



THE POWER IS IN PEOPLE

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR DEVELOPMENT
PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA

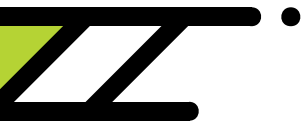


OXFAM



COVER PHOTO

Woza Moya care worker Jane Nxasane holds a baby during a site visit in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Max Bastard | OXFAM



THE POWER IS IN PEOPLE



REFLECTIONS FROM OUR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA





HACT WOZA MOYA DREAM CHAIR

The Dreams for Africa chair sits majestically on top of Table Mountain during it's time in Cape Town.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman



WASH

Water is at times scarce for community gardens in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

PHOTO © Cedric Nunn | OXFAM

CREDITS

TITLE: The Power is in People: Reflections from our Development Practice in South Africa

PUBLISHED BY: Oxfam Australia in May 2016

AUTHORS: Various

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DESIGN: LUMO design company (www.lumo.co.za)

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ISBN: 978-0-620-70603-2

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Although the translations within this publication from English into other South African languages were done as accurately as possible, it is recognised that translations can be subjective; therefore we apologise in advance for any errors or misinterpretations in this regard.

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NOTE: This publication is a collection of pieces from the work of the Oxfam Australia team in South Africa. The word 'Oxfam' throughout the publication refers to Oxfam Australia in South Africa. The names of other Oxfam affiliates or the broader Oxfam Australia, outside of South Africa, are specified, where applicable.

For more information on the stories, reflections and lessons gathered in this publication, please go to <http://power-is-in-people.wordpress.com> where you will find further reading and access to source documents.

MESSAGES FROM OXFAM LEADERSHIP

WINNIE BYANYIMA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - OXFAM INTERNATIONAL

Oxfam affiliates have a long history of supporting civil society organisations in South Africa, spanning the pre- and post-apartheid era. Over the fifty-nine years that Oxfam has engaged in South Africa, ten Oxfam affiliates have worked in the country supporting local civil society organisations.

During the apartheid era, Oxfam affiliates made contributions in various ways, some through supporting underground resistance movements and others through partnerships with organisations working in the country. In the sixties, seventies and eighties, Oxfam worked with the African National Congress (ANC) and gave space (literally in the Oxfam house in Zambia) to ANC leaders in exile in order that they could organise and plan. And when Nelson Mandela was elected in 1994, Oxfam staff were the sole international election observers allowed at polling stations, while all other governmental and non-governmental observers were excluded.

Oxfam has worked in partnership with local civil society organisations to empower them to create change across southern Africa. We can feel proud that many of the organisations we have supported are leaders in their fields, pushing for social transformation in innovative ways. Our approach with partners was always to walk the path together, tackle challenges together and learn from each other.

“...when Nelson Mandela was elected in 1994, Oxfam staff were the sole international election observers allowed at polling stations...”

I would like to thank Oxfam’s partners and the local communities in which we have worked for trusting and standing by us – for their collaboration and generosity as we tackled pressing issues together, learnt and grew together.

And, of course, my most sincere thanks to our staff who have worked in the region, for their dedication to justice, and for addressing the needs of the most marginalised and vulnerable people in South Africa.

All of these groups can be proud of their hard work which has now culminated in the creation of an independent, indigenous Oxfam South Africa. The new Oxfam South Africa affiliate will build on this proud history and take Oxfam’s work forward to continue to influence the social transformation in both South Africa and the wider southern African region.

I look forward to continuing this journey with you all.



WINNIE BYANYIMA

Winnie Byanyima, the Executive Director for Oxfam International.
PHOTO © Oupa Nkosi | OXFAM



HELEN SZOKE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - OXFAM AUSTRALIA

I am very proud to have played a small part of the journey of Oxfam Australia in South Africa and am so proud of what has been achieved by our staff and partners over the past seventeen years. The Oxfam programs in South Africa have matured and grown from the early response to the HIV crisis to being an integrated and deep program working with partners and communities on aspects of their lives that will lead to dignity and empowerment.

My field trip to South Africa was important. It demonstrated that communities welcomed our partnership and the diversity and dynamism of our program – responsive to local needs and local opportunities. Oxfam was there when South Africa moved from apartheid to democracy, and I still recall celebrating sixty years of Oxfam Australia and the memorable video with Graham Romanes when he was taken to meet Nelson Mandela, who thanked Community Aid Abroad (as we were then) for our support!¹ What an honour to be part of the history of your country, to work with you as staff and partners and to be part of the change that will take South Africa into the future.

“...communities welcomed our partnership and the diversity and dynamism of our program – responsive to local needs and local opportunities.”

As Oxfam in South Africa moves forward in a new form, I look forward to our continuing support from Australia for this journey. I thank our staff who have worked so hard to manage this transition with dignity and to demonstrate that change must be driven by the needs of community and must be enacted with their interests at the forefront of our work.

I will remember fondly my trips to South Africa and look forward to seeing more of the developments as they occur. Thank you to our staff, our partners and the communities for the great opportunity to work with you over the past seventeen years.

HELEN SZOKE

Dr Helen Szoke, Oxfam Australia's CEO getting a tour of Nomathemba Ngcubo's garden during her visit to Woza Moya, Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Xavier Vahed | OXFAM

1. This story is documented in a history of Oxfam Australia, available at www.oxfam.org.au/60years.

WENDY LUBBEE

ASSOCIATE COUNTRY DIRECTOR - OXFAM AUSTRALIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

As I sat down to reflect on how best I could capture the voices of our Durban team and our journey, I felt humbled and challenged. And I felt strongly that I needed to rise to the challenge. I cast my mind back to my first few days at Oxfam in the Clark Road office, where the team was small and growing. The diverse team behaved as one family, meals were shared regularly, there was constant chatter in the various rooms of the house that was our office. In one newsletter we reflected on the change process as a ride in a South African taxi. There were analogies made about the experiences of being in the taxi together. It was fun, it was scary, but we were moving together in one direction.

With the birthing of Oxfam South Africa and the development of the exit plan, the analogy, on which our team often reflected, changed. Instead of being in a taxi, the team was on an aircraft. I felt it would be apt to continue this analogy. As we started on the journey to bring the aeroplane down to land safely (thanks, Amon!), we were flying high. The program had reached its peak; the team had reached full strength. Many staff were happy they had been given the opportunity to reach their dreams and be part of a program that was making a difference to the people of South Africa.

With a sudden change of captain (which took us all by surprise) there was some adjustment, but we all settled down to decide how best we would bring the plane to land safely. We had in mind the partners we had on board, as well as staff who would experience many ups and downs as we hit turbulence and faced storms and challenges for which we had not planned. In true style, our team stayed together and worked hard to land the aircraft smoothly. They kept focused and continued to work at the pace of previous years to ensure that we did everything within our ability to maximise the impact of our program and ensure we left behind something sustainable.

So, as we come in to land and disembark, we acknowledge others who have been part of our journey. We did not do this alone. Throughout our journey various Oxfam affiliates have partnered with us and for this we thank you – you know who you are. Special mention goes to our long-term partners Oxfam Germany, Hong Kong, Novib, and Ireland, as well as other affiliates who have contributed to particular projects such as Oxfam Italy, Canada, America and Great Britain. And, of course, Oxfam International who made sure we did things right. Over the last year, we had a team in Melbourne who supported us and made sure we had everything we needed to exit well. They made sure the plane was fit for purpose, was well maintained and could land safely: Thanks, Maud and Katia, to Zel, Luis and Linda, who made sure we had the fuel (money), and not forgetting Matthew and Kerry, who did everything in their power to provide us with emotional support as we went through this exit.

A special thanks to Andrew and Colin, who acted as the air traffic control officers providing guidance and wisdom to keep us on the unfamiliar flight path, despite the storms and turbulence. And there was no lack of those!

To our families, who supported us through the journey and are waiting at the arrival gates, we say a BIG THANK YOU.

To our partners, we wish you all the best as you continue to serve communities and bring about change. We thank you for flying with us, and I am sure you join me in thanking the 'crew' for doing such a great job in serving together.

As the title of this publication states, ***The Power is in People***, and the final thank you must go to the Oxfam team for being part of this journey. This publication serves as a tribute to you, the 'crew', for your commitment to the people of South Africa.



WENDY LUBBE

Wendy Lubbee, the Associate Country Director for Oxfam Australia in South Africa with the Dreams for Africa chair.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM

ACRONYMS

AACES	Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
APAC	Australian Partnerships with African Communities
ART	Antiretroviral treatment
CAA	Community Aid Abroad
CBO	Community-based organisation
CREATE	CBR Education and Training for Empowerment
CSO	Civil society organisation
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
HAPG	HIV/AIDS Prevention Group
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JAW	Justice and Women
JOHAP	Joint Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-government organisation
NHI	National Health Insurance
NLV	No Longer Vulnerable
OHAP	Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program
OpUp	Operation Upgrade
OZA	Oxfam South Africa
PACSA	Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action
RAPCAN	Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
RCCTT	Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust
SA	South Africa
SACSPP	Southern Africa Child Social Protection Program
SHG	Self-help group
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
TB	Tuberculosis
TIC	The Inner Circle
TP	Triangle Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	Women on Farms Project

