range of health-related community services. Their work with clinic committees within the township has, so far, according to Michael Matanzima, Director at Sophakama “resulted in easier liaisons with the Department of Health, improved health services, getting clinics to be open for longer, having the mobile clinic visit new areas, and encouraged the community to become more heavily involved in their own health issues. It also gives them a platform to speak out about any grievances that they have.” Sophakama’s approach is centred on mobilising people to participate in the committee and having a mentoring relationship with the participants, with some Sophakama workers sitting in on the meetings to help guide them in their problem identification and solving; for example, addressing immunisation in crèches. They are now able to work with various health teams and receive test kits from the clinic, and also assist in capturing and reporting statistics to the clinic. At a broader level, this enables the community members to engage with the new systems being put in place to reach the level of an ‘ideal clinic’ which aims at reducing the time spent in the clinic by clients and achieving the 90/90/90 targets set by UNAIDS.

Clinic committees have so far proved vital in offering a platform for the community to have a say in the standard of healthcare they receive. These committees have also been beneficial by forging relationships between the patient and the medical professional, making both parties more aware of each other’s needs.

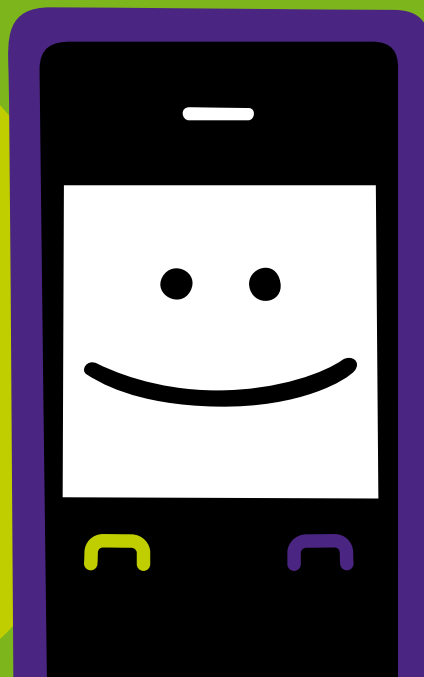
Although these four organisations work in very different locations and contexts, their successful approaches to working with clinic committees have very similar foundations in that they provide mobilisation for the community to participate in this space. Having members of each organisation supporting community members in the committees is not to tell them what they need, but to guide them in their problem-solving and identifying what is needed. This approach is effective because the organisations make a point of not dictating to the clinic committees but rather provide the tools so that members of the community become the driving force in creating real change for themselves and their people.





FOLLOW UP ON FARM WORKERS' STRIKE

NIKITA SMITH



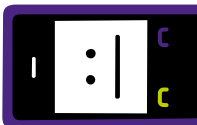
It has been three years since the small town of De Doorns in the Western Cape, South Africa, erupted and led to a nationwide farm workers' strike.

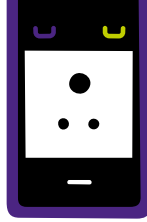
"I decided to join a union since I, like most of the other farm workers, was not happy about working conditions on the farm and the wages that we were getting paid at the time," says Deneco Dube, a former farm worker and now a regional organiser at The Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE).

Deneco vividly recalls the day he and fellow farm workers confronted the farm owner where they worked. "We requested a higher salary from him and raised our questions about the poor living and working conditions on the farm. The farm owner seemed to be pushed into a corner and couldn't give us the answers to our questions and was not willing to speak about a wage increase," says Deneco.

Through TCOE and the union, the farm workers extended a call to farm workers around the country to participate in a nationwide strike to show their support and agreement with the issues raised.

TCOE was established by the late Steve Biko in 1983 and is a national organisation that operates mainly in the rural areas of South Africa. It has been successful in building well-informed leaders who can lead local initiatives and campaigns, and in grappling with the question of land, livelihoods and food sovereignty in a number of different ways. Some examples include a campaign to access land for livelihoods, making inroads into organising rural women, and creating strategic partnerships and alliances with organisations working with land and agrarian reform issues.





In November 2012, farm workers around the country took to the streets demanding a living wage of R150 per day instead of R69 a day as they were paid at the time. The strike spread to over 25 rural towns and farm workers from hundreds of farms were involved.

TCOE director, Mercia Andrews, works with other organisations to bring a collective voice to farm workers across the country.

TCOE and Women on Farms, an organisation that strives to strengthen the capacity of women who live and work on farms to claim their rights and fulfil their needs, have taken the initiative to establish a coalition of organisations (TCOE, Sikhule Sonke, Women on Farms Project, CSAAWU, BASWSI, Mawubuye, SPP, COSATU and the De Doorns farm workers committee).

“We have taken a lead role in organising support for farm workers and co-ordination at local levels between rural organisations, farm worker forums and unions where they exist,” says Mercia.

The strike in November 2012 appealed to many farm workers and the call to show solidarity spread. “We organised farm workers to come and act in their own interests. Thousands of farm workers showed their solidarity and came out,” adds Mercia. However, the unified stance by farm workers did pose threats to many jobs. Mercia explains that many farm workers do not know their rights, which results in a “high level of victimisation and harassment”.

TCOE has worked mainly in the Overberg and Breede River Valley; two of the region’s key agricultural districts of the Western Cape in South Africa. “Here we have workers with Mawubuye Land Rights Forum, an organisation of small farmers and women producers and the Commercial, Stevedoring, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (CSAAWU), a small independent union for farm workers. For us, it was important to work alongside all of these organisations to organise and



support the campaign of the farm workers because seasonal workers or contract workers are [also] small farmers and are organised for communal gardens in the off-season. It was our strategy to build unity and solidarity in the rural communities and towns. In the past five months we have started to build farm worker committees on over 80 farms in the two districts. We still have a great deal to do to consolidate these committees and strengthen local leadership,” says Mercia.

The strike resulted in many challenges, such as farm worker retrenchments and many disciplinary cases. Some workers were evicted from the farms while others who have worked on the same farm for over 10 years were forced to sign new contracts accepting less than the minimum wages.

In the near future, TCOE endeavours to introduce a monitoring and communication system in an attempt to remove the sense of isolation and the silence on farms. The monitoring system will provide basic information on the implementation of rights for farm workers.

“We have recently introduced a bulk SMS system as a way of communicating with farm workers. Currently, we send just over 2 000 SMS messages to workers on a weekly basis. We could use the SMS system as a platform to inform people of the new minimum wage. This was a means in which we informed farm workers of their rights, of upcoming meetings and to build solidarity,” says Boitumelo Ramahlele, SMS coordinator at TCOE.

Mercia believes that this bulk SMS system is crucial when implementing TCOE campaigns. “Now we want to extend this system to monitor what is happening on the farms, analyse the feedback, and link that to a monthly update that is produced by a media officer. We want to develop this tool as a way of protecting the rights of farm workers and as a way of monitoring implementation of rights. We want to make rights real,” says Mercia.

In February 2013, South African Labour Minister, Mildred Olifant, announced a new minimum wage of R105 a day for farm workers across the country.





BUILDING

JOE SLOVO'S FUTURE

MATTHEW MOLVER

Sophakama is a care and support organisation whose mission is to provide a range of community services to the Joe Slovo township near Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. These include health services (disease management), health communication (prevention), children's services (orphaned and vulnerable children), advocacy (accessing social services), and improving livelihoods.

Joe Slovo emerged as an informal settlement in the late 1990s and has only recently become more formalised by the Nelson Mandela Metro with its first set of housing being built in 2003.

In the last few years, there has been extensive construction in Joe Slovo with the building of low-cost houses and the installation of safe basic services. However, when the building started the community was not part of the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) processes, which were put in place by the government to ensure high quality housing and the reduction, to a minimum, of disasters such as fires and flooding, which are great dangers in dense communities. The use of non-flammable and strong materials during building is an important part of this process. Community involvement in the building process is a necessity because community members are most aware of potential weather-related and other risks, having lived in the area.

The first batch of houses to be built were of a very poor quality and some collapsed. The companies that were contracted to build the houses had been using cheaper materials to cut costs. Michael Matanzima, the director at Sophakama says: "During the building of the houses, before the moratorium, the workers that were hired were part of the community and they noticed that when they were mixing the cement for the houses they were told to use two parts sand to one part cement. This meant that the cement would be more porous and therefore weaker. This would open up the houses to higher risk of collapse and be more vulnerable to the elements."

The government removed residents from the metro, where many had been living since the 1990s, to the new Joe Slovo township. Former Housing Minister Joe Slovo bought the land for the community under the Trust. However, the Trust returned the land to the municipality so that the township could receive government services. This raised further complications and deepened tensions between stakeholders.

Due to the poor building practices used by contractors, a moratorium on the building of housing and the relocation of families was put in place. This was because the community felt discarded by the municipality and failed by the government. A more community-centred approach to the building of housing was developed. Sophakama became integral to the interactions between the community, government and the tender holders, who were responsible for the building contract. The organisation would assist government with identifying land for building new houses.

A housing committee was also formed to monitor building contractors to make sure they used the correct materials and adhered to zoning regulations to help prevent disasters, such as fires or houses collapsing. A small business committee was also formed to monitor the contractors.

“The community and Sophakama’s first port of call when interacting with government are the ward councillors who pass the message on through the relevant channels. They have been good at helping the community’s interactions with government. They also go to housing development agents who make sure that houses are being built in the correct way and on time. Because of the difficulties faced with government interaction and the politics that are involved in the construction of the housing, there is still a lot being done, but despite this the future looks bright,” says Michael.

Interactions between community members and government were difficult at first. Some government members held shares in the housing developments and were resistant to any change that was put forward by Joe Slovo dwellers. The community's trust was also broken when the new N2 Gateway housing development, which was supposed to build 4 000 homes in the 2012/13 financial year for the people of Joe Slovo, failed. To date, no houses have been built. The moratorium was a welcome relief for the community because it gave them more of a say in the future of their living space.

The interactions between government and the community have improved because the community fought for their housing rights and had Sophakama on their side offering valuable support throughout these complex interactions.



WOMEN ON FARMS FORGES A BETTER PATH

NOBHONGO GXOLO



Millions of women in South Africa are born into poverty with the odds against them. The Women on Farms Project (WFP) focuses on knowledge and information-sharing, up-skilling and supporting women so that their disadvantaged pasts don't dictate their futures.

According to their website, the Women on Farms Project (WFP) aims to meet the specialised needs of a segment of women who live and work on farms. The organisation operates in the Western Cape in Stellenbosch, Paarl, Grabouw, Villiersdorp, Ceres, Rawsonville, De Doorns and Wolseley and in the Northern Cape it works in Upington, Kanoneiland, Keimoes, Kakamas, Groblershoop and Augrabies. The director, Colette Solomon, puts it like this: "Our role is to unlock or ignite the agency that has, for historical reasons, left black women, especially rural women at a strong disadvantage."

According to Colette, there are farmers who routinely and systematically violate women's labour and tenure rights. People are evicted illegally, some are not paid wages to which they are entitled, some don't get written contracts or don't get the overtime pay they deserve, while others are short-changed on their maternity leave. Farmers are often able to get away with these infringements because farm workers don't know their rights. "If she doesn't know what the minimum wage is, what she's entitled to, how can she demand it?" Colette adds that these women find themselves in intricate and difficult situations. "Physically and geographically farm workers are lodged in the belly of the beast – on the farmer's land. He has a say on your life; he has total control over you." Added to this is the fact that the government doesn't always enforce the law. Colette says the government doesn't take tough action against farmers who, for instance, evict farm dwellers without following due process. At times, the farmers even get the police to remove the farm workers. "There is a lack of political will to implement and enforce the law," says Colette.



Explaining challenges faced by the farm workers, Colette says the increased rate of casualisation of women farm workers means that men get to work throughout the year while women are generally seasonal workers who only get about four to six months of work a year. There is also the issue of women often getting paid less than men for similar work. Colette also points to the rise in evictions, even though legally farmers can't evict without following due process, which includes having the municipality source alternative accommodation for the farm worker.

Another challenge is that there is a physical threat against women on farms and the informal settlements of small rural towns. They face high incidences of violence, including from their intimate male partners. "Rape is a serious issue which is aggravated by the poor or inadequate response from the police. Police are very dismissive of women farm workers who report abuse. The perpetrator is often released. There is a lack of shelters for women affected by abuse in rural towns. The accommodation on the farms is usually in the name of a male partner. All of this forces women to remain in abusive relationships," says Colette.

The discrimination of women farm dwellers and workers often extends outside of the farm. According to Colette, this also happens when the women interact with government officials, clinics and the municipality where they face class-specific discrimination.

The WFP steps into these situations offering their three-pronged approach. Firstly, they focus on equipping women farm workers with knowledge, educating them about their rights. Secondly, these women are mobilised by being introduced to teams and forums where they can share their experiences and work collectively. It is especially important to break their isolation because farms are often spread out from one another. Both prongs are informed by a feminist approach and ideology, which helps women understand and analyse patriarchy, and forge collectives and solidarity. Lastly, the WFP participates in policy and legislative engagement, including bringing these workers into a space where they can use the knowledge they've obtained to challenge formal departments and bring about structural change at both a policy and legislative level. "We



engage them in writing formal submissions, we take them to attend local hearings and municipal meetings. All this in order to change the existing systemic issues around women's rights," says Colette. The WFP also engages in various campaigns as part of its advocacy and lobbying activities. Campaign issues have included violence against women, women's tenure rights and security, women's labour rights, women's right to food and evictions.

The WFP reaches between 600 and 900 women, but the organisation argues that this is not nearly enough and that too few organisations are invested in providing this type of assistance. Only about five to 10% of the workers are unionised and most of those are male permanent workers, not women, who are seasonal workers. The workers who are unionised do not need the same level of support.

WFP has established various community-level or farm-level groups of women. These include labour rights forums, land rights forums, cooperatives, health teams and young women's support groups. WFP works with these groups intensively to build women's confidence and leadership skills, and reinforce information from training workshops. In the mentoring and support that WFP undertakes with the farm-level groups, women are also capacitated to be co-facilitators at WFP workshops (for 'recently-recruited' women). The organisation also encourages, facilitates and supports women to attend external meetings with local government, independently of WFP.

Along with rights-based capacity-building, WFP also prioritises helping to build women's confidence and self-esteem, says Colette. She says WFP focuses on "things that have been broken down both at work and at home. Unlearning internalised oppression, replacing it and developing a new consciousness, helping them become aware of their value in society is a difficult journey". It's a painstaking process; one has to be patient as it can take years to get to this point. But WFP is invested in working with women to improve their living and working conditions, strengthening their leadership, and contributing to the realisation of their human rights and dignity. They've been doing this for nearly 20 years now, and they hope to forge a better path together with the women on farms.



GENDER & VULNERABILITY

Gender justice continues to be critical to development work in South Africa. OAU and partners have found that programming needs to continue to place women more centrally as both actors in development and as primary beneficiaries of Oxfam's work.

It is important to maintain a strong gender analysis and develop the skills and tools needed to improve programming. Following various program reviews, and, in particular, the No Longer Vulnerable Midterm Review, the need for a more nuanced approach in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity as well as specificity and location (for example, in rural and urban contexts) was identified. There continue to be gaps and challenges in this work, but hopefully the stories below demonstrate how, in different ways, partner organisations are trying to grapple with the complexities of power, patriarchy, sexual (and other) violence, queer issues and the like.

WORKING FOR CHANGE

NOBHONGO GXOLO




It started because of the children. In 1998, Caring, Affirming, Training for Change (CATCH) Project's founding member, Sue Davies, started a club for just over 30 children in a church hall in Mzamomhle, Gonubie, East London.

It was a safe space, a recreational and educational distraction from their challenges of poverty, abuse, and living with HIV and AIDS. By 2004, the organisation had acquired a smallholding and the number of orphaned and vulnerable children being supported and fed and partaking in the recreational club activities had grown to 400. Soon their mothers started to receive support as well.

Program leader, Thobani Sojola, says that the organisation's core business has evolved since its formative years. He says the focus is on the championing of active citizenship and encouraging agency so that people take control of their own lives and are able to deal with the issues they face. Describing CATCH's focus Thobani says: "It's to protect and promote the safety and health of women and children affected by violence, poverty and HIV and AIDS...We encourage women and any other stakeholder in the community to help vulnerable people. We've tried to work with men but have had poor success. We tell them about HIV and AIDS but they simply don't care about condom use and information they don't think is useful. Men are mostly interested in jobs, in something that will bring money in."

In most cases, women and children are most at risk. "They face an overwhelming amount of violence. And because a lot of women don't know their rights, they also don't know what action to take when they are mistreated. Yes, they have their own voices, but they also live within certain boundaries. That's why we focus on encouraging women to take up leadership positions in the community," says Thobani.





Masikhanye Women’s Forum and the Victim Empowerment Centre, programs initiated by CATCH Projects, are just two examples of spaces where women are informed about their rights, and how to protect themselves and facilitate similar groups, called home cells, in their own communities. Once they have undergone training covering these topics, the women can then join the forum. Equipped with information, they head into their communities in pairs as CATCH representatives and they meet with a smaller group of about 10 women, known as the home cell. They share what they have learnt with women who aren’t involved with CATCH. Thobani says, “Once they know and understand their rights they can speak out about their issues. This is important because women don’t often get a chance to voice their issues, even at community meetings.” One of the organisation’s aims is to train people to manage themselves on their own so that they’re able to run these processes and eventually carry on without CATCH.

There are about 40 home cells in communities where CATCH works. The two CATCH representatives who lead each home cell are often thought of as the organisation’s ‘eyes and ears’ in the community. “They are how we find out about children being abused or raped,” says Thobani. “We’ve created a space for people to speak out and converse. This translates to an improvement of the quality of life for children in the community. Whatever we do is for the children and it includes working with the women. We implement a down-up approach where women feel they can do something to uplift themselves and the kids.”

CATCH recognises that to try and combat societal problems like violence, abuse and sexual assault, without involving members of the community would be flawed. For this reason, the organisation outlines one of its objectives as “engaging young men and boys in order to change beliefs which disempower women and girl[s]”.



Thobani explains: “Our cultural norms disempower women. We have a boys’ club that meets weekly and a young men’s camp that meets four times a year. We help boys understand their rights and we help inform their beliefs against gender discrimination. We also try to influence them on...issues like rape.”

Speaking to these young men, CATCH Projects learnt that they too feel vulnerable. Members of the organisation say they don’t feel safe in their communities because they too are victims of violence, including male rape. These issues are sensitive and difficult to discuss. “The boys we work with are nine to 14 years old. They are ashamed. If, for instance, they are molested by the breadwinner of the house they don’t feel safe in speaking out. They’re afraid that if they do, they’ll jeopardise the possibility of having their important cultural and traditional rituals, like initiation into manhood, carried out.” In a household, the breadwinner holds the power because they are financially responsible for carrying out these ceremonies, and if the breadwinner is exposed as abusive, they may decide not to pay. Thobani adds: “CATCH created a space for boys to be free and not feel threatened. We get them to speak and interact at workshops and other sessions too.”

Gender-based violence is a significant problem in South Africa with cases such as those that are as well-known as Reeva Steenkamp’s to others that are never brought to light. Having open spaces, where these issues can be discussed, is an important step in the direction of combating gender-based violence. The home cells have been created by women for women and function as a space for informal counselling which is essential. These groups are starting to prevent a sense of alienation and isolation and create a sense of community in informal settlements where women can start to access the support they need.





COMBATING HATE CRIMES

LINDA MASANGO





Hate crimes and corrective rape have increased drastically in South Africa. A contributing factor is the lack of knowledge about the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) community, which has led to stigmatisation and harassment due to sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Gay and Lesbian Network (GLN) is a non-profit organisation based in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. The organisation aims to create awareness about the injustices that LGBTI people encounter and provide support to this community.

GLN's approach to addressing hate crimes is multidimensional. GLN works with various government partners in criminalising hate crimes, trains those who provide support services to victims of these acts, and lobbies for the passing of a Hate Crime Bill. GLN has advocacy activities and events with educational institutions, government departments and traditional leaders aimed at increasing awareness about the prevalence of hate crimes and homophobic discrimination varying from hate speech to sexual or physical assault against the LGBTI community.

One of the major concerns of GLN is that there is no legislation on hate crimes. The organisation's director, Anthony Waldhausen, says: "Hate crimes are not sufficiently reported because South Africa does not recognise the abuse of the LGBTI community as a hate crime. For example, when somebody is raped or murdered, it is taken as simply that – but not as a hate crime." A hate crime is when the perpetrator commits the offences with hate and intolerance being the underlying reason against the victim of a certain race, gender or sexual orientation. Another major concern for the Gay and Lesbian Network is that "people are not coming forward to report hate crimes". The organisation works closely with religious groups, researchers and partners, as well as local and foreign citizens to influence government policies and change mindsets.