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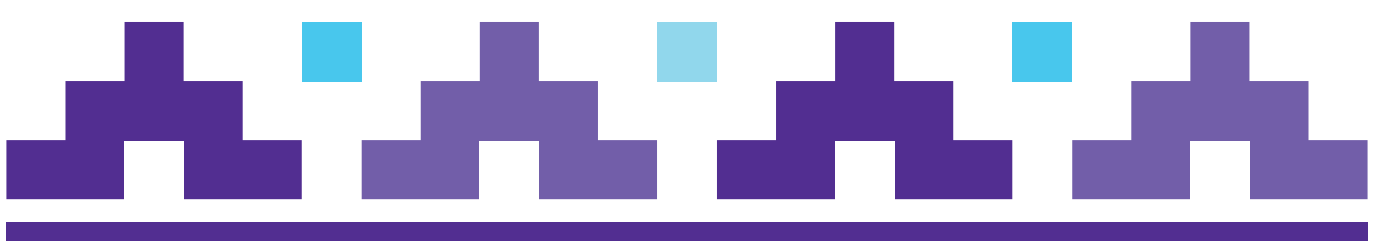
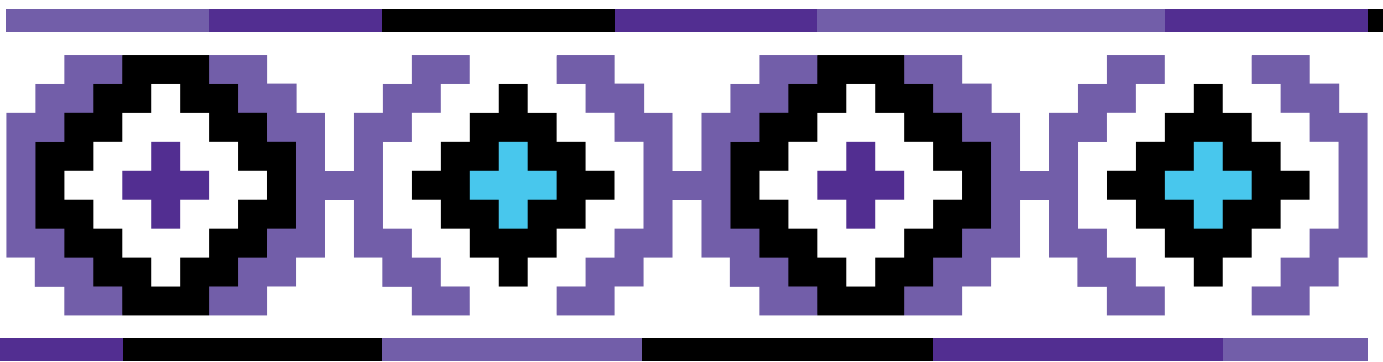
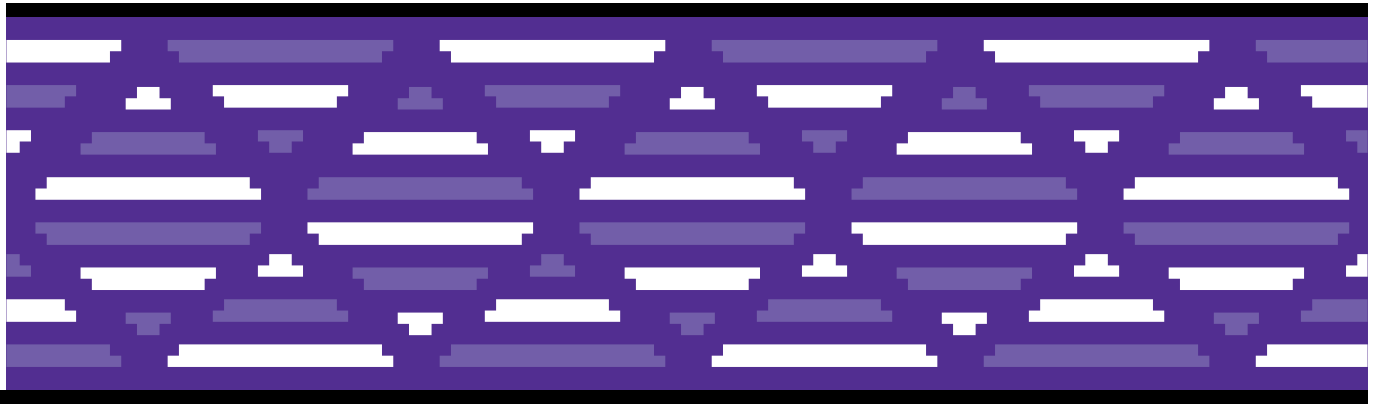
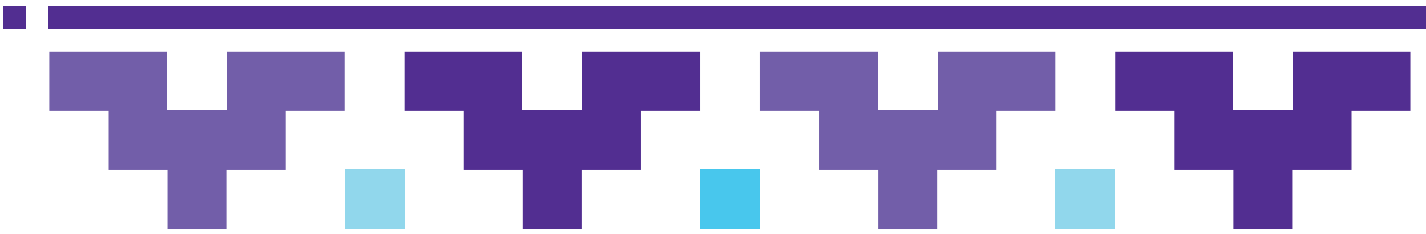
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PLAY TIME

Children at the Woza Moya Playschool.
PHOTO © Max Bastard | OXFAM



ISINGENISO

INTSHAYELELO

SELELEKELA

INTRODUCTION

MATHOMONG

MVULATSWINGA

MATSENO

THE PATH TO PUBLICATION

In late 2014, the first notice was given of the planned closure (in March 2016) of the Oxfam Australia program in South Africa. The idea of a 'coffee table style' book was born as the team confronted this reality and met in January 2015 to plan how the exit process would take place and what it would look like. Unsurprisingly, the planning process had moments of standing back and reflecting on the remarkable work that has been done over the past seventeen years. There were many lessons, successes and challenges to share with the development sector about our partnerships, our program work and how it developed over time, and the careful consideration and thoughtful processes that went into designing and implementing our programs.

And so the journey to capture the experiences and principles of Oxfam's work in South Africa began in true Oxfam style with debate and laughter, and then on to concept notes, Gantt charts and Excel spreadsheets. The project was a highly ambitious one, both in terms of timelines and scale, with the content for the publication being developed through iterative and consultative processes with current and past Oxfam staff, and external experts.

We wanted an Oxfam publication that captures experiences, learning, knowledge and underlying principles of the development of the programs from 1998 to 2016. The purpose of the publication is to:

1. Describe our journey in South Africa through the eyes of the people of Oxfam, highlighting key moments and reflecting on the changes over the years.
2. Capture the core principles and values of Oxfam's practice and ways of working.
3. Share the way partners and Oxfam have worked together to bring about change and how these lessons could further thinking around good partnerships.

A publication like this can never capture the many voices and experiences that have been part of Oxfam's seventeen years in South Africa, but we think the end result has reached these objectives and we hope you enjoy reading our reflections.

We acknowledge the tremendous effort it took for all those involved – whether directly as part of the project team, as contributors of articles, or in the form of support and advice along the way – in making this publication a reality. We thank those interviewed, the contributors from partner organisations, staff and consultants.

In conclusion, we hope that you, as the reader, will be able to recognise and feel the deep relations between, and the big hearts of, staff and partners who made up the Oxfam Australia program in South Africa for almost two decades. We also hope that you will find the experiences in this publication valuable in your own lives. As Pumla Mabizela stated: *"We will not be here next year but the lessons will be..."*

GLENISE LEVENDAL

FEBRUARY 2016



THE LONG PATH AHEAD

Rural roads in the Umzinto district where Save the Children KZN is working with the community in the WASH program.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM





BELA BELA

Hilaria Simon in the township of Vingerkraal, Limpopo, where the Bela Bela HIV/AIDS Prevention Group provides services.

PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



OVERVIEW OF THE POWER IS IN PEOPLE

This final publication for Oxfam Australia in South Africa, *The Power is in People*, is separated into three sections that cover important aspects of the organisation's work over the years: Our People, Our Practice and Our Partnerships.

OUR PEOPLE

Our People considers the stories, experiences, reflections and dreams of some of the people involved in Oxfam Australia's program in South Africa. This section highlights key moments in the life of Oxfam Australia's South African office and events held by Oxfam over the years and reflects on the changes in programs and partnerships to ensure their relevance to people who live and work in South Africa.

OUR PRACTICE

Our Practice captures the development of the core principles and values of the way Oxfam has worked in South Africa. It examines the partnership model adopted by Oxfam Australia in South Africa and the organisation's approach to programming which has been regarded, within and outside the Oxfam family, as good practice. This section also highlights business systems, capacity building and monitoring, evaluation and learning, amongst other aspects.

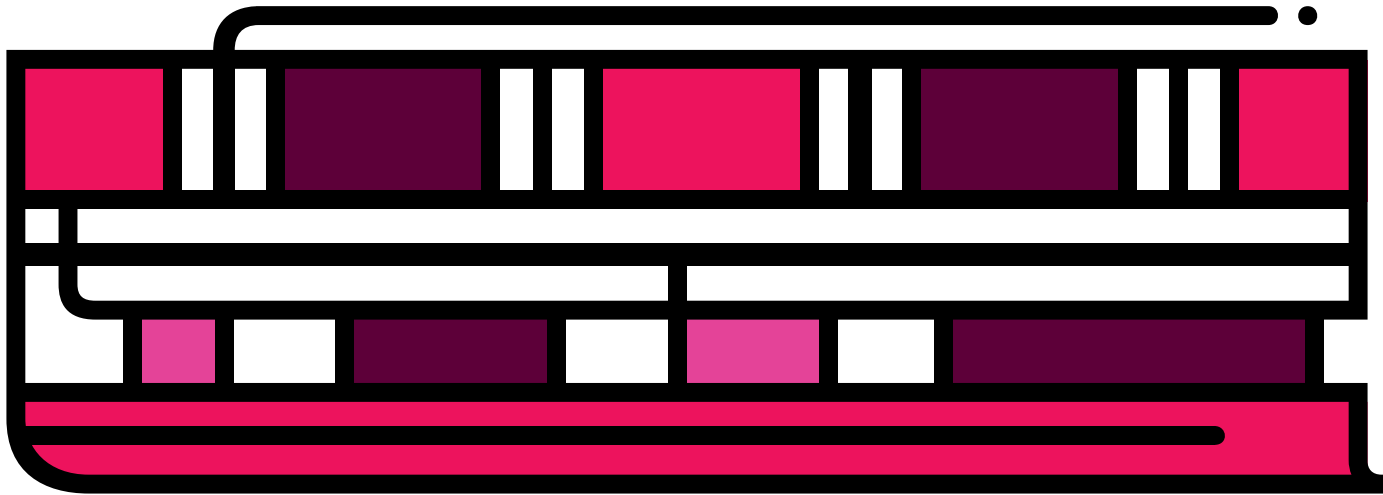
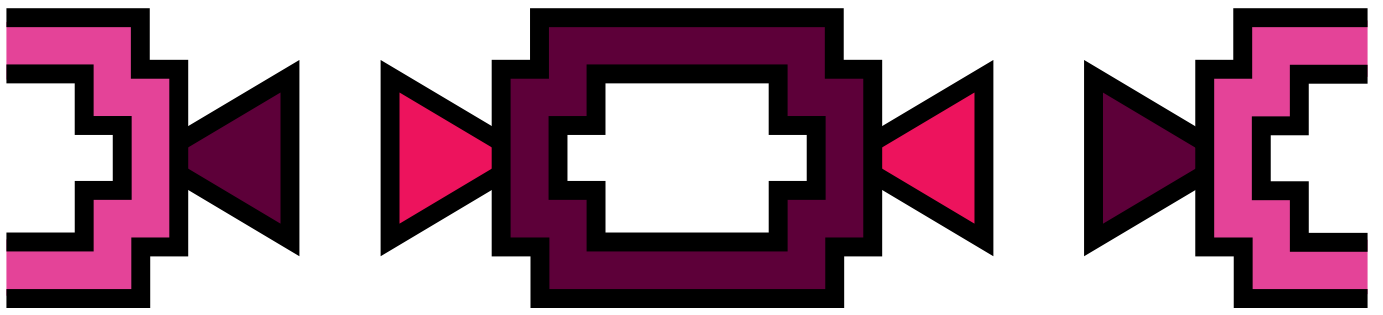
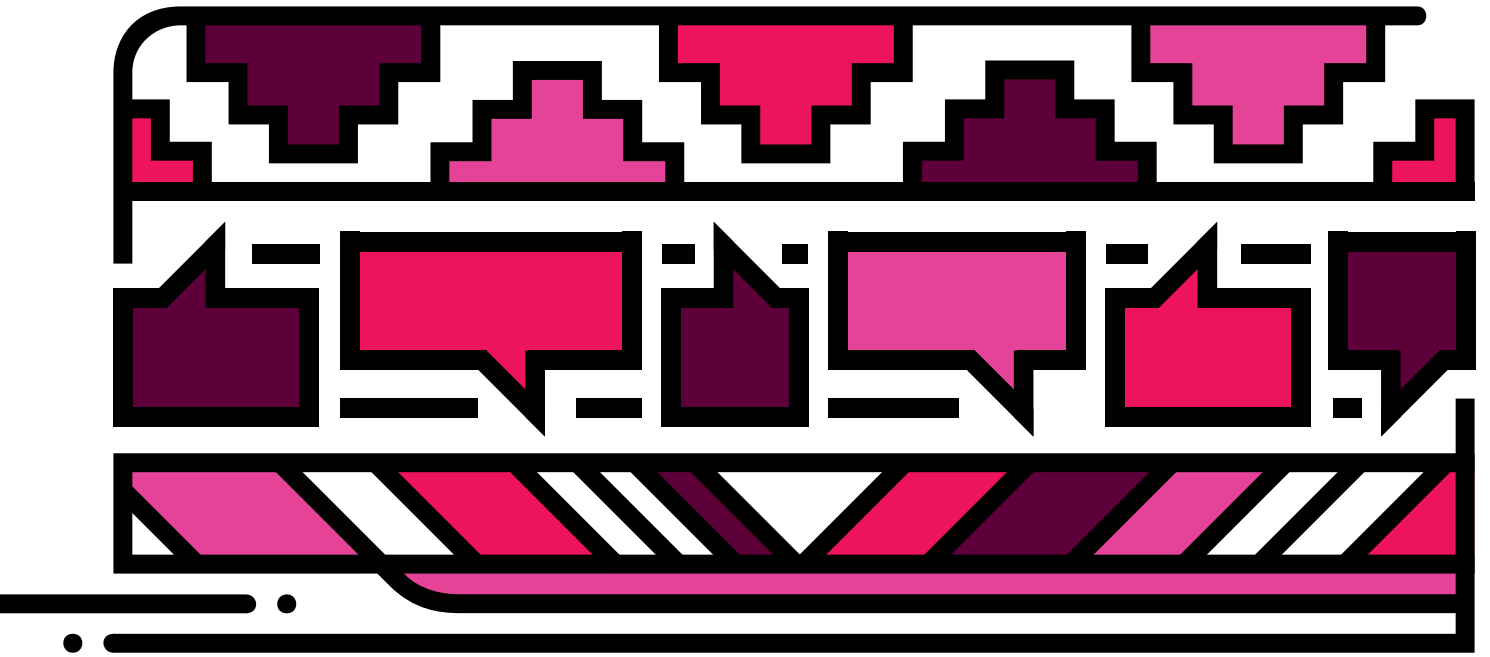
OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Our Partnerships explores the diversity of Oxfam's partners in South Africa. It highlights the importance of these relationships in contributing to development work in South Africa. The relationship between Oxfam in South Africa and partners was one based on transparent participatory learning processes that enabled partners and Oxfam to learn from one another. This section outlines the importance of trust in the Oxfam partnerships, as well as the complex process of engaging with government.