GLN has also worked with the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to address this issue. The collaboration between the two institutions came as a result of a notable increase in the prevalence of these crimes around the country. The NPA formed a rapid response team, which is part of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJCD). This team is tasked with following up on unresolved hate crime-related cases that have been in the justice system since 2003. GLN is part of the KwaZulu-Natal LGBTI task team and serves on local and provincial victim empowerment forums. GLN also serves on the Hate Crime Working Group which focuses on documenting and lobbying for progressive development in the protection of LGBTI rights.

The organisation trained lay counsellors from the Thuthuzela Care Centre in Edendale Hospital, who were incorrectly taking statements and disposing of forensic evidence of lesbian, gay and transgender (LGT) sexual assault victims. Anthony says they also train Department of Health (DoH) clinical staff in community-based hospitals and clinics, sensitising them to provide a non-discriminatory service to sexual and gender diverse patrons. In a number of reported cases, hate crime is deemed baseless due to a lack of forensic evidence and improperly written statements. In order to counter this problem the organisation found it important to engage lay counsellors, clinical staff and police. This training of public servants on the rights and issues of the LGBTI community demonstrates GLN's commitment to tackling hate crime in a multifaceted way.

The South African Police Services (SAPS), the DoH and different NPOs have been reached by the organisation through workshops designed to change the behaviour of role players on issues that the LGBTI society face daily. It was also important to re-emphasise the rights of this minority group. The most critical element to the workshops was to create awareness about hate crimes. "We were very successful in training SAPS. They were very supportive and cooperative. The organisation was able to train all sectors in the police departments serving communities in which GLN reach," says Anthony.

The government has also been invited and is heavily involved in the workshops that GLN hosts. "The government has been extremely supportive. They attend the workshops put together by the Gay and Lesbian Network. The organisation has received funds from the Department of





Social Development,” says Anthony. The government’s contribution to creating awareness about hate crimes affecting the LGBTI community has been influential because they have the ability to educate many people attending rallies, and national or provincial policy processes. Their support with funding and participation shows eagerness in creating an environment free from stigmatisation and discrimination.

Another important area for GLN is educating traditional leaders about these hate crimes. This is critical since in some communities, traditional leaders are the governing body. Gender identity and sexual orientation workshops are part of the organisation’s strategy to sensitise traditional leaders. “Working with traditional leadership was hard at the beginning but a relationship was soon developed with the group,” says Anthony. In reaching traditional healers, GLN works with iTeach, which is a NPO that engages with traditional healers.

Expanding the outreach program has been at the heart of the GLN, especially now that the organisation is more recognisable in communities. “As part of our future endeavours we want to take our programs to other spaces, such as Newcastle, Escort and Greytown,” says Anthony.

The organisation has also looked at establishing relationships with educational institutions such as the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s Pietermaritzburg campus and Durban University of Technology. “It is important to create awareness in schools and tertiary institutions so that students are conscious of these issues and how they affect other people. This will allow students to establish support groups and hold workshops within their institutions, permitting fellow students to gain knowledge about hate crimes. On the other hand, establishing relations with educational institutions can help the GLN with regards to documentation and research on hate crimes and the marginalising of LGBTI and this can contribute to influencing the government in criminalising hate crimes,” says Anthony.



Combating hate crimes is extremely difficult. It involves changing the law, the system and people’s mindsets. Through their work, and despite considerable challenges, GLN is making remarkable headway in all of these avenues. Indeed, they are creating a more just society one step at a time.



RAISED VOICES: WOMEN SPEAK OUT

NOBHONGO GXOLO









Traditional practices have a stronghold in rural communities around South Africa. This can be difficult because many of these practices are entrenched in patriarchal behaviours which often oppress women. Even though they may be unconstitutional, these practices are accepted as the norm in some communities, by both men and women.

KwaZulu-Natal-based Justice and Women (JAW) is a gender-justice organisation. According to Grace Khethiwe-Ngema, a co-ordinator at JAW, the organisation runs workshops, which focus on strengthening individual agency when it comes to gender concerns. “We create spaces where the individual can speak openly and trust that they’ll be given help,” she says.


In some rural communities women do not have autonomy over their bodies. Decisions that affect them are made for them without their input. “Women cannot challenge these unfair practices because of their financial dependency on men,” says Grace.

“We help them evaluate their feelings about how much they’re willing to stand in a relationship. We start by challenging their perception of relationship norms,” she explains. Grace describes how sometimes women come into a discussion so angry at their abusive partners that they can hardly speak about their experience. That’s when JAW would step in for a debriefing session. Here they implement programs like their modified Tai-Chi, which consists of slow body movements aimed at reducing stress and anxiety, coupled with an awareness of breathing, which helps women connect with their bodies.

Grace says the women they deal with often deny the existence of sexual violence, even in their own lives. “We once worked with a very traditional and rural community where it was believed to be normal behaviour. So we role-played scenarios showing that it’s not okay,” she adds.





In their community dialogues, JAW tries to focus on three aspects of experience. ‘The head’, which is the woman’s perception of her environment and what is happening around her; ‘the heart’, which is focused on how she feels about these experiences and how she addresses them; and “the feet”, where the actions she can take in response to her situation are explored.



Ntombi Ngobese, a facilitator at JAW, says their work is about helping women make their own decisions. Recognising the influence of traditional leaders, especially in rural areas, JAW has focused their energies on partnering with traditional leaders as well as the men in the community. This is how they aim to make real change, by speaking to the root of the problem, and including both men and women in these processes.

“The conversations are long,” she says. “We help [women in our community] understand how certain aspects of culture can sometimes oppress women. These women can then report their problems to the traditional leaders who now have a better understanding about which issues they should handle themselves and which ones should be taken straight to the police.”

Ntombi says that JAW members respect their cultures. She believes it’s this approach that has helped communities become more open to hearing what the organisation has to say. “The role play helps us discuss the issues together – the good and the bad things. We don’t go in pushing our agenda. Instead we try to find a win-win situation. It helps that the Inkosi (Chief) isn’t a difficult man – he helps us work with the other men.”

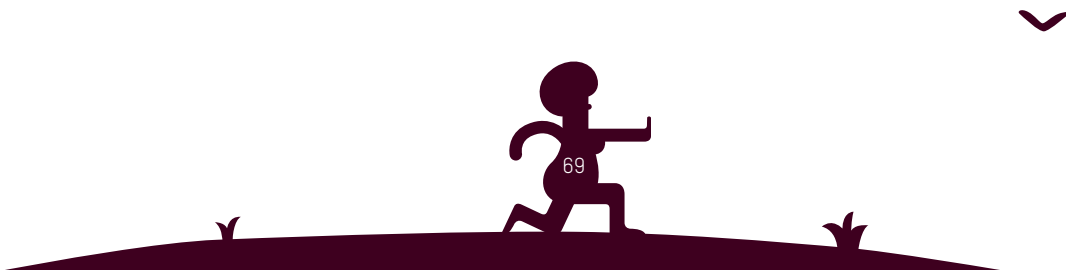


When asked to share an example of an oppressive cultural practice still at play, Ntombi refers to lobola (bridal price). “Because it’s expensive it has men thinking that when women are ‘paid for’ they become an asset. But umakoti (the wife) isn’t meant to be treated like a slave. Lobola is supposed to be about the meeting of two families, two households – but they don’t understand that.”

Ntombi tells about working in a community where there had been no developments in terms of social issues. People were uncomfortable to even refer to sexual organs using their anatomically correct names. She describes the experience: “I was accused of being a slut – of trying to seduce the men in attendance.”

One man was particularly offended by her. He asked after her, wanting to know which clan she was from and why her husband let her behave in such a disrespectful way. Ntombi’s husband was pointed out to him as the man who had driven her to the workshop. It was only then that the man was willing to listen to what she had to say. It took a man supporting a woman in order for her voice and opinion to be considered worthwhile. An important point to focus on is the fact that her voice was finally heard.

This complex dilemma factors into why JAW doesn’t only seek the participation of women, but of men, including traditional leaders, as well. Structurally, men and tradition hold positions of power. So it’s important that these two spheres of society come together to aid women in their fight against societal oppression. Traditional leaders can play a particularly crucial role by supporting women and voicing their stance when tradition stops hindering and starts aiding in the healing.



WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION

LINDA MASANGO



KwaZulu Regional Christian Council (KRCC) seeks to ensure unity amongst churches and the community in the struggle against poverty and injustices in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The construction of concrete tanks, vegetable tunnels and houses by groups of women in the community forms part of the organisation's economic program.

The aim is to increase the involvement of churches in economic activities that contribute to poverty alleviation in rural communities. KRCC has 27 self-help groups, which keep more than 400 women actively involved in making their lives better. Home based-care, a soup kitchen, construction and income-generating initiatives are some of the activities of these groups. All of the groups are managed by women and address needs in their communities. The construction projects of self-help groups challenge the community perceptions around roles and responsibilities of women, as it is a job that is usually done by men.

Exchange programs to Limpopo, North West and other parts of KwaZulu-Natal signalled the start of a new era for KRCC's self-help groups in their construction projects. "The trip to Limpopo included organisations such as Operation Hunger. The purpose was to explore the idea of building concrete tanks. Then we took a group of women to the North West to see how the tanks are constructed," says Mxolisi Nyuswa, director of KRCC. This permitted the organisation to change their water conservation system from a weak plastic tank to a long-lasting concrete tank while also challenging gender norms within their communities.

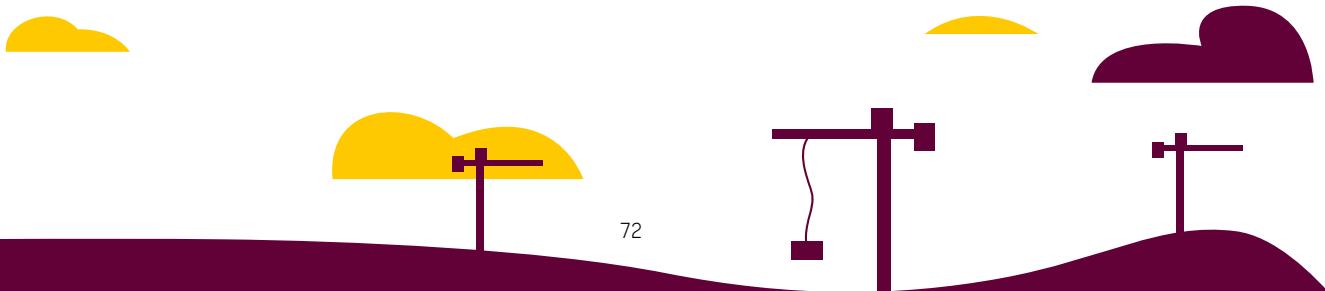
KRCC decided to emulate this idea because of the advantages, such as skills creation rather than buying from a retailer, and the durable material used for a concrete tank, which can withstand the heat waves, hailstorms and wildfires that occur in northern KwaZulu-Natal. The tanks have been built at schools and in the community, providing water for food gardens and helping the schools feed their learners with vegetables and soup.