In conclusion, *The Power is in People*, touches on some of the lessons that can be learned from Oxfam Australia as the organisation exits from South Africa. Most importantly, it focuses on the importance of sticking to a set of shared core values.

This publication is not intended to be read from cover to cover (although the contents and format make that possible). It is hoped that over time readers will dip into sections, depending on interests, information required and experiences, so that organisations and communities will be enriched by the experiences of the Oxfam Australia office and their partners in South Africa.





ABANTU BETHU

ULUNTU LWETHU

BATHO BA RONA

OUR PEOPLE

BATHO BA RONA

VHATHU VHASHU

BATHO BARENA

INTRODUCTION BY COLIN COLLETT VAN ROOYEN

(PREVIOUS COUNTRY DIRECTOR, OXFAM AUSTRALIA IN SOUTH AFRICA)

Oxfam is about people. Yes, that's an obvious statement but one that we sometimes need to spend a bit more time thinking and talking about, and also acknowledging the impact of. This section does just that. It provides us with a moment in time to consider the stories, experiences, reflections and dreams of just some of the people who were involved in Oxfam Australia's program in South Africa. Of course, because this is Oxfam we are talking about, these amazing people work within programs; in that context they shine and their valuable skills and passion connect with the partners and communities to whom they are so committed.

When you read through this wonderful section, developed by contributions from an amazing group of people, a number of clear themes emerge. Themes that reflect heart and soul, and, indeed, the very essence of what Oxfam Australia did in South Africa. Reading through these lovely insights you will notice how the themes emerge and link well together in ways that demonstrate the sensitive creation of an environment that enabled growth, the space for reflection and learning, empowerment as a result of the growth and the careful confidence that has and will continue to lead people forward. It is no surprise that popular and most often used words in the stories from staff include opportunity, support, change, programs, partners, journey, learning, relationships, experience and team.

What this section reveals, too, is that something bold and special happened in the 'office' in South Africa, in the programs that this 'office' so skilfully steered, and, indeed, beyond. The way of working and the ground-breaking programs – JOHAP being the first of many – set the standard for programming work in South Africa and further afield.

"...something bold and special happened in the 'office' in South Africa, in the programs that this 'office' so skilfully steered..."

This 'something' operated on multiple levels. For both Oxfam team members and program partners, it created space for people as leaders of their own processes; as people who were proud of being able to test themselves, learn from one other and develop a sense of pride in overcoming the challenges they experienced. Yes, there were challenges. This is no fairy-tale story. Multiple changes, both external and internally within Oxfam, brought about numerous challenges for 'the people of Oxfam' and its programs. For some, just dealing with ongoing change, while themselves working as agents of change in the communities they supported, was a challenge.



For others, the demands of the work, the depth of their commitment and the intensity of learning that arose from challenging one's self and being exposed to external challenges simultaneously had impact. Missing loved ones and home on long work trips dedicated to helping others was a very real dilemma with felt pain. For others, being challenged on the basis of their youth, experience or beliefs presented processes to be worked through and overcome, and ultimately to grow from. Tears were not unusual – tears of support, pride, comfort, frustration, love and even sheer exhaustion. Tears arising, too, from those pure silly moments can't be forgotten.

“...it created space for people as leaders of their own processes; as people who were proud of being able to test themselves, learn from one other and develop a sense of pride in overcoming the challenges they experienced.”

All in all, as you read through this section, enjoying the profound privilege of stepping into the hearts and souls of the contributors, swimming through their experiences and memories, you will hopefully emerge richer and wiser. You will also hopefully honour the amazing diversity of the people of Oxfam, their cutting-edge programming, committed and integrated partnerships and incredible commitment to the people of South Africa. Through the understanding gained from this publication, I hope readers will acknowledge that it takes a team of humble and committed people, great people, in the context of strong and deep programs and partnerships, to make something work as well as the Oxfam Australia office in South Africa did.

To get more insight into our journey, please visit: <http://power-is-in-people.wordpress.com>

COLIN COLLETT VAN ROOYEN

Colin Collett van Rooyen, former Country Director in South Africa, with the Dreams for Africa chair.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



UHAMBO LWAM NOOXFAM

MY JOURNEY WITH OXFAM

NOLUCKY NXASANA'S STORY

For many years, the Oxfam team in South Africa has used the metaphor of the tree to explain the way we work with partners, and the way we see development. Now we know that all healthy trees need strong roots; and we (partners and staff alike) found that quiet grounded strength in Nolucky Nxasana. Of course, Nolucky, being who she is, would be quick to point out the many people who have developed Oxfam and its programs, but this only serves as further proof of her centrality, her modesty, and her wisdom. It is only fitting then that the story of Oxfam in South Africa is told through her experience as the longest standing staff member.

NOLUCKY, HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AT OXFAM AUSTRALIA?

Ja, umm ... as we all know that I'm the first person who started here at Oxfam [laughs]. I arrived in 2000 of which the program had started in 1998, two years before me.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE BACK THEN?

It was the Joint Oxfam HIV and AIDS program then, JOHAP for short. It concentrated on the development and implementation of activities within three components of gender, capacity building and networking. There were no other programs. As time went by [a] few programs were added like APAC, which is the Australian Partnership with the African Community. I was not involved with the programs, I was working as an Administrator in 2000, 2001, 2002 before I was joined by the new Coordinator, Bridgette.

SO IT WAS ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THE EARLY 2000s?

Yes, at one point before Bridgette arrived I worked with two coordinators who came and left, and it was just me for almost a year!

WOW, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT. HOW MANY PARTNER ORGANISATIONS WAS THE OFFICE SUPPORTING?

I can say we had about thirteen partners then.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE SEEING THE ORGANISATION GROW?

Honestly, I'd say it was exciting work back then, but as the years went by it was more exciting – seeing more organisations joining the program and being joined by more staff members, that on its own was and is still exciting to see the family grow from three people to more than twenty-five people.



DID THE PROGRAM CHANGE?

Yes! HIV and AIDS remained a key area the whole time, and we started with JOHAP, as I said. This then changed to the Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (OHAP) when Oxfam started coming together globally and we also joined the APAC work at this time. The Food Security Program started in 2005 when Mavis first joined us. After that the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programs began during No Longer Vulnerable, from 2012 until now.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHY WERE ALL OF THESE PROGRAMS IMPORTANT? WAS IT LED BY FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES OR BY PARTNER EXPERIENCES?

Ja, I have to say both; it was a combination of the two. There was a need as well as the finance. Adding those new and different programs was one of the brilliant things about the people here. People today live because of those ideas, those ideas that were planted in our partners, you know; ideas that have made our partners take action to ensure the community is being taken care of.

DO YOU FEEL IN SOME WAY THAT YOU ARE AN ANCHOR IN THE ORGANISATION?

All I can say is that I'm here because of the people who were here before and the people who are here currently. They are my wisdom because if it wasn't for them you know, I wouldn't be in this position ... I wouldn't say I'm an anchor, but I would say I'm the person still standing after others have gone.

AS 'THE PERSON STILL STANDING', WHEN YOU LOOK BACK, ARE THERE ANY HIGHLIGHTS OR KEY MOMENTS THAT STAND OUT FOR YOU?

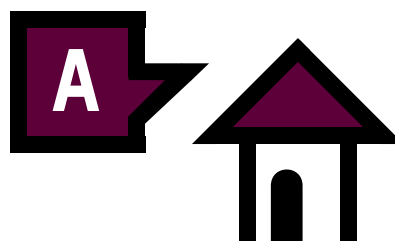
My key moments are when I first started at Oxfam I was dealing with two people, but now in the current period I see a huge difference – from two to twenty-something! That's quite something for me because who would have ever thought that so many people would join the organisation. Another key moment for me was when I joined the programs team. It was quite difficult when I first started because I felt I knew nothing about programs, but as time went by when I look back I just ask myself, how did I get here?! I don't know how I have done it, but I'm here ... I never saw the capability in me.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE OTHER PEOPLE SAW IT IN YOU?

Yes, I would say it's people who saw capability in me. If it wasn't for them I wouldn't be here because you know when you are on a journey sometimes you think you are walking by yourself although there are people beside you ... you might not see them but you hear their voices, you feel their presence – that they are there for you; whenever you fall they will catch you...

THAT IS VERY BEAUTIFUL. IT SOUNDS LIKE A VERY SPECIAL TEAM. DID YOU EXPERIENCE ANY CHALLENGES?

Yes, like I said, it was not easy when I first started with the programs team. I was unfamiliar with the program but I knew the partners. I started with eight partners then in 2012, which was quite a huge number for a starter, but as the years went by I started learning and I am still learning. One of the challenges is when partners were phased out. This was hard for me and other staff because we are like family here, and then they [the partners] would leave. Saying goodbye to family is a hard thing to see.



WERE THERE PARTNER ORGANISATIONS THAT REALLY IMPROVED WHILE YOU WORKED WITH THEM?

Yes, quite a lot! I'd say that a very good example is during my monitoring visits, partners would tell me what they want, what they are looking for, then I'll come back and work on the plan and they would be capacitated in different areas. There is a difference, like partners now have websites when they didn't before. Also including people with disabilities, it was the most amazing thing that has happened in our program. It has been challenging, but I feel quite excited about it because since this work started we have seen the change. Most partners are now involving people with disabilities in their work. They have even developed policies on this. Although it's not much, we can see something is happening. I now visit some of my partners and I would see even their premises are disability friendly. So it's really a program that has worked and is still working.

IT IS A VERY DIFFERENT TIME NOW IN SOUTH AFRICA COMPARED TO WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED WITH OXFAM, WOULD YOU SAY PARTNERS HAVE BEEN RESPONSIVE TO THESE CHANGES?

Actually I have seen a lot of change since I started. I remember it was really a struggle for people to get HIV treatment. Some they used to buy them. They would pay lots and lots of money. Now the treatment is free even for those people who cannot afford [it] ... it is available to everybody. Partners have been more than the word 'responsive'. They were very active in terms of making sure that everybody is getting access to those things.

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY ABOUT OXFAM'S JOURNEY IN SOUTH AFRICA?

Just to say thank you to each and every person that has been in my life since I started with Oxfam; that includes people at Head Office as well as local people. Those people really made my journey a blessed one ... they've really made who Nolucky is today.



NOLUCKY NXASANA

Nolucky Nxasana sits on the stairs outside the Durban office.
PHOTO © Xavier Vahed | OXFAM

LOOKING BACK

This centrepiece provides a brief overview of key moments in the life of Oxfam Australia's Durban office. Having worked in South Africa since 1998, the organisation has transformed many times, undergoing metamorphoses always aimed at building on lessons and experiences of the past.

Oxfam's history with South Africa stretches back to the days of apartheid and the liberation struggle. In those days, supporters would come into the country carrying money for political movements in their socks or hidden away amongst their luggage. Officially, though, the organisation's work in the country began in 1998.

1980s

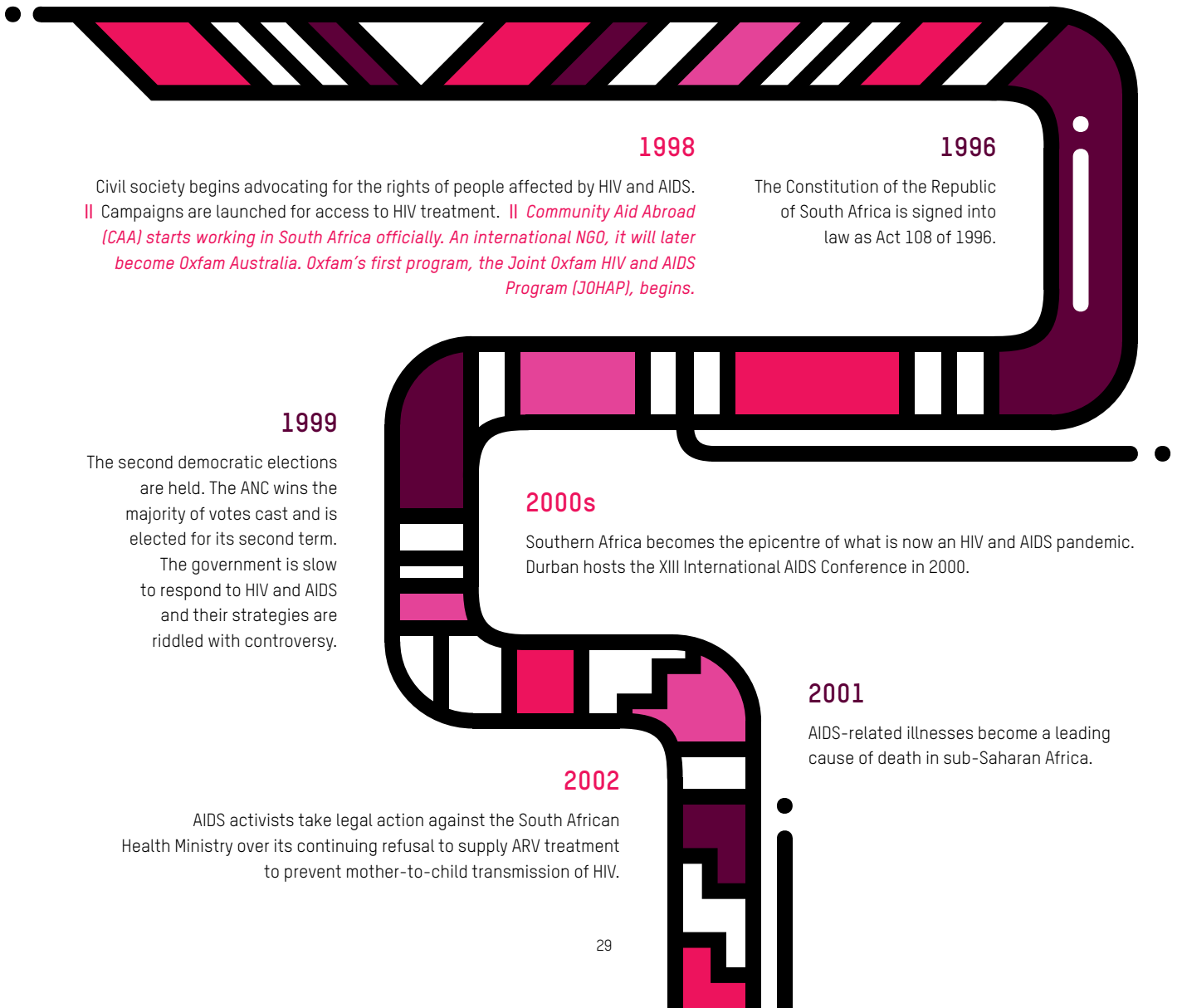
The first cases of AIDS and the first AIDS-related deaths are recorded.

EARLY 1990s

The numbers of people dying of AIDS-related illnesses increases exponentially, drastically affecting South African households and communities.

1994

South Africa becomes a democracy and the ANC is elected as the ruling party.



2003

Civil society intensifies its call for free treatment through campaigns such as 'Our People are Dying, Treat Us Now'.

2009

Government publicises a commitment to test all children exposed to HIV and provide all HIV-positive children with ARVs. Transmission from mothers to their children is reduced to 3.5%.

2007

Children and their caregivers are included in Oxfam's work with a focus on strengthening approaches for social networks of support in South Africa and Zimbabwe. || The South African government and representatives of labour, civil society and the private sector, through South African National AIDS Council, finalise a new Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS and STIs in South Africa, for 2007-2011.

2010

South Africa has succeeded in rolling out treatment to people living with HIV and AIDS and has one of the largest programs in the world. || There are still high rates of new HIV infections occurring in the country. || *Oxfam Australia enters into an agreement with Monash University (in Australia and South Africa) to place students within the country to support partners while learning invaluable skills and lessons about development. This continues for five years.*

2014

Oxfam South Africa (OZA) gains observer status within the Oxfam Confederation. || *A three-country program (South Africa, Pakistan and Zimbabwe) around increasing the visibility and protecting the rights of sexual minorities starts.* || South Africa remains the epicentre of the virus, with HIV incidence rates and new infections still high, and service delivery remains a challenge. || *Oxfam is a partner in the second National Gender Summit hosted by the Commission for Gender Equality.*

2015

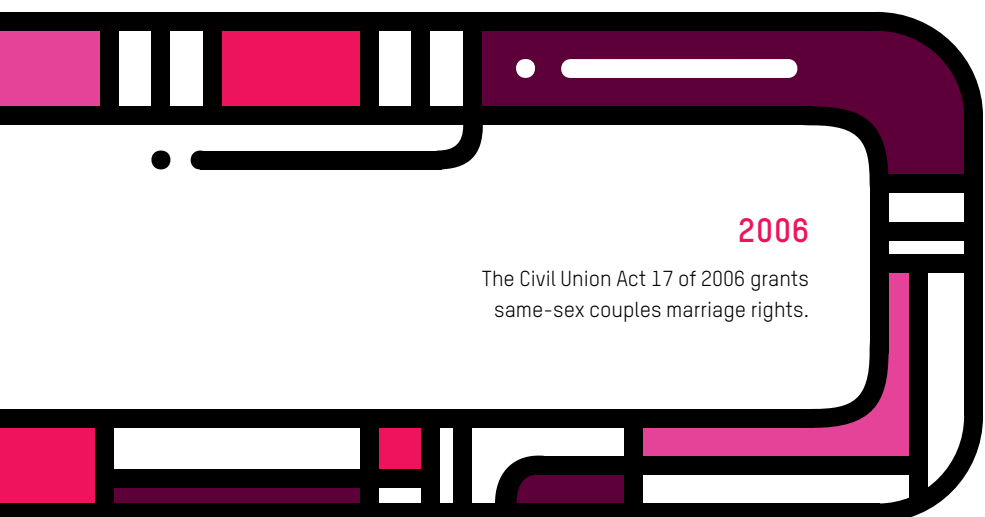
Oxfam Australia in South Africa enters its exit phase. || Gains related to increased access to treatment, reduction in stigma and improved disease management mean people are living longer and fewer households experience loss of family members. || Male condoms continue to be distributed in high numbers, but this is not the case for female condoms. || A State of Emergency is declared in three provinces due to drought.

2016

A state-owned pharmaceutical company Ketla Phela is launched amid hopes that it will allow for easier and cheaper access to HIV and AIDS treatment.

2004

The organisation becomes a fully-fledged Oxfam/CAA office. || Oxfam begins another program aimed at reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development in South Africa and Mozambique.



2006

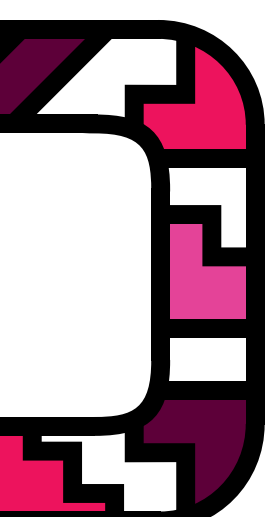
The Civil Union Act 17 of 2006 grants same-sex couples marriage rights.