KRCC also supports those self-help groups that build blocks to construct houses and extend existing ones. They are a separate self-group from the group that build the concrete tanks, but both groups share the same ethos. Women help with activities like mixing concrete and clearing rubble from building sites. This initiative helps the groups to further develop their expertise, which results in communities being less reliant on government to provide low-cost houses.

Mxolisi says: “Our motto is that we are not going to wait for government, we’re going to get the work done, with or without government.”

The organisation has used cultural practices as an entry point for promoting citizen participation and challenging gender norms. Culturally, it is women and girls who are expected to collect water from the river. The tanks have changed the way people source water, but also encouraged women to explore the male-dominated sector of construction. In addition, they have become income-generating structures, allowing women to put food on the table. “This was intended as a gender project looking at making women active participants in their communities,” says Mxolisi.

The idea of women building concrete tanks came as a huge surprise to most men in the community because the commonly-held view amongst people in the community is that a woman’s place is in the house rather than doing construction work. That misconception resulted in men wanting to take over the project. “It is interesting that one man was able to wiggle his way into the self-help group initially just to give a hand, but ended up wanting to earn an income. When his demand was rejected he left claiming that KRCC owes him money,” says Mxolisi.



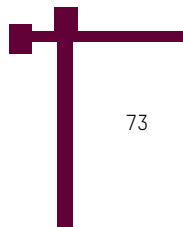
Some members of the community reacted with curiosity as this project was the first of its kind in Eshowe. They were keen to see how work done by women would benefit their immediate society.

Women were not only instrumental in providing clean water through building concrete tanks but they also built vegetable tunnels at schools and community centres. This project responded to weather conditions that destroy the crops because these tunnels provide protection for the plants.

Mxolisi adds: "Building vegetable tunnels was our attempt to be proactive against the extreme levels of heat and heavy rains on crops."

Overall these construction projects had a positive impact on the women who participated. The groups travelled outside their communities, attended workshops, and gained practical experience. This work provided communities with skills to use in the future and, most importantly, helped improve their self-esteem. It is a successful model which other women, locally and from different parts of the country, have considered important to learn about as a best practice approach.

"If such [projects] are done repeatedly and on a bigger scale, we believe that things will really change," says Mxolisi.




LIFELINE:

GIVING POWER BACK TO THE PEOPLE

MATTHEW MOLVER






Lifeline provides access to a 24-hour telephonic service that offers counselling for people experiencing stress and trauma – both psychological and social. The latter includes stigma and other challenges that they may confront in their social circles and struggle to deal with.

Since Lifeline was founded in Sydney in 1963, they have helped thousands of people with a wide variety of issues. The first Lifeline in South Africa was established in 1970 and since then the organisation has grown exponentially, offering more than just a telephonic counselling service.

The expanded services include life skills workshops for at-risk youth. These cover topics such as communication, eating well, and adhering to antiretroviral treatment. These topics were rolled out in October and November 2014 in the districts of eThekweni, Ugu and Ilembe. The workshops included sharing with those living with HIV the importance of having a balanced diet and eating prior to taking their treatment, as well as developing effective ways of sharing their status and communicating this information in their relationships.

Many of the young people Lifeline Durban works with are sex workers and the initiatives aim to support these young people by providing outreach services. Pravisha Dhanapalan, the director at Lifeline Durban explains: “Weekly, we have mobile HIV-testing units going into areas where these high risk youths gather. In Durban’s Warwick Avenue area, Lifeline provides a homeopath, HIV-testing and a crèche ensuring that sex workers’ children are in a safe place while they are at work. Lifeline also interacts with clubs and brothels frequented by sex workers providing



condoms, and protection against violence by liaising with the club owners, making them aware of the dangers these women face from customers who frequent these establishments. This ultimately goes to improving their working conditions. Initially there was resistance from businesses owners but they realised that the health of their workers impacted upon their own business needs, so they in turn supported Lifeline's initiatives."

In addition to providing psychological support and resources such as regular testing and access to healthcare, Lifeline has introduced 10-week income-generating courses for at-risk youth. These courses specifically target youth at risk of substance abuse and people engaged in sex work. By providing skills and information, these courses aim to provide alternative or additional income-generating opportunities for the youth involved.

The courses include card-making, beadwork, computer literacy and hairdressing. Participants are also taught how to budget their money so they can make the best use of what they earn. Support groups are provided during the courses to talk about any problems the attendees are having. The courses in card-making and beadwork allow the recruits to open home businesses and become self-employed. This not only provides an income, but empowers sex workers with a sense of achievement and a mental boost which improves their lives significantly. The hairdressing and computer literacy courses have been very popular and have seen much success. They provide the recruits with skills that allow them to work in a salon or go into the corporate world.

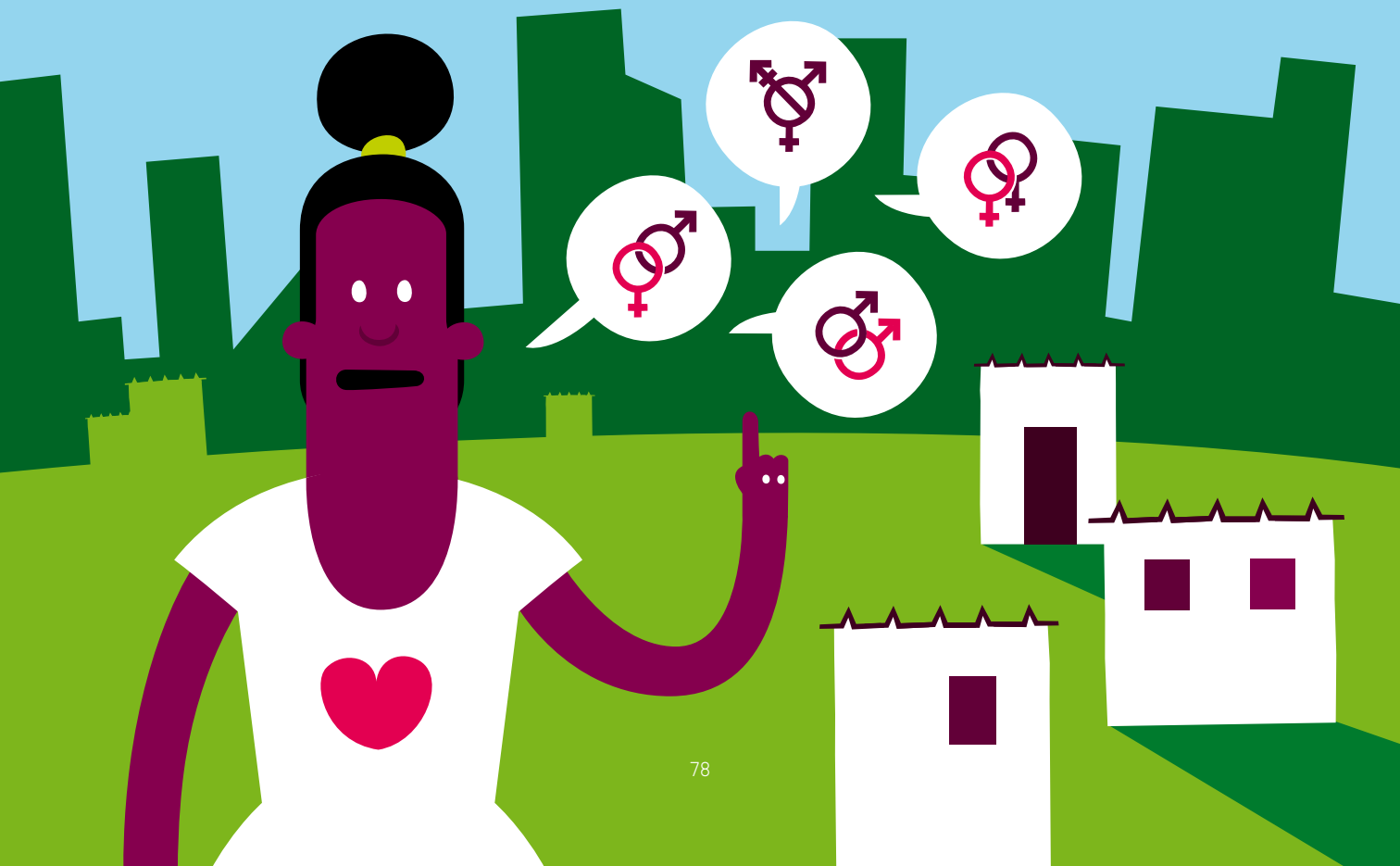
Pravisha says: “Seventy percent of the peer educators involved in the courses are former at-risk youths who went through the courses themselves and are now giving back to the community and helping Lifeline. Others are going through Lifeline’s counselling training so that they too can counsel other at-risk youths. Who better to understand the plight of these youngsters than those who have been through the same thing?”.

Lifeline’s work is helping many people. They are providing people with choices and the chance to break the cycle of poverty and the state of powerlessness that many sex workers and at-risk youth find themselves in. They are working with people to bring about change, which in the long-term will benefit them and reduce the risk that they are harmed or exploited by people with more power than them. Lifeline is putting the power back in the hands of at-risk youth and sex workers.



RAISING CONSCIOUSNESS IN SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

LINDA MASANGO



Project Empower is a Durban-based non-governmental organisation that works closely with young women to support them to protect their sexual and reproductive rights. According to Ntokozo Madlala of Project Empower, the group works with young women from informal settlements and women of all ages from a rural community in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

Many of the young women in urban informal settlements come from rural areas in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. "Project Empower educates young women about taking care of sexual and reproductive health and their rights. Most young women are not aware of their rights," says Ntokozo.

Sexual reproductive health and rights are about ensuring that everyone can make their own choices concerning their sexual actions and reproduction free from prejudice, cruelty and violence. Access to sexual reproductive health and rights guarantees individuals the ability to choose whether they want to engage in sexual intercourse, when they want to do so, and with whom. People also have the right to choose if and when they want to have children. Access to information about their rights gives individuals the agency to do so.

Project Empower focuses on young women who live in extreme poverty. The program does not dictate how people should live their lives, but instead places emphasis on supporting them to analyse their personal situations. The organisation encourages young women to interrogate the decisions they make, the impact of the decisions, and who benefits or loses out due to them.