2005

South Africa begins a program to provide free HIV treatment after years of confusion and delays. || Oxfam starts a program in response to concerns about food security and nutrition in the uMkhanyakude district in northern KwaZulu-Natal.

2011

A global move towards becoming one Oxfam leads to the expansion of Oxfam Australia office in South Africa, and Oxfams working together in South Africa. The 17th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) campaign, led by Oxfam in Durban, is a successful example of joint work. || A WASH program is launched in South Africa and Zambia. || The DRR program begins and challenges traditional models of humanitarian response. || The incidence of HIV among young women aged 15-24 years remains high. || The National Strategic Plan on HIV, STIs and TB 2012-2016 is launched.



2012

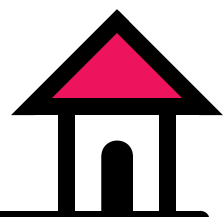
Oxfam launches an integrated program called No Longer Vulnerable. || Oxfam introduces Disability Inclusion and Child Protection into its work.

2016

At the State of the Nation address, the government launches a new campaign aimed at HIV prevention for young people. || Worrying funding trends negatively impact civil society's HIV-related efforts such as home-based care and HIV prevention work.

2016

In March, the Oxfam Australia program in South Africa closes, making way for the indigenous Oxfam South Africa.



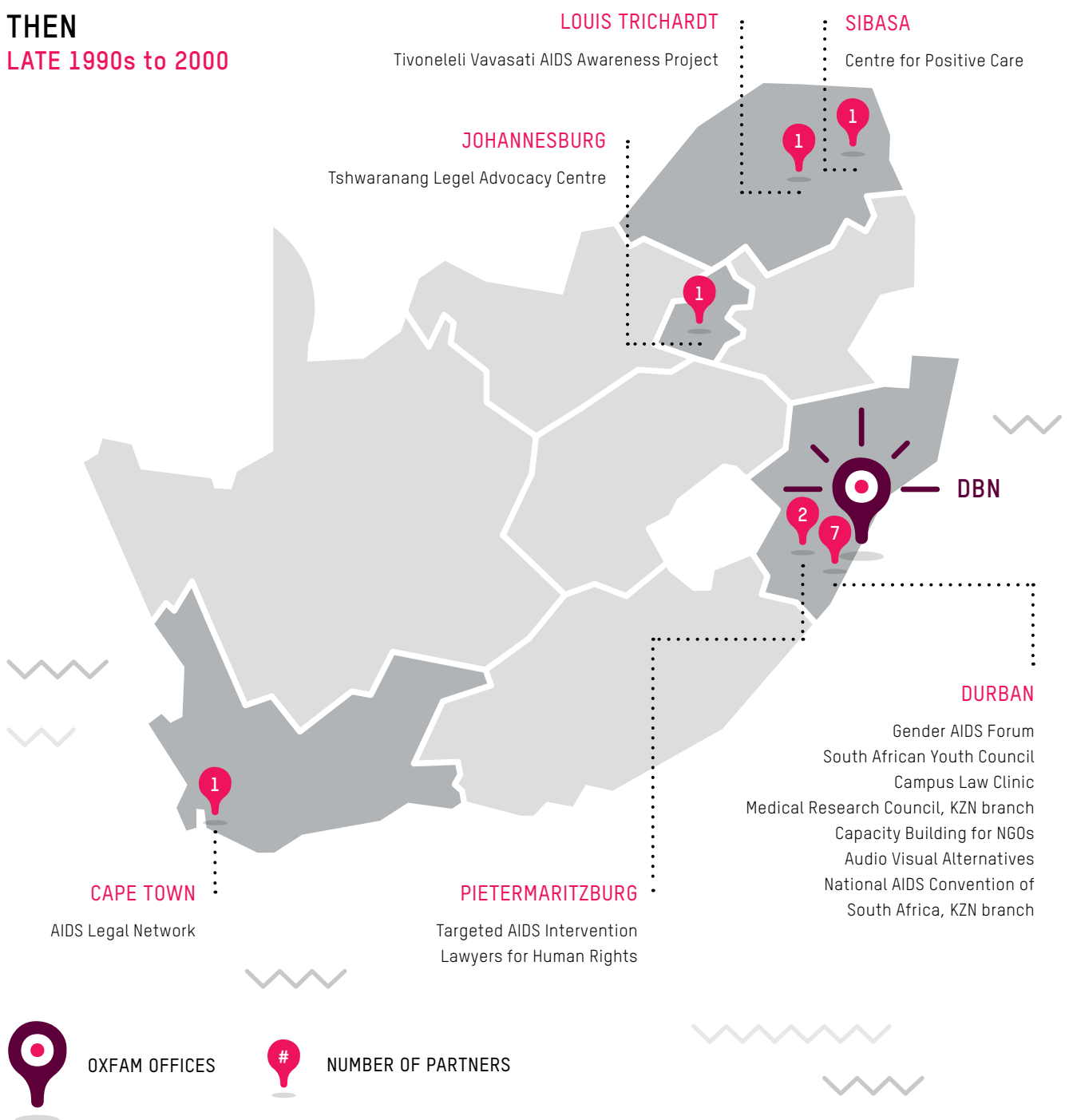
OXFAM AUSTRALIA IN SOUTH AFRICA: THEN AND NOW

Over the years, Oxfam Australia grew, not only in the number of organisations we partnered with, but also where we were based around the country. *Figure 1* below tells a powerful story of increased integration, partnerships and impact.

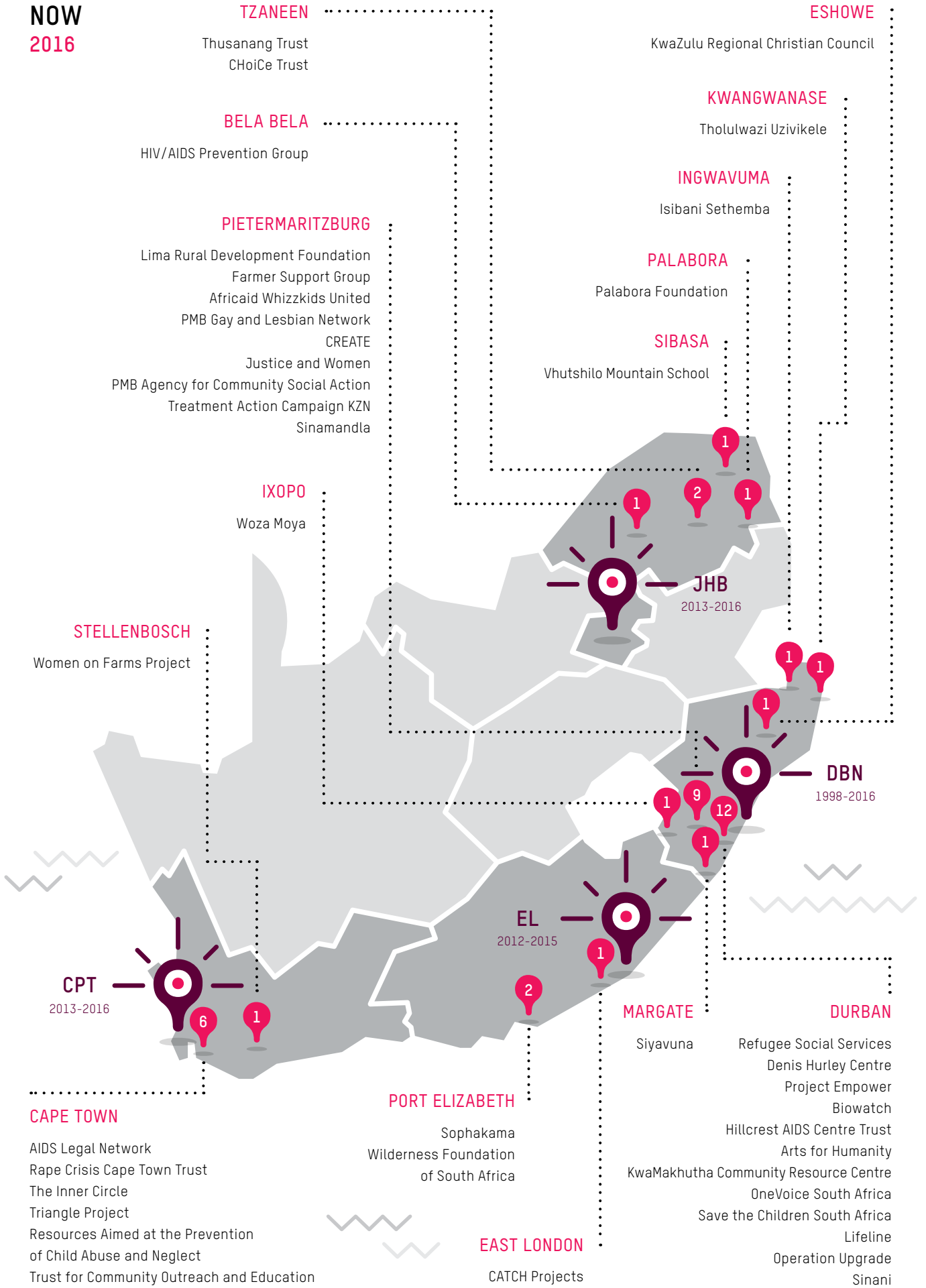
FIGURE 1: Mapping Then and Now.

THEN

LATE 1990s to 2000



**NOW
2016**



OUR PARTNER EVENTS

OXFAM LINK AND LEARN EVENTS OVER THE YEARS

Oxfam has always valued platforms that enabled partners to get together to learn from, and interact and share with, one other. Link and Learn events were viewed as a significant space for the growth and continued development of collective work. These events, (which later fed into combined partner events) were a space where partners came together to share their work and discuss issues that were affecting them and their communities. These, in turn, informed Oxfam's work to support partners.

● INTERSECTIONS

2009

A first in scale and nature, Intersections was a major partner event which involved collaboration between Oxfam Australia and its counterparts in South Africa – Oxfams Canada, Great Britain and Hong Kong. The aim of this event was to create the opportunity for Oxfam partners to come together and share learnings with each other, with a focus on the lessons emerging from practice.

“Delegates were given a unique role and voice in the event through the recording and documenting of sessions, ideas and conversations. I thought the use of the website and the capturing of photographs, voice recordings, videos, blogs and tweets gave a wonderful life and dynamism to the event as well as providing people with both skills and an understanding of the possibilities of using the growing accessibility of technology in creative and developmental ways.”

- THE RAPPORTEUR

Intersections set the trend for future events managed and planned by the office.

● MEASURES: UNDERSTANDING OUR IMPACT

2011

Partners work in diverse contexts and across diverse themes. Measures aimed to create the opportunity for Oxfam partners to come together to share learning with one other, with a focus on the lessons emerging from practice around understanding our impact.