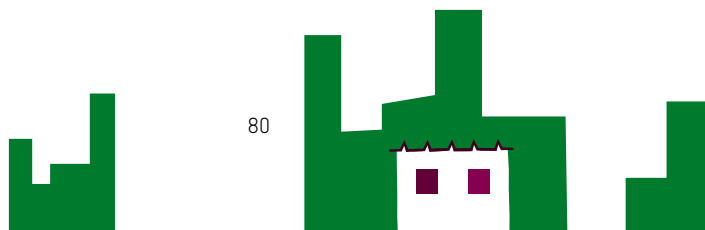
“In most cases there is a gender dynamic that exists in relationships where most young women engage in sexual intercourse, not for their own benefit, but to please their partners,” says Ntokozo.

Project Empower has created conscious-raising groups, which provide safe spaces for women to talk and engage. In these groups the organisation discovered that women experience a lot of pressure to please their partners and sometimes rely on sexual enhancers to make sex more enjoyable for their partners.

“Young women use sexual enhancers like snuff and detergents thus compromising their health,” says Ntokozo. Women also jeopardise their health by engaging in unsafe sex for the benefit of their partners.”

Young girls believe that once a relationship has lasted for three months it means that they must stop using a condom.” While young women are concerned about safer sex, they have little ability in their sexual relationships to insist on the use of condoms. This is why Project Empower has created a space for them to engage with these issues.

In group meetings, young women gather together to discuss their experiences, identify challenges and work together for solutions. “We are unapologetic about our approach; we work with women, although there have been interventions that involve men,” says Ntokozo.



Sometimes the solutions include discussing ways in which young women can engage their partners about sexual reproductive health. Sexual reproductive rights also extend to the access and availability of public healthcare facilities, such as clinics. Many young women are uncomfortable about discussing their sexual and reproductive health with older people and with clinic staff, in particular. The young women's groups approach clinics and ask to be represented on clinic committees. In addition to sitting on clinic committees, young women make random visits to clinics to interact with other young women waiting as patients in queues, discuss the services they are receiving, and engage with them about sexual and reproductive health issues.

Project Empower also focuses on educating women about male and female condoms, with a special focus on female condoms which enable women to protect themselves. According to Ntokozo, there is a limited supply and availability of female condoms.

Project Empower pushes for the healthcare system to make female condoms more accessible. Project Empower's approach is rooted in empowerment through information sharing, access, and creating safe spaces for young women to learn about and demand their sexual and reproductive health rights. In this way, these young women change their own lives and work collectively to change their communities.



EMBRACING COMMUNITY COMPLEXITY

Communities are inherently complex but this is often not factored into programming. OAU in South Africa, together with partners, have tried to be much more conscious of this complexity within strategies and implementation.

It is hoped that these vignettes demonstrate responsiveness and holistic approaches which organisations have used in a range of contexts and to deal with various issues.



DENIS HURLEY CENTRE:

AT THE HEART OF URBAN-BASED DEVELOPMENT

LINDA MASANGO

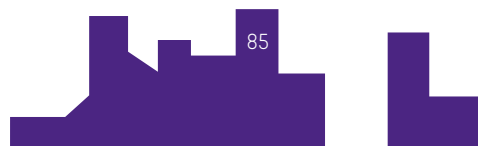
DENIS HURLEY ST

In Denis Hurley Street (on the corner of Cathedral Road) in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal there is a centre by the same name. Scattered in the vicinity are faith groups, transport systems passing over and through the space, a host of thriving formal and informal business and the busiest marketplace in Durban.

The centre's location allows it to take advantage of the hub of activities that surround it, making it easier to collaborate with diverse institutions. As a faith-based organisation and NPO, the Denis Hurley Centre (DHC) attempts to provide services to vulnerable groups and to restore trust in the city.

Raymond Perrier, director of the DHC, says: "For many years this place used to be a school. In a way, cities are like an unmanageable schoolyard. To some degree you need to guide and discipline, but if you discipline too much you break what makes the schoolyard interesting in the first place."

This is seen clearly in the way that up to 300 people queue, more or less peacefully, to receive a free hot lunch at the DHC. While they are waiting, they also get a chance to interact with social workers, have a hot shower and get their clothes washed. While free healthcare services are not readily available in Durban's city centre, the DHC's presence in the city closes that gap somewhat by providing free healthcare through the Usizo Lwethu Afrisun Clinic. The clinic responds to the needs of vulnerable people living in the city. Raymond says the clinic fulfils an important role because of where it's located. "We are seen as a clinic that treats people with great respect and is welcoming of all people: refugees, homeless and drug users." The DHC clinic focuses on primary healthcare including HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis. Of the people it serves, 40% are foreign nationals and 60% are South Africans.



The city is also overwhelmed with wunga (or whoonga) addicts. The DHC’s physical presence in the central business district plays an influential role in attempting to eradicate this problem.

“We respond to the basic sicknesses related to wunga use, such as respiratory and skin problems,” says Raymond.

The core principal of the centre rests in the idea of collaboration between institutions in the city which is why they joined forces with the mayoral office’s initiatives to counsel drug users. Raymond says: “The Qalakabusha Project is an initiative of the mayor’s office through the Newlands clinic, which is the only free drug rehabilitation clinic in the city.” The DHC also hosts Narcotic Anonymous meetings.

This organisation’s mission concerning urban-based development is drawn from the diversity of religions existing in the city. Another example of collaboration is between faith groups. Raymond explains: “We want to show that the different faith groups in the city – Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews and Buddhists – can work together to transform the lives of people.” For example, the Victor Daitz Trust, a Jewish foundation, supported the centre with money for a CD4 machine to test the CD4 count⁶ of people living with HIV to establish whether they should be on antiretroviral treatment. The scheme for feeding homeless people is a partnership with a group of Muslim organisations. These examples show the collaborative effort between different religions in terms of resources and volunteers.

⁶ “A CD4 count is a lab test that measures the number of CD4 T lymphocytes (CD4 cells) in a sample of your blood. In people with HIV, it is the most important laboratory indicator of how well your immune system is working and the strongest predictor of HIV progression.” Source: www.aids.gov

Cities in South Africa, as elsewhere, often face a lot of criticism, especially from their citizens. People complain about crime, dirt, and traffic and those who can afford it end up moving to 'safer, cleaner and well-kept' suburbs. This indicates that people have lost trust in their inner cities. "I think it is sad that so many people are frightened of their own cities," says Raymond.

"Yes, we are responding to the needs of the vulnerable people, but what we are also doing is giving middle class people who are scared of coming into the city an opportunity to volunteer, attend events, help in the kitchen and discover the city," Raymond explains.

The centre views gated communities as the enemy of urban areas because they are founded on the idea of separating one group of people from the rest of the public. The culture of gated communities relies on building high walls and maintaining them, and turning a blind eye to the problems and crises facing the city. The DHC is a place that attempts to break down walls and establish relationships between communities.

The centre places emphasis on centrality, coexistence and collaboration as the main features to urban-based development. Raymond says: "We just named the main hall the Gandhi-Luthuli Peace Hall. We have done that because we want to make sure that at the heart of our operation is a statement which is about racial and religious diversity, one that is united in the care for the underprivileged, the struggle for justice, and the love of Durban." Clearly, this organisation does not only talk about the principles of coexistence and collaboration but practices them too.





USE OF MOBILE PHONES IN PROGRAMS

NIKITA SMITH

An innovative method of gathering information has been introduced and it is literally right at your fingertips. Woza Moya and Oxfam are using mobile phones to collect data about households, the community and the issues that affect people in the Ufafa Valley.

Woza Moya is a South African non-profit organisation that focuses on health and poverty concerns in the Ufafa Valley in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The organisation was established in April 2000 and runs different programs, working together with members of its community to address underlying issues.

A survey was conducted around the issues of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) over three months from June to August 2014. "It was a thorough survey consisting of about 69 questions," says Sue Hedden, the director at Woza Moya. The questionnaire, which was formulated by Danny Lichter, a volunteer from the Oxfam-Monash Student Volunteer Program, included in-depth questions such as: 'Do people have decent toilets?' 'Is it accessible especially to people with special needs?' 'Are there facilities available for handwashing?' and 'How often do people get sick with regards to poor quality of water?'

The survey was loaded on mobile phones provided by Oxfam and participants were required to enter the data on the devices. This proved to be a huge improvement in the collection of data.

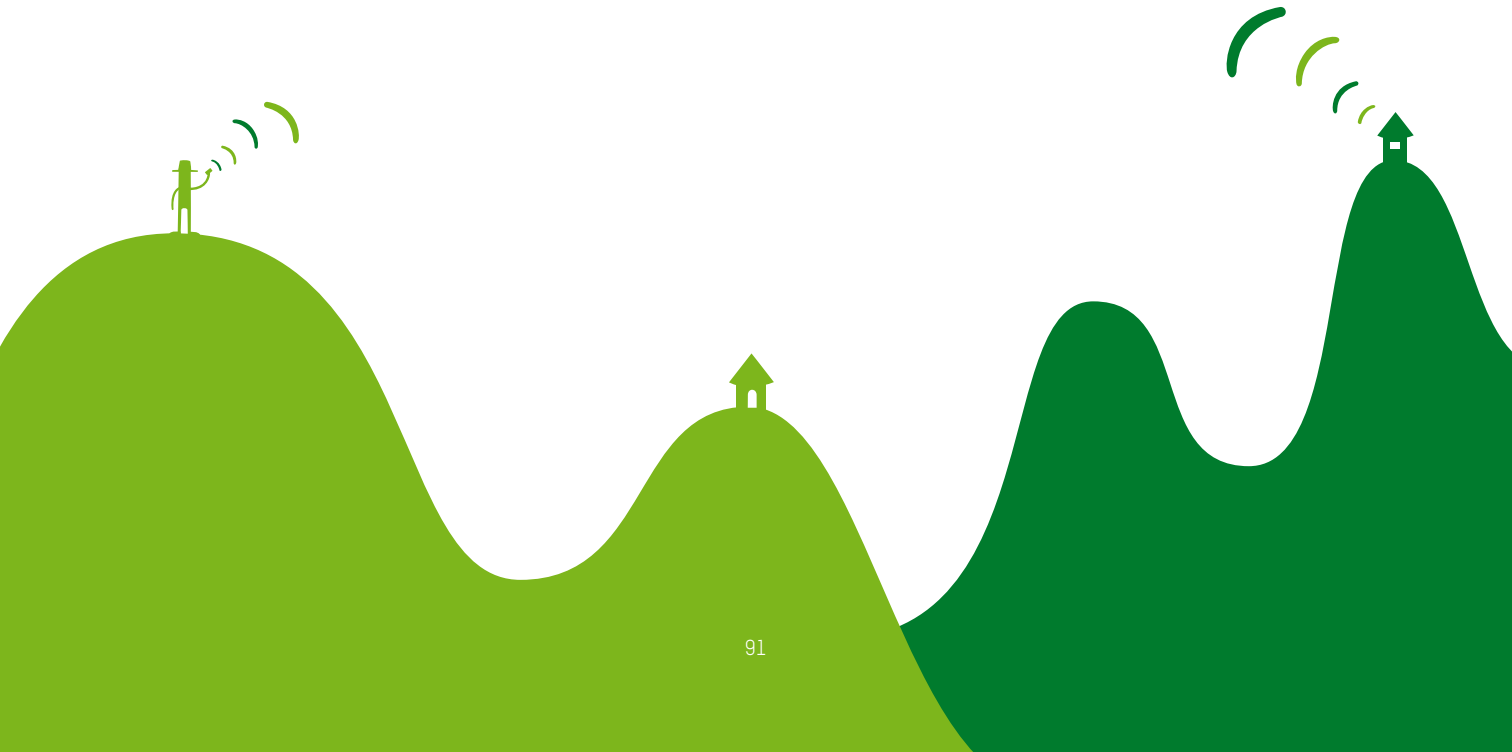
“We could make the survey much longer, which would not be possible if the old pen and paper was used. It would take much more time to read and answer 69 questions in the past. Another great benefit of using mobile phones to survey was that errors were hugely reduced. Answers that were input incorrectly were not accepted and also people weren’t able to skip answers. The application on the mobile phone would not allow you to continue with the survey if you skipped a question. Previously, we would often receive questionnaires back with blank answers and questions answered incorrectly,” says Sue.

Using applications on mobile devices to collect information meant that the process was much quicker and more accurate with built-in checks and balances. “The funny thing is that Ufaha has many hills and as soon as we reached the top of the hill, the mobile phones auto-uploaded the information that everyone had gathered straight to the web-based consul showing live information as it is uploaded in Durban, which cut out all the data capturing processes. Prior to using mobile phones, this task would usually take weeks to complete with the community youth of Woza Moya being stuck with mountains of paperwork,” Sue says.

The information received by the consul was collated and sent back to the team at Woza Moya in the form of an Excel spreadsheet for the team to interpret accordingly.

“It was a big task, but the youth from the community accompanied Woza Moya community care workers placed throughout the valley to complete the survey in the households they visited. We found this partnership very valuable since the care workers would help verify the household answers,” adds Sue.

Woza Moya intend to conduct such a survey every two years and hope to have more support before and after the survey to improve the use of mobile technology to carry out studies.





QUELLING VIOLENCE & BUILDING PEACE

LINDA MASANGO



Originally called The KwaZulu-Natal Program for Survivors of Violence (PSV), Sinani was established 21 years ago to run a program for survivors of violence.

The program was started at a time when South Africa was dealing with the trauma experienced by many communities as a result of political and inter-group violence in KwaZulu-Natal. Sinani aimed to offer advice and support on peace-keeping and trauma counselling.

Often communities are overwhelmed by two kinds of conflict, one that is personal in nature and the other, which is politically driven. An example of personal conflict can be illustrated by an incident that happened in Inhlazuka, a rural area near Pietermaritzburg. A dispute between two men over a relationship with a woman went from being a minor disagreement to becoming an inter-household conflict which caused more hostilities in the area. Examples of political conflicts are evident in instances where leaders, such as some traditional leaders and ward councillors, have the potential to inspire division within communities, even though the circumstances might differ from one community to the next. Many people in rural or semi-rural areas work in big cities, such as Johannesburg and Durban. In some cases, a dispute between individuals may start in urban areas, and by the time individuals return to their village the conflict is too violent and advanced for community leaders to handle. Having worked with many communities and finding that the nature of violence and conflict is highly context-specific in each instance, Sinani has adopted different methods of working.

When making initial contact with communities, the organisation explains to the community leaders their role as a mediator between them and local parties that are in conflict with one another. Sinani works closely with influential figures, such as chiefs, headmen and ward councillors, in affected communities.

Sinani also organises workshops for leaders and political parties that are in conflict. The aim of these workshops is to give people an understanding of what is meant by conflict and conflict mapping. Conflict mapping is the process in which a disagreement is critically analysed to help both the interveners and actors within the conflict to understand its causes. Ideally, this exercise will encourage a reduction of the conflict, allow better management, and result in a solution.

Through their youth development project, Sinani combats the normalisation of violence by giving power to young people. Milton Gumede, community development facilitator at Sinani, says: "Sinani focuses on youth development because it is the youth that are used during conflict so when developing them you break the cycle of violence." The organisation focuses on personal and leadership development and goal setting. The youth also take part in a 'respect campaign', which promotes dignified ways of communication between community leaders, men, women, youth and children.

Sinani works on building political tolerance during local and national elections, such as in Lindelani township, which experienced political violence between various parties in the 1990s and early 2000s. In this community, Sinani invited the African National Congress, Inkatha Freedom Party, National Freedom Party, Democratic Alliance, and community-based organisations to partake in workshops. The purpose of these sessions was to highlight the similarities between the parties rather than the differences, focusing on their similar needs and wants. "The community and the ward councillor of Lindelani are delighted about Sinani's workshops," says Milton.

In their workshops Sinani supports parties and civil society to understand that destroying community infrastructure is not a constructive route to take when protesting about service delivery. This is based on the importance of peaceful coexistence to the organisation.

In Inhlazuka, there was a power gap between the traditional and development committees which work closely with the ward councillor. Sinani assisted both groups to understand that they should strive for the development of both organisations rather than for power. Milton says the councillor and ward committee have begun to share power by attending traditional council meetings.

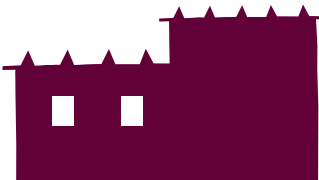




“Although it was not easy, traditional leaders and men have accepted women as leaders in rural communities. For example, in Inhlazuka the chairperson of the Inkumane Peace Committee is a woman,” says Sinani’s operations manager, Nkosinathi Mbatha. Since women have been allowed the opportunity to lead in these communities, they have gained confidence and skills which they can use in other platforms.

The cleansing ceremony is an important step in the process of peace building and reconciliation that Sinani utilises. The actual ceremony comes at the end of a long process that involves dialogue between groups that have had a long history of violence and conflict, which includes the loss of lives, displacement of people and deeply entrenched divisions. An example of this was a reconciliation ceremony held at Empandwini, which signified the end of fighting and the start of a peaceful time. This ceremony targeted six chiefs of Sobonakhona, Isimahla, Maphumulo, Thoyana, Ngonyameni and Embo Thimony, their traditional councils and members of the community. These areas were overwhelmed by all sorts of violence that lasted for years and flared up during holidays, especially during the Easter and December holidays. Inkosi yamaNazareta was invited to conduct the cleansing ceremony because of the church’s connections with African belief systems. Most people and leaders in KwaZulu-Natal trust the church’s process of cleansing during such ceremonies to symbolically reconcile groups and involve those from each side who had died during the violence. “The community is delighted that the ceremony took place and since then there has not been any conflict, so in a nutshell the area is peaceful,” says Nkosinathi.

“It is important to say that working as mediator is not a walk in the park. In some instances meetings end at the brink of a war, but since we were pushing the respect campaign which encouraged treating each other with respect and dignity, we were able to push through and usher a violence-free era,” says Nkosinathi. Despite considerable challenges, Sinani’s approach to reducing violence and building peace works because it embraces context and diversity while resting upon the critical principle of respect.





GIS:

MAPPING FOR ACTION

NIKITA SMITH

2

2

The rural community of KwaNgwanase is often faced with challenges due to the lack of water service provision. The area is located in KwaZulu-Natal some 15km south of the Mozambique-South Africa border and is rich in history and culture.

KwaNgwanase is located on Tembe land and belongs to the Tembe chief. This has been occupied for 1 000 years. A territorial battle came about when the Tembes came from Maputo, Mozambique and found the Ngubanes occupying this land. The Ngubanes were a little old-fashioned in their hunting and used sharpened shells to slaughter their prey while the Tembes had knives. At some stage the Ngubane tribe had caught and killed a buck with their sharpened sea shells. The Tembe tribe showed their advanced utensils and helped the other tribe skin their kill. As a sign of gratitude, the Ngubane's gave the Tembe tribe the front left shoulder of the buck. In Tembe culture however, giving someone the front, left shoulder of a slaughtered animal symbolises a form of submission, which is how this act was interpreted, and the Tembe tribe took over the area.

In recent years, issues surrounding water in the area had prompted community members to make a change. People would contribute a certain amount of money, between R20 and R100 to dig a hole, get a pump or generator for electricity to pump water and purchase community tanks. Household members would then contribute on a monthly basis for diesel or petrol for the pumps and generators and for ongoing maintenance. The local municipality has since taken over this service and outsourced it to a private company, which is now delivering this service to the community.



KwaNgwanase is situated near the iSimangaliso Wetlands Park which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The area consists of various water sources which some community members are not aware of and did not use the water from these sources.

Tholulwazi Uzivikele (TU) is a non-profit organisation in the area which aims to empower and share knowledge with community members around various issues including HIV, poverty and poor service delivery.

“There is one of a few open wells in the community where people collect water. The well contains leach water which is a form of water that naturally leaches through the soil. If you use it all up, then you have to wait a while before water naturally leaches through again so at times locals sleep over at this well to be the first to collect water. This can be dangerous, but the lack of access to water in the community has many other implications,” says Kobus Meyer, program director at TU.

TU established the Water Users Association, which consists of a group of locals who have been chosen to represent their communities on water issues. In partnership with Oxfam, TU has hosted workshops in the community using drama and theatre techniques to use people’s lived experiences to gather stories and information relating to water issues.



Although still in its infancy, TU is also piloting geographic information systems (GIS) to educate community members about the sources of water that are available to them. “We would like to start with one area at a time and map all the water sources whether it is a tap that has never worked, a well that has run dry, or anything that is related to water; then take a photograph of the water source and get the GIS location. At least twice a year (dry and rainy seasons) we would like to track the state of the water source; whether or not it is working and supplying water. We would also like to track the quality of the water, like whether it is safe for human consumption,” says Kobus.

Explaining the idea behind GIS mapping, Kobus says it is to “make known to community members the available resources that they have and also encourage them to protect and preserve these sources of water, for example, covering a spring so it doesn’t deteriorate”.

The team at TU views GIS mapping as a way to “give tools to the Water Users Association to advocate for themselves and to engage with community members, the local municipality and various stake holders”. All forms of knowledge are powerful, and understanding people’s stories, as well as making available spatial information provided through GIS, attempts to give communities in this area a more holistic way of seeing critical issues such as water quality and shortages.