Measures focused on:

- Improving program monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes;
- Creating the space to reflect on the Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (OHAP) baseline process and survey results;
- Sharing monitoring methods and tools being used by partners;
- Sharing learning and experiences of partner's MEL capacity building processes;
- Sharing by partners of their own MEL practice and learning; and
- Discussion around how to improve MEL practice.

● WELLSPRING

2011

This two-day learning event introduced the AACES Program and some concepts around WASH and inclusive programming. It aimed to increase understanding of WASH, highlight issues relevant to the work of partners and Oxfam and share experiences of participation, gender, and advocacy in relation to WASH.

“For many of us it was the first time to look at disability and if we are disability inclusive. Sarah from CREATE talked about understanding disability better and how we could make our programs more accessible and inclusive for persons with disabilities.”

- WELLSPRING PARTICIPANT

● VOICES

2012

Despite the resistance by some organisations to using the word 'advocacy' to describe components of their work, an Oxfam-commissioned research paper to map partner advocacy in OHAP showed that the integration of advocacy in partner programs was highly advanced and also extremely effective.

Voices, the 2012 Oxfam Link and Learn event, was intended to provide a platform at which partners could share lessons and experience; continue to build the collective for action; discuss, debate and learn together; and begin the process of crafting a common vision. Most of all, the event was intended to allow voices to be heard.

● REZONE

2013

Rezone was a practice-orientated space in which those who were working in urban spaces could come together to share learnings with a view to increasing and expanding understanding, as well as to offer support, ideas and constructive criticism to one another. The event highlighted various methodologies, practices and learnings in urban Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) work; engaging with other urban actors in the pursuit of partnership and sharing; and discussing how urban DRR work could be strengthened.

● RE-VISION

2015

During Oxfam Australia's seventeen years of working in South Africa, the organisation saw its program and partnerships grow, change, push and evolve the development sector in the country.

Poised to move forward to a new phase and form of Oxfam in the country, the organisation felt that it was important to look back and remember impacts and challenges, celebrate partnerships, examine contexts and relook at the future.

Three events were held in the provinces of Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. They had distinct themes and processes based on the key issues of partners' programs. These were designed to build on current policy-making processes nationally and provincially, as well as discuss future areas for engagement, alliance-building and solidarity.



PEOPLE OF OXFAM

Oxfam is about people. This section tells the story of the people of Oxfam. It gives a small glimpse into the journey of the current staff in the Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg offices. It acknowledges the people of Oxfam and gives them their own space in this important document.



NOLUCKY NXASANA

“I arrived in 2000 when we were still managed from the Head Office in Melbourne. I joined in an administrator role and I moved into programs a few years ago as a Coordinator. One of my highlights has been the people I have worked with over the last fifteen years. The organisation was being led by great and intelligent people since I started. Starting from the first Coordinator I worked with before the formal office in Durban was set up, until today. There was a lot of wisdom in those people; they came with great ideas, with great qualifications. They came with brilliant ideas to make the organisation into what it is today. Yes, it’s them who built it, who moulded it into what it is today.”

PUMLA MABIZELA

“I came in as a Program Officer in 2002 and at that time we were based at the Berea Centre. I have enjoyed being part of the growth of Oxfam staff and our partners. I also really loved working with people, especially when I was a Program Officer because I enjoyed being on the ground.

At management level it has been a different experience which I have also enjoyed because it has given me opportunities. I have stayed on the lookout for how we can do the work better with the team. It was complex at times but it gave me an opportunity to grow and strengthen my skills.

A highlight for me was that, as South Africans in our office, we did it ourselves. There were skills all around in our team. We were an innovative team that wanted to learn all the time. We had the flexibility to exercise our skills and creativity in driving the program together with partners. Our work contributed globally – our approach, our thinking and the ways to make things better and more relevant, and that is because we were so close to the organisations we worked with.”

THABI KHOZA

"I started in 2004 as part of the programs team. My role was facilitating and coordinating the partnerships between Oxfam and partners. Over the years, I became the Senior Coordinator and I think they were acknowledging some of my skills and my long-term service at Oxfam. I was then responsible for ensuring that South Africa's program quality initiatives are responsive to, and consistent with, Oxfam standards, policies and expectations.

Enabling marginalised and vulnerable communities has been one of my highlights; seeing beneficiaries accessing their basic rights so as to make sure their environments are healthy and sustainable. I really enjoyed engaging with many NGOs. Working at Oxfam gave me both theoretical and practical exposure to WASH and food security and livelihoods issues, which is something I never thought I would be part of."

PHUME SIBISI

"My journey at Oxfam has been wonderful and challenging. It has brought me to an understanding of patience. I have learnt to be considerate and more tolerant. I have also grown into a professional which has helped my confidence around people. Overall, the journey at Oxfam has been a victory.

Over the past four years I have made an effort to develop my skills and experience in different ways. I have matured as an individual and in my experience of working with others – both colleagues and partners."

BLESSING ZAMA

"My journey with Oxfam started in 2003 as a Finance Officer. I was tasked with putting the IT, finance, administration and human resources systems in place for Oxfam in South Africa. I worked with partners by looking at their financial policies and procedures. I checked how strong or how weak their systems were and provided assistance and advice. I also ran workshops with the partners that we funded. I even attended several meetings at our Head Office in Melbourne as part of the Finance and Human Resource Committee.

I am very happy about the experience I gained over the years. Right now it is not clear what the future is like but I'm glad I made changes to different organisations. It's rewarding to know that I helped organisations strengthen their systems.

Working at Oxfam changed me, even though I am business and corporate-minded. I have become a social activist which is not common in the accounting profession. I really want to make changes in people's lives. I have become attached to the communities we work with and the projects we delivered on the ground."





MAVIS NYAKURIMWA

“My journey with Oxfam started in 2005 when I was initiating the Food Security Program. During the early phases of the program, there was a lot of work to do because people did not even know what food security meant. People thought that Oxfam was going to give them food. There was a lot of groundwork that needed to be done. We needed to have a conceptual analysis of the implementation phase and conduct research studies. It was quite a lot of work.

I really enjoyed working on the Food Security Program. It gave me so much experience. I also got to know more about South Africa and travelled to different parts of the country.

I am proud that I started a program from scratch. I learnt a lot, from strategic planning, research, conceptualisation of the proposals, implementation, designing, monitoring and evaluation. I am happy that my program was able to give birth to other programs like WASH and the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Program. I saw the Food Security Program growing, which was very exciting.”

MARK STRYDOM

“I joined the team in 2008 to support the Durban office around its IT and office maintenance needs. I also had the opportunity to support the Maputo and Harare offices. One of my big projects was coordinating the relocation from Clark Road to Musgrave and making sure it was as smooth and pain-free as possible.

I liked working with the different offices in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg, as well as the teams in Zimbabwe and Mozambique around their IT requirements when their offices closed.

I enjoyed being able to be a part of the team on our many events and support visitors, partners, consultants and friends of Oxfam over the years.”

ARTHI HARISINKER

“I started in 2007 and I have just finished eight years with Oxfam. I have always worked in the Finance Department. When I started, I was just the second person in finance and since then there have been two other people joining the finance team. I learnt a lot of my work on the job because I don’t have a degree. It was easy to understand what was required of me because I previously worked for a funded organisation and now I work for a funder organisation. I have grown a lot in this time and my confidence has really grown.

At the time of doing audits we are very flexible and we do our own bit of capacity building with the partners. We provide one-on-one training and I believe that is where we make a difference. We work with what partners have in order to strengthen their capacity and systems.”

VARSHI RAJCOOMAR

"I grew quite a lot in the last seven years. I grew in my thinking and how I approach influencing work. I see it now as ingrained into my everyday life. I have become really process-driven, really looking at the how, the mechanism, the approach and focusing on that more than the content. I think I believe we all know how we want to solve something."

At an organisational level working with a really good team has been a highlight. I think we get on really well and we work well together. We build on each other's strengths and I look forward to coming to work because my colleagues have become my family.

In terms of the partnerships, my highlight is investing in people and organisations because for far too long we didn't invest our time and our money and resources in these things enough. It is taking the time to invest in work that we know will carry on, or work that we know is going to be sustainable."

SANYUKTA BHYRO DEYAL

"I have been a part of the Business Services Team for over six years and have taken on many roles in my time with Oxfam. One of the larger projects was the Voices learning event where I needed to coordinate the logistics of over 170 people who came to the event. I have worked on systems to manage the many consultancy and partner contracts the office holds. This was at times a tough task but we worked with the team through these good practice principles. More recently I took on the role of Business Services Coordinator and worked with the Finance Team on financial management tasks including conducting partner audits."

WENDELL WESTLEY

"I think I was very fortunate to get a job at Oxfam way back in 2009. My roles have changed over the years and I have learnt so much along the way. One of the things I love about Oxfam is that it is a learning and open organisation. If you express interest in something, you are given an opportunity to grow and develop something that you love and have a passion for. It is up to you to take those opportunities and run with them. It has been very exciting. I have grown personally and professionally through the many opportunities we are exposed to."

The way we work is so well thought through and carefully put together and we are able to be creative and find new ways to work better. We are able to work in a way we believe is right for the program and partners and communities, instead of being stuck in one place because that was the way it has been done before."





NANCY VAN WHYE

"It has been a short journey. I was coming from more 'hands on' work with communities so it was a struggle for me coming into this environment and being behind a desk. I really enjoyed my visits in the field as I am passionate about this. I had to learn though and manage from my desk.

I love my partners to bits. I couldn't have asked for better ones; even those partners who left our partnership during my time here. All we did was learn from each other – I learnt from them and they learnt from me. I am going to miss that interaction with them, but I don't think it'll stop."

SUE ALEXANDER

"I can't remember clearly when my journey with Oxfam started but I think it was about five or six years ago. I started on a three-month contract.

I am an activist and have been an activist for the past twenty-five years. Finding a home at Oxfam was ideal for me because of their ethics, work styles and values. For me, it was just another growth spurt. I came with my knowledge and I was able to apply it to a lot of the Oxfam work. I used to work with community organisations and I understand the importance of funding. Everything I had learnt out there I was able to put it into good use in here. I got a chance to bring more partners to the party and link different people together.

Almost every day is a highlight for me. I love what I do, I love every inch of what I do, as difficult as it maybe. Being able to deliver is important to me. I love the fact that people allowed me to grow on my own, there was never somebody standing behind me with a big stick. I was given the freedom to grow."

JOHN NYAMAYARO

"I have been lucky that I have been a WASH person throughout my journey with Oxfam. I have enjoyed the program and related WASH projects. I have liked it because it's different and the needs and issues have remained current. I am happy that to some extent we have empowered partners and beneficiaries to demand and claim for WASH-related services.

At Oxfam, I loved that as an individual you are your own limit. I have gained and benefitted so much from various exposures. There are more positives than negatives here. It's very hard to find challenges because Oxfam has been very supportive. You work in your own time and pace as long as you meet the deadlines."

WENDY LUBBEE

"My journey started about five and a half years ago as a Programs Manager. I moved from Johannesburg to Durban to take up the position with Oxfam. It was a big but nice change. When I first joined the Oxfam team, there were about twelve team members and the team grew to a total of twenty-four staff members.