5

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are essential in the way OAU works with partner organisations, and the way those organisations work with communities and local stakeholders. Our partnership model is deliberate, relational and diverse, and has evolved over the years.

The more this approach is practised the more OAU has realised its potential and how unique it is in the current South African development context. The final set of vignettes demonstrates some interesting aspects of these partnerships in order to generate further awareness of, and interest in, meaningful relationships between organisations.



INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN WATER & SANITATION

LINDA MASANGO





“People with disabilities are amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised in any community; disabled women struggle more than men. So if your development has to reach the most marginalised and vulnerable it has to look at people with disabilities,” says Sarah Rule, the director at CBR Education and Training for Empowerment (CREATE).

In this light, the Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) aims to reduce water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) related inequalities in vulnerable groups such as people living with disabilities.

“Disability inclusion means a community accepting and understanding people with disabilities. It also means understanding their human rights and including them in activities and projects happening in communities,” says Nokulunga Radebe, HIV and disability inclusion trainer at CREATE.

Development is a process intended to benefit everyone in a community, but, in most cases, organisations fail to establish programs that include people with disabilities. This was one of the main challenges Oxfam Australia noticed with the AACES partnership. To counter this problem, Oxfam included KwaZulu-Natal based CREATE as a technical partner to encourage inclusive development.


CREATE was tasked with working with seven organisations to help them become disability inclusive. In order to do this, CREATE developed a three-tier approach. Sarah says: “We looked at the organisational culture and how welcoming the culture is to disabled people; we looked at policies of the organisation and whether they facilitate disability inclusion; and we looked at the practices of the organisation: are they disability inclusive.”



Changing an organisation's culture can take different forms, and transforming the mindset of AACES' partners with regards to people with disabilities was vital. Establishing development programs that include people with disabilities requires an understanding of what is meant by disability. CREATE found, for example, that AACES partners did not know the correct terminology to use when talking to, or about, people with disabilities. Due to a lack of knowledge, organisations also did not know how to work with, or involve, people with disabilities. According to Nokulunga, it was not easy for the AACES partners to make the necessary changes. In the beginning, it took time for them to understand the aim of the inclusion process, but they soon began to appreciate it and started to accommodate people with disabilities.

CREATE has done extensive work training mothers of children with disabilities in communities where AACES partners conduct their programs. This is to help parents understand the nature of their child's disability. It then becomes easier for them to assist the child when experiencing problems such as illness. "We have been working with mothers in our training. We are now going to involve immediate family members of people with disabilities at the training we will be doing at Woza Moya," Nokulunga says. The plan is to sensitise the whole family unit and that's why the training is not only confined to parents. Sarah adds: "At Woza Moya we developed a 15-day course which we ran in three separate weeks involving home-based care workers and that really gave them a good understanding on disability particularly with children. At Tholulwazi Uzivikele (TU) 13 to 17 members also attended the disability inclusion training. Organisations were therefore gaining knowledge about people with disabilities, which helped them create an inclusive environment."

The training is also offered to people with disabilities to ensure that it is truly inclusive of all members of society. Nokulunga states: "People with disabilities are part of all disability inclusion training since their slogan says 'Nothing about us without us'. So we share information about WASH and they give advice and suggestions where necessary." Training and seeking advice from people with disabilities gives information to AACES's partners, which they can use to establish disability-friendly projects and also refine those that are already in place.



Making partner organisations' infrastructure accessible is significant because not only does it benefit those with disabilities but it increases access for everybody. Sarah explains: "Putting a ramp from the road to the pavement or in a building does not only help a person with disability, but it also helps the mother with a pram." Many partners have adopted this mindset. Organisations like Maputaland Development and Information Centre (MDIC) have begun to look at school WASH infrastructure to facilitate access for people with disabilities. Save the Children KwaZulu-Natal has also considered the design and infrastructure of crèche centres for access to children with disabilities, while Woza Moya has added ramps to their offices and their toilets. This shows a positive change in attitude of these partners.

It is important to revise the policies of the organisations so that they offer a firm foundation for inclusive development. CREATE encouraged partners to make their policies disability-friendly. Changes in approach have already taken place. "Organisations like TU are now allowing and encouraging people with disabilities to apply for jobs," says Nokulunga. With such reforms, people with disabilities may be able to access employment and thus better their lives.

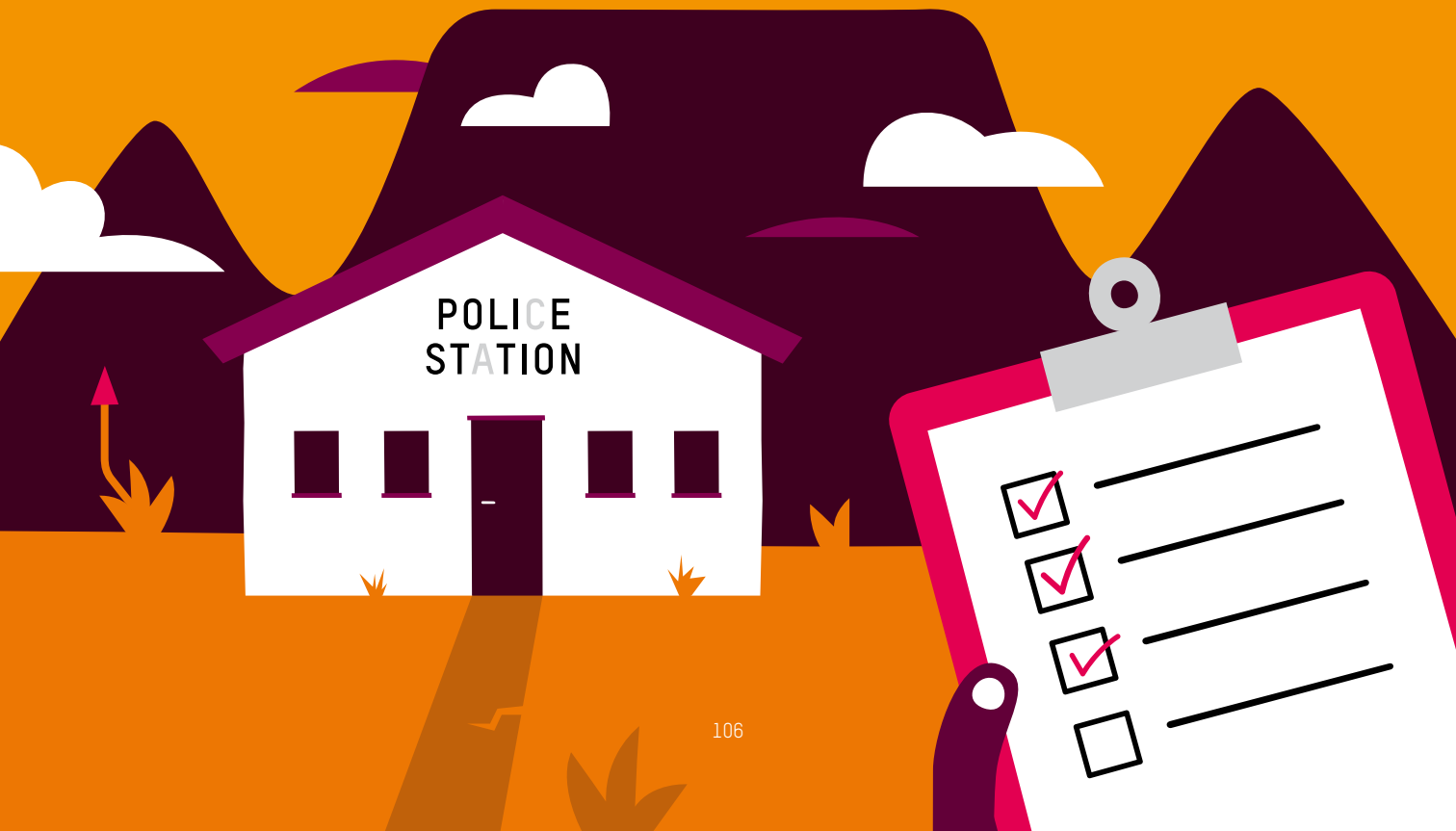
"AACES partners were not aware about disability inclusion; their policies and infrastructure did not cater for people with disabilities."

However, that time has passed, and they have evolved with guidance from CREATE. What is important about the partnership between these organisations and CREATE is that they did not have a 'one-size-fits-all' approach, but looked at each individual organisation's context and needs.

Sarah reminds us of the importance of disability inclusion: "Disability inclusion is no longer a favour that government and organisations need to do, it is actually a right for people to be included in society and in services."

SHUKUMISA SHAKES THINGS UP

NOBHONGO GXOLO

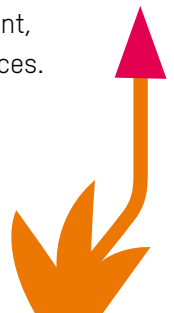


The Shukumisa Campaign was designed to stir and shake up public and political will so that policies and laws related to sexual offences could be developed, strengthened and implemented.

Rape Crisis is one of 46 non-profit organisations involved in the coalition that makes up this campaign. Rape Crisis director, Kathleen Dey, says it's important to challenge and change public perceptions about rape. "Shukumisa lets the public know what government is doing. We publish pieces about the myths and stereotypes about rape to help people recognise that their understanding of rape is often skewed, for whatever reason. We make submissions to Parliamentary Committees as well as directing reports and letters to government departments that point out, using evidence-based research, where and what the gaps in implementation of laws are."

Shukumisa is an alliance of civil society organisations trying to make a dent in the high prevalence of gender-based violence. Amongst other factors, its success relies on bringing networks of organisations together to develop an advocacy base that encourages public debate and influences political trends. The focus is on strengthening the influence of civil society when it comes to violence against women. Their aim is to ensure that South Africa's sexual offences legislation protects survivors and acts as a deterrent to would-be rapists, and that the legislation is supported by a strong criminal justice system – a system that supports rape survivors' access to justice, rather than making them feel traumatised by their experience of reporting rape to officials, or being shamed into silence.

The campaign does this by monitoring police stations, health facilities and courts to establish whether these government facilities and service providers are honouring their commitment, which is to provide infrastructure suitable for housing services to victims of sexual offences.



Kathleen says that once the Sexual Offences Bill had been enacted in late 2007, the coalition had to ensure that the legislation would be implemented. “If it was stated that all police stations needed comfort rooms for rape survivors or victims of violence we deployed people to do walk-ins and check that these spaces existed,” says Kathleen. Shukumisa took it back to basics asking questions like: ‘Does a police station have a copy of the Act on their premises for police to refer to when working on sexual violence cases?’ ‘Is there a private room where survivors can report their cases in confidentially – one that doesn’t double up as a makeshift recreational room or space for taking breaks?’