The different change processes during my time with Oxfam also resulted in changes to my position. With the internal changes and my changing roles, I had to learn the Oxfam way of doing things very quickly. The changes have been both very interesting and challenging at the same time.

My highlight on both my time with Oxfam and probably my development career has been the opportunity I was given to coordinate Oxfam's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program. When I joined Oxfam, the program was at the inception stage and I had the privilege of working with a team to both design and implement a successful program over its lifespan of five years. The program acted as an incubator of new innovative ideas, the guinea pigs for introducing new ways of working which included inclusive programming across both South Africa and Zambia. I had the opportunity of working with members of ten other Australian NGOs who were programming in eleven African countries. Not only did we design, plan and implement together, but we learnt together and developed relationships that resulted in a highly successful program which has been acknowledged not only by the Australian Government but other development practitioners."

INGER HARBER

"I started in 2010 and my first post at Oxfam was to manage the Oxfam-Monash Student Placement Program. After that I worked briefly as a consultant and then I started with the DRR Program.

Since I started I have had opportunities to be involved in various exciting projects. Working at Oxfam has been interesting. Everyone is very supportive but there are also some things that are quite confronting with a lot of challenging aspects.

People work here because of their principles and beliefs; for many people it's not just a job. I have come to understand that nobody really ever does this just for the job. People care for their country and the people. I work with people who have a strong sense of justice.

The relationship between the staff and the partners is very real. We know things about each other's families; we share our experiences honestly and really get to know each other."

WENDY



INGER





CAILI



GINA



GLENISE

CAILI FORREST

“My journey started in January 2015 and it has been a strange journey because I entered in the exit phase and I did not know Oxfam before the exit phase. My main reason for joining Oxfam was for the people because people are important to me. I was working for a municipality and I wanted a change. It was a wonderful experience for me as a young person to be surrounded by passionate, experienced and thoughtful people. I got a lot out of it and it means so much to me.

I became the person who did the documenting and provided the support for the exit. I feel like my role is to help with a responsible exit, to gather the stories, ensure there is good communication and to try and support in the ways that I can.

It has been a strange journey but also an important one personally and professionally. Oxfam is very supportive in a sense that they provide career support and have allowed me to also take advantage of those opportunities. Overall my journey has been interesting, short and strange.”

GINA BLACKBURN

“I started at Oxfam at a time when I had experienced terrible corporate working environments and I had decided to take a career break. During my break, I decided I wanted to work with an organisation with the right culture and environment. I wanted to work for an organisation that was not all about profits but about people and that is how I ended up at Oxfam.

The journey has been great but we are currently going through a difficult time. It has been nice to see that everyone has been supportive and everybody wants to take care of everyone else. I love working in an environment where you are allowed to express your opinion. We call ourselves the Oxfam family.”

GLENISE LEVENDAL

“I joined Oxfam in 2008 and I worked for Oxfam Canada as the Regional Southern Africa Program Officer for women’s rights and gender equality. Those were very exciting years because it was sort of starting and setting up a women rights program. We had to find partners and inform them, so it was really nice. After Oxfam Canada closed, I joined Oxfam Australia in 2013. It has been a long journey in terms of getting experience, and the variation of jobs and focus as it shifted. I have seen and experienced Oxfam from many different angles.

Oxfam within South Africa, and through the different affiliates, always had a strong gender focus. It has been very exciting hard work to see how the agenda had buy-in from the leadership. Our gender work had great influence and impact.

I saw the possibility of changes in partners’ leadership and practice to become ones that advance women’s rights and gender equality, not only in their program work but also in their internal organisational policies and practices.”



NICK MOLVER

“My journey with Oxfam started in 2013. I started at Oxfam as a consultant, documenting conferences and projects. I later came on board as a Research Assistant and my roles have continued to evolve since then.

I learnt to build relationships with the partners. I learnt to be around, helping them whenever they needed and staying away when they don't need it.

Oxfam Australia views the relationship with partners as equals, even though we come in as donors. We try and limit the amount of hoops we expect them to jump through. We don't throw money at them and expect them to dance for us. They are on the ground doing the work. We are privileged to have been able to support them to do that in whatever ways we can. We go into established groups who are already doing the work, we see the work being done well and we are adding to it. We are not trying to dominate it and we are not trying to control it. We work together with partners and our partners know there is a strong concept of partnership. These are some of the things that drew me into the role of a Program Coordinator.”

LATTICIA NGEMA

“My greatest highlights while working for Oxfam are the amazing different cultural backgrounds I got to meet and work with; the intriguing work Oxfam incorporates; and the caring nature of the people of Oxfam, from managerial positions and various others. This experience did change certain perspectives and views I had and how I actually looked at the world. In Oxfam it's about caring, growth, growing, sharing, knowing and living with people in Oxfam.

What I definitely take forward is the sincere caring nature and knowledge of the different cultures and people's ways of living. The hard work Oxfam puts in has been embedded in most people.”

ZARINA MAJIET

“My journey at Oxfam has been short as I started in May 2015. It has been really good getting to know the culture of the team. The relationship that staff have with partners is quite unique because there is a commitment to working with partners from where the partners are. I like that we don’t impose what we think should be happening and we let our partners take the lead. The support Oxfam gives to its partners is really amazing. I have been helping organisations get ready to continue, helping them put measures in place to be sustainable. It feels like I have been working here a lot longer because the Oxfam family and culture is really great.

I have been working in the development sector for years and I have never seen an organisation that cares for its partners the way that Oxfam does. The relationship between the team and the partners is very unique. It’s amazing. I will always remember the size of the heart of Oxfam staff.”

SAMUKELE KHOZA

“My journey with Oxfam started in May 2015. I was lucky because I heard about the job opportunity, the Finance Officer had just left and I filled in his position. This is my first job and if this is how working is then I am happy. It’s all good. I like working at a place where everyone is united and connected because we are all here to try and help other people. I have been taught by other people and learning how they work has been interesting. It’s a good gig for a first gig.

When I started I was so scared because it was my first job, but as soon as I got to know the people I became comfortable. I was also a bit scared because I am the youngest. I was not sure how that was going to play out but they do not take me as someone who is young and I really like that.”



STAFF PHOTOS

PHOTOS © Xavier Vahed, Wendy Lubbee and Micaela De Freitas | OXFAM

LEADERS OF OXFAM AUSTRALIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

Leaders play a crucial role in guiding and supporting an organisation such as Oxfam. The office in South Africa has gone through many changes. These included the growth of its programs, various internal systems and processes, the bigger Oxfam Confederation shifts and changes in South Africa and beyond. Leaders have made diverse contributions to the team and its partners. This section describes some of those contributions.

WENDY LUBBEE

Wendy joined in 2010 as the Programs Manager responsible for managing the team of twelve. After the departure in 2014 of the Country Director, Allan Moolman, Wendy, who was by then the Associate Country Director, took on the role of managing the Oxfam South Africa exit process and all the challenges that entails.

“It has been a tough time for the Oxfam Australia team over the last year due to the planned exit and closure of the Oxfam Australia office in South Africa. In taking up this responsibility, my dream is that as a team we are able to finish the journey together on a high note. I think for many staff the closure of the Oxfam program in South Africa is like a ‘death’ as they have invested so much in building a successful and responsive program, which has included investing in building strong and effective work and personal relationships with partners and colleagues.”

“I truly believe that we will leave a legacy. The program has been strong in building the capacity of people, implementing good development principles, and developing and sharing good practices. We will not have a monument anywhere to Oxfam Australia in South Africa but we were successful in investing in the lives of many people through the work of staff and partners. We also accompanied partners and communities to identify their challenges and work together to find solutions and overcome them. I believe it is not the end but the legacy will live on.”

“As a team we should be celebrating the good things rather than grieving the end of a program. The team should remember the good times as there are many great things to celebrate and we learnt a lot as we journeyed together.”

ALLAN MOOLMAN

Allan joined Oxfam Australia in 2007 as Program Manager. He soon became Deputy Country Director and later filled Colin's shoes to become Country Director.

Allan was central to the process of creating the country strategy, which was developed as a collaboration by the Program Team. The strategy was not handed down from the top, but, rather, Allan and the management team provided the conceptual framework while the actual creation of the strategy was an 'all-staff effort'.

In his time, Allan offered his innovation and risk-taking management style to the organisation.

"Working for Oxfam in South Africa was about doing development differently. Everyone has been saying that. The program in South Africa showed these possibilities. It showed better results than our peers who were constrained by the norms. Our team was ready to push. It was never: 'we can't'; we said 'we might fail, but we'll take a shot'. We also didn't dwell – it was forward-looking and we had massive learnings."

For Allan, the people are what made Oxfam special. The Oxfam team works as a people-centred development program built out of strong relationships with partners, staff and the affiliates and has been successful because it invests in strong relationships.

COLIN COLLETT VAN ROOYEN

By 2004, the organisation had changed the role of the Country Representative in South Africa, and Colin joined the team, acting as liaison between the work in South Africa and the managing office in Australia. He brought in a strong focus on structures and systems and set professional standards for the office.

The office's scope of work expanded to include food security and soon it was no longer the secretariat acting on behalf of the Joint Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (JOHAP), but a fully-fledged Oxfam Australia office offering support beyond the objectives of JOHAP. Colin became the first Country Director for Oxfam Australia's office in South Africa.

With the introduction of the Australian Partnerships with African Communities (APAC) grant, which aimed to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development, the scope of work expanded even further.

A significant moment in Colin's time was the introduction of HR50, the workplace HIV policy which aimed to offer support to Oxfam staff, all of whom were affected by HIV in one way or another.

"I think the introduction of that policy, in which South Africa was instrumental, did an incredible amount for the team as we were living it ourselves and were able to adjust and amend it to the South African context. This was a special moment in my time, particularly how we were able to implement it sensitively which allowed for people not to compromise themselves. We were even able to keep family members alive when access to ARVs was almost impossible at the time."

BRIDGETTE THOROLD

Bridgette joined in 2002, heading the office, which was managing the JOHAP program. In her time, the partner portfolio grew and the issues addressed expanded so that HIV could be central and at the same time take into account other development issues.

Bridgette led the development of the JOHAP phase 2 strategic plan which saw an expanded strategy able to respond to the evolving development context with a firm eye on the need to maintain a strong civil society. This was at a time when many activists had become part of the new democratic government. She had a strong community development approach and continues to believe this is key to the success of the work of organisations like Oxfam.

"I would want to encourage and re-affirm the importance of supporting community level/local initiatives as well as scalable and policy level initiatives. Small pockets of empowered good practice have value and relevance and should be supported to inform larger scale or replication efforts."

DAWN CAVANNAGH

Dawn was recruited as Coordinator of the JOHAP program in 2000. She brought a strong gender focus to HIV work and was instrumental in establishing the Gender AIDS Forum, a partner organisation which became known for exploring and shaping how people could focus on HIV from a gender perspective.

For Dawn, it was a crucial time of consultation with organisations doing both gender and HIV work and this set the agenda, to a large extent, of the work Oxfam Australia (then CAA) was doing. JOHAP funded two critical issues of the *Agenda* journal, both focusing on the intersection between HIV and gender and both issues coming out of a consultative process involving activists in both sectors.

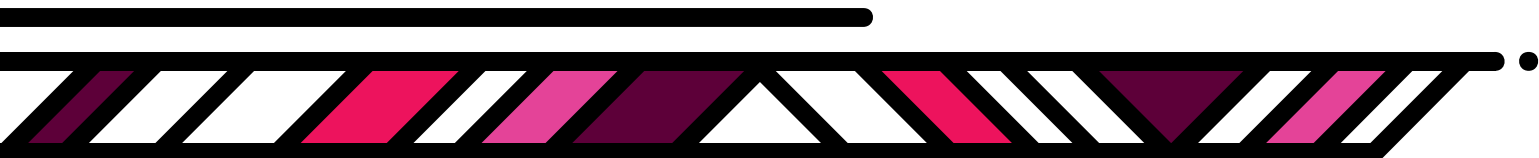
“A fundamental value was to talk and listen to local activists working on women’s rights and gender and hear what their needs were and what would be the best in terms of investment. It was crucial to be sensitive and responsive to what those leading on HIV and gender were saying.”

JOSEF GARDINER

Josef was the Melbourne-based Manager responsible for HIV work in South Africa between 2001 and 2003. His role was to support and monitor the work of the field office.

“South Africa staff and partners really informed the work being done by Oxfam in other countries, particularly the HIV and AIDS mainstreaming work.”

For Josef, the work being done by JOHAP was ground-breaking and informed much of the work done by Oxfam across the globe. It also provided a model for how collective work could be done.



CHILD & YOUTH CARE

Yolanda Dlamini, who attends the Woza Moya playschool, stands with her grandparents, Mhlanganyelwa Dlamini and Phumlile Dlamini.
PHOTO © Max Bastard | OXFAM



OUR PROGRAMS

Oxfam's work in South Africa continued to evolve as we learnt, grew and responded to the changing context. Here is a brief description of each of our programs over the years:

● THE JOINT OXFAM HIV AND AIDS PROGRAM (JOHAP)

1998-2010

As the HIV and AIDS epidemic spread dramatically, Oxfam affiliates became aware of the need to respond systematically. At the same time, the affiliates started speaking about 'harmonisation' – aiming to work together for greater coordination, impact and cost-efficiency.

JOHAP was a pilot program whose mission was to strengthen the civil society response to HIV and AIDS, especially through CBOs and NGOs, so that it was cohesive, responsive and effective.

Oxfam/Community Aid Abroad managed the program, which was led by a Program Committee of contributing Oxfam agencies, and given strategic guidance by an Advisory Board of local experts. The Secretariat comprised three local staff based in Durban.

● OXFAM HIV AND AIDS PROGRAM (OHAP)

2010-2012

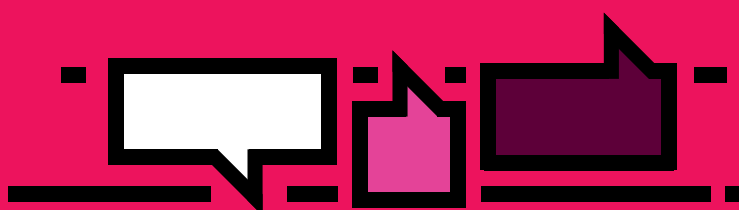
With changes in the way the Oxfam Confederation worked, all fourteen Oxfam affiliates now worked under one Oxfam name and brand – simply 'Oxfam'. This meant all Oxfam work was shared rather than belonging to any particular Oxfam affiliate. With this change the concept of 'joint' in Oxfam programming fell away and JOHAP became OHAP.

● THE AUSTRALIAN PARTNERSHIPS WITH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES (APAC)

2004-2010

APAC was initially designed as a five-year partnership between the Australian Agency for International Development and Australian NGOs, including Oxfam Australia. The program was extended to a sixth year of funding and concluded in 2010.

APAC's aim was to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development in targeted countries in southern and eastern Africa. The program involved three sectors: food security, communicable diseases (including HIV and AIDS), and water and sanitation in South Africa and Mozambique.



- **THE UMKHANYAKUDE PARTNERSHIP (FOOD SECURITY) PROGRAM**

2005-2012

Working with communities through partner organisations, this program drew on community knowledge and practices of food production and distribution and built on current coping mechanisms to increase resilience to HIV and AIDS by increasing food and nutrition security – it hoped to strengthen community responses in this way.

- **THE SOUTHERN AFRICA CHILD SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAM (SACSP)**

2007-2012

This work focused on strengthening and supporting approaches to social protection that effectively addressed the needs of orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers. The program was operational in Zimbabwe and in the South African provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.

The program aimed to strengthen families and households in their protection and care of orphaned and vulnerable children (legally, politically and economically), hold government to account for legislation, policies and implementation that protects the rights of children and support partner organisations in their capacity to implement work in this regard.

- **THE OXFAM-MONASH IN SOUTH AFRICA STUDENT PLACEMENT PROGRAM**

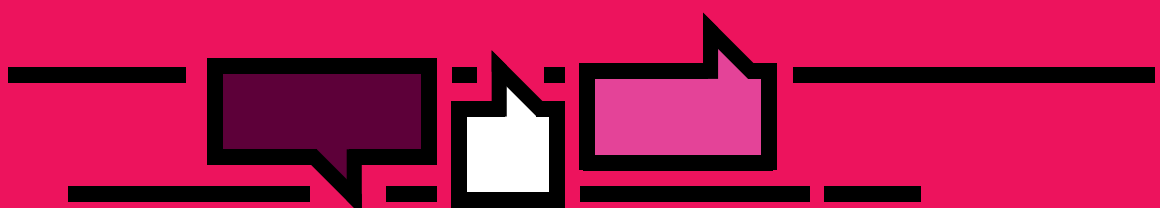
2010-2015

The Oxfam-Monash in South Africa Student Placement Program was part of a broader agreement to collaborate between Oxfam Australia and Monash University (in Australia and South Africa) that included the placement of students in South Africa for a fixed period to develop field-based learning and gain exposure to development issues and practice in the South African context.

- **AUSTRALIA AFRICA COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SCHEME (AACES)**

2011-2016

The AACES program aimed to enhance the health and quality of life of poor and vulnerable communities through increased access to improved water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure and systems, while building the capacity of partners, communities and the government to support and sustain the improvements resulting from this work. The specific objectives of the program in South Africa and Zambia were to increase access to safe, sufficient and sustainable water supplies, and to sanitation and hygiene improvements; reduce WASH-related gender inequities; strengthen the WASH technical capacity and knowledge in partners, targeted communities, government WASH sector and private sanitation sector; improve WASH governance and effectiveness; and document and communicate learning from the program and share knowledge.



● THE DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR) PROGRAM

2011-2014

DRR builds on the idea that it is better to take a proactive approach, which seeks to reduce the risk that vulnerable communities are exposed to and therefore mitigate, or at least reduce, the impact of hazards. Such action results in a reduction in the losses experienced in disasters and an improvement in quality of life.

Building on its experience in DRR and climate change adaptation, Oxfam hoped to further explore its understanding that contextual factors must be taken into account when undertaking DRR interventions. It did this through focusing on increasing the ability of partner organisations and community members to analyse hazards and risks. This meant building their understanding of DRR, supporting them to assess municipal DRR strategies and create DRR plans, and offering training in assessment and risk mapping so they could monitor the implementation of the plans.

● THE OXFAM PROGRAM FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH AFRICA: NO LONGER VULNERABLE (NLV)

2012-2016

In 2012, the Durban office launched the NLV program, which promoted a strongly integrated approach aimed at ensuring people have access to the broadest range of services and support at the shortest possible distance from where they live and work.

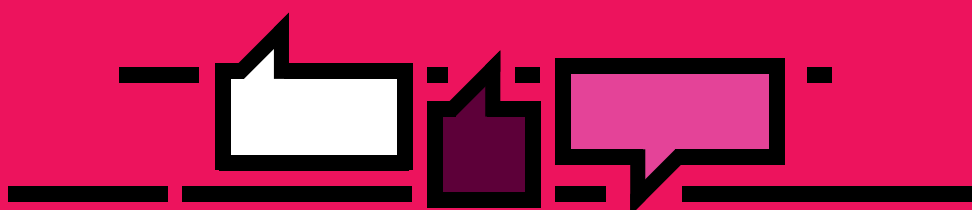
At this point, the Oxfam program in South Africa, given the need to maximise the impact of the limited resources available, focused on ensuring that people living in South Africa had improved health outcomes, opportunities to improve their livelihoods (such as income-generating activities and agricultural activities to produce their own food) and access to social protection or rights.

● PROMOTING AND PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEXUAL MINORITIES

2014-2017

The overall objective of this joint program, Promoting and Protecting Human Rights of Sexual Minorities in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Pakistan (known as the BuZA program), is to support the rights of sexual minorities in these countries by improving approaches through knowledge sharing, and providing robust models for related programs globally.

In South Africa, the program was managed by Oxfam Australia, with Triangle Project (TP) and The Inner Circle (TIC) as implementing partners. Both organisations are based in the Western Cape province and work nationally and globally.



ABOUT TRIANGLE PROJECT

Triangle Project became an Oxfam Australia partner in 2014.

They offer professional services to ensure the full realisation of constitutional and human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons, their partners and families.

Their three core services centre on:

- *Health and support,*
- *Community engagement and empowerment, and*
- *Research and advocacy.*

Triangle Project's services to the LGBTI community include a variety of health services, such as sexual health clinics, counselling, support groups and a helpline, public education and training services, community outreach and safe spaces, and facilities such as the drop-in centre and library.

For more information, see: www.triangleproject.org.za

ABOUT THE INNER CIRCLE

The Inner Circle (TIC) has worked as a partner of Oxfam Australia since 2014.

TIC was established by a concerned group of Muslims in 1996 as an underground social and support group. Study circles run by the group have proven successful in helping Muslims who are queer to reconcile Islam with their sexuality.

Vision: Transforming society into one of inter-connectedness and inclusivity of different faiths and beliefs around gender and sexual diversity.

Mission: To empower and raise consciousness around gender and sexual diversity by engaging faiths and beliefs, encouraging independent reasoning and collaboration, especially with Muslims who are queer and the local, national and international Muslim community.

For more information, see: www.theinnercircle.org.za

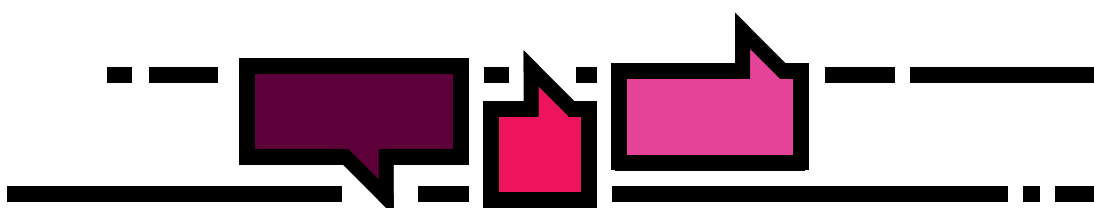