Kathleen says: “The survey was purely infrastructural. We found that there were courts that were in a shocking state of disrepair. We found that about 50% of police stations didn’t have copies of the Act on site. Police lacked important resources. So we put all these findings in a report hoping to shake the system up.”

In the Eastern Cape, this on-the-ground work brought about a level of community activism. Some fieldworkers started to establish relationships with police commissioners. In the Western Cape some commissioners wanted the checklist that the field workers were working from, in order to implement it in their stations as a guideline of their own, providing checks and balances as a standard practice. In KwaZulu-Natal, a copy of the finalised report was taken to the provincial legislature with organisations from the coalition calling on provincial departments to address the relevant gaps. In this way the report is used as a basis for advocacy.

When Shukumisa held their very first meeting, less than 20 organisations were represented. A shared cause and the influence of word of mouth led to different organisations starting to participate in the campaign. Increased participation happened in a number of ways: Some groups would be invited to attend a field training session; a member would bring along an affiliate from another organisation whose interest would be piqued; and new members

continued to sign up and spread the word. The number of non-profit organisations participating in the campaign grew exponentially from its establishment in 2004, and then again from 2007 when the Sexual Offences Act was passed.

Collaborating in this way does have its challenges. It requires the members to recognise that they not only represent different organisations, but they're all individuals and are all very different. The participants are from different races, religions, classes, diverse backgrounds and education levels, speak distinct languages, and have contrasting experiences and exposure. It was largely these differences that led the members to develop a set of Norms of Inclusivity. These were rules established at the beginning of each meeting how the session would be conducted so that no one was left feeling excluded from the proceedings. Kathleen says: "One of the rules we came up with, which we still employ today, is that no one is allowed to speak using acronyms. The more obvious ones like the ANC and DA we use, but it was a way to acknowledge that it can get very confusing for new people to figure out what we are referring to when they are too hesitant to ask. You can struggle to keep up and get caught out if you're new to the group and unfamiliar with 'the speak'."

The benefit of various organisations working together in this way is that one gets to meet many, very different people. "When trying to get something done it's important to have an alliance, and to know the people in your alliance. We have a vast constituency that we can easily access. That means when an issue arises, we can confer and muster up a response very quickly. If we need to send out a press release and endorse it we can do that very quickly too. Working together as a coalition also means being able, as individual organisations, to strengthen our own advocacy effort," says Kathleen. She adds that the experience of meeting and working with a broad spectrum of organisations from academic institutions to NPOs to small village community-based organisations is very enriching. One has a very theoretical approach, while the other is more grassroots, offering practical solutions based on direct experiences.

Having many partners, and so many voices, can be challenging, but it means more heads coming together with a wealth of ideas, opinions and experiences. These lead to valuable strategies, processes and alliances; 'the stuff of change'.



SIYAVUNA:

THE PATH TO SELF-SUFFICIENCY

MATTHEW MOLVER



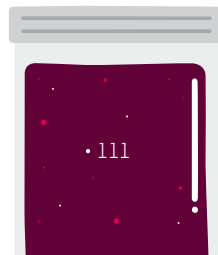
In KwaZulu-Natal, the organisation Give a Child a Family started a project in 2008 to teach foster parents, who were offering their homes to children, a chance to start their own food gardens. This was to bring about another source of income.

The foster parents were positive about the project and excited to take part. Growing exponentially, it eventually branched off to form its own organisation called Siyavuna, which currently operates in 10 communities around KwaZulu-Natal.

Siyavuna is a non-profit organisation whose main focus is to improve the livelihoods of almost 1 000 small-scale farmers in KwaZulu-Natal. It achieves this through marketing the crops grown, and supporting the co-operatives run in these communities, through the 'Kumnandi produce' brand.

To be part of the program, farmers have to go through a number of steps which Diane Pieters, the director at Siyavuna, outlines: "Pre-conditions for joining the program are that they have done a three-day organic training program, joined a farmer association, and signed up to get a membership card. Once these conditions have been met, they can start selling their produce to their co-operative under the Kumnandi brand. There are three categories that farmers are put into: M1, M2 and M3."

She describes M1 farmers as those who are still in the beginning stages of going through their organic training programs and joining a farmer association. M2 farmers have undergone these processes and received their membership cards. They are licensed to start selling their produce. The M3 category is claimed by the top 30 farmers.



“Farmers harvest their produce in the mornings and walk to the nearest collection point where it is weighed and undergoes a quality check. They are paid in cash for their harvest. This cash-in-hand every week for the participating farmers not only improves their livelihoods but is a great morale booster for them too,” she says.

Each farmer association elects a chairperson and a secretary plus two representatives from each area to form their co-op board. The board facilitates the pickup, delivery and administration of the Kumnandi produce in their area. Co-op vehicles arrive each week to collect the produce, which is sold either en-route back to their hub or packaged at the hub and sold to other customers, local markets and restaurants. Unsold excess produce is kept at the co-op hub, where, if not sold, it is given back to the community so that nothing goes to waste. Farmers work with the co-op and have access to on-the-ground mentors, who will show them all they need to know to become an M3 category farmer.

Even with these successes, there have been some challenges. Diane says: “We have capacity constraints because of our small team which has other responsibilities. We don’t have a dedicated marketer to spread the Kumnandi name. We have found that people like the story behind the brand but we just need to communicate it more. We have a long way to go in terms of promoting the produce with branded packaging. There’s also the issue of co-ordinating supply and demand to give customers what they want. But we are getting there.”

The livelihoods of many communities have been positively affected by the Kumnandi produce program and the training Siyavuna provides. Not only are they able to make a living through selling the produce and enhancing food security but they can also develop other income streams from Kumnandi.



Mabongi Cele did the three-day vegetable production course in April 2012. She joined the farmer association in August 2012. In late 2013 she participated in a jam-making course arranged by Siyavuna and has thrived in setting up a good customer base for her jams. Schools, neighbours and church members place orders, which keeps this part of her business thriving.

In 2014, Mabongi was selected for inclusion in the M3 training program. Through engagement with her mentor, Sandile Mgedezi, she was exposed to several new techniques including worm farming and making a wider range of organic sprays and feeds. She is developing this as an additional income stream, selling sprays, feeds and worm wee, which is an effective organic fertiliser. Her garden is very stony so transforming it into a productive area was a challenge. She makes her own compost and green tea, and also grows more unusual produce, such as coriander, rocket, basil and strawberries. As her space is limited, she includes vertical planting to increase production.

What makes Mabongi a rising star is her creative and passionate approach to developing her business. She has a flair for building a customer base through a relational approach. For example, she approached crèches and schools and offered to dig and plant a vegetable bed. She also offered skills transfer by teaching participants the basics of growing vegetables for their school. These clients then buy organic sprays and feeds from her to use in their gardens. In addition, some have asked her to plant more beds which she does at a cost. This way she is building up a substantial client base that will see her business grow from strength to strength.

The co-op boards that Siyavuna have in place, and the hard work they do in marketing and selling the Kumnandi produce, have proven to be a great asset to the communities in which Siyavuna works. The organisation is providing people with opportunities to enhance food security, increase farming knowledge and develop viable sources of income, as well as opening up niche markets that people can fill – like Mabongi has done so well. What started as farming has now blossomed into a range of activities that community members can pick up and from which they can start earning a living. The Kumnandi brand stimulates the local economy in ecologically safe ways and gives the farmers a sense of security and pride in what they do, and it can only get better from here.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT OUTREACH PROGRAM

NIKITA SMITH



In 2012, a survey was conducted by the National Development Agency (NDA) in South Africa to determine the challenges faced by the early childhood development (ECD) sector in the country.

According to the survey, of the 54 503 educators or practitioners working with the children in these early development sites, 12% were qualified, 88% required additional training of some kind, and 23% had no training at all. This gives some idea of the critical skills development need in this sector.

In 2010, Woza Moya, a non-profit organisation that focuses on health and poverty concerns in the Ufafa Valley of rural KwaZulu-Natal, established a crèche, which now boasts 50 registered children. The organisation is situated in the Buddhist Retreat Centre and receives many donations from donors around the world.

A partnership was formed with Save the Children KwaZulu-Natal, an organisation which aims to improve the basic needs of children living in the province, which meant added support in ECD teaching, training and resources.

“Initially we had thought that only the kids that are relatively close to the Woza Moya organisation would attend the crèche, but due to the partnership with Save the Children we realised that the area of operation was far bigger and there were four outlying crèches in Ufafa,” says Sue Hedden, the director at Woza Moya.

“About a year ago we became aware of how the other crèches didn’t have much in terms of resources, teaching and training and support,” she adds. The team at Woza Moya then requested some assistance from Save the Children who offered a solution in training caregivers.

Once a month, about 40 crèche teachers would go to Woza Moya for training to work towards acquiring a year’s accredited teacher course. The teachers were from crèches in Ufafa and some surrounding areas of Umzumkhulu, Ixopo and Jolivet. “There is a wide area that is receiving this amazing support and training from Save the Children,” says Sue.

The staff at Woza Moya discovered how relatively well-off their crèche was compared to the neighbouring rural crèches. “Our ECD practitioners are readily cleaning out excess materials and toys. Anything they don’t use must go to the outlying crèches. Also, every Friday is ECD Outreach Day. We close our play school and spend a day at each of the other crèches handing over goods and teaching them how to play with, use and store away each material,” adds Sue.

This development has prompted many practitioners to change their outlook and behaviour towards other crèches. Sue explains that one ECD practitioner “was reluctant to let go of some of the crèches resources but after visiting the other schools, she is gladly sorting out stuff that can go to them when new goods come in”.

This movement has also generated an easier method of monitoring the growth and assessment of children in the area. Jane Nxasane, a home-based care manager at Woza Moya, runs a number of integrated management of childhood illness programs for children between birth and five years in partnership with the Department of Health. Along with the care workers living in the valley, Jane does monthly child growth monitoring and assessments. "This has been such a good and organic development. Instead of going from door to door, the care workers can go to each crèche and monitor and assess about 50 kids at once," says Sue.

Through water, sanitation and hygiene programs, Woza Moya and Save the Children have also installed tippy taps in the crèches and are teaching children about washing their hands after using the toilet and fly-drying hands instead of using a towel.

This linkage has impacted positively on communities in the Ufafa Valley and the team at Woza Moya is hoping to implement many other programs in the future through this valued partnership.





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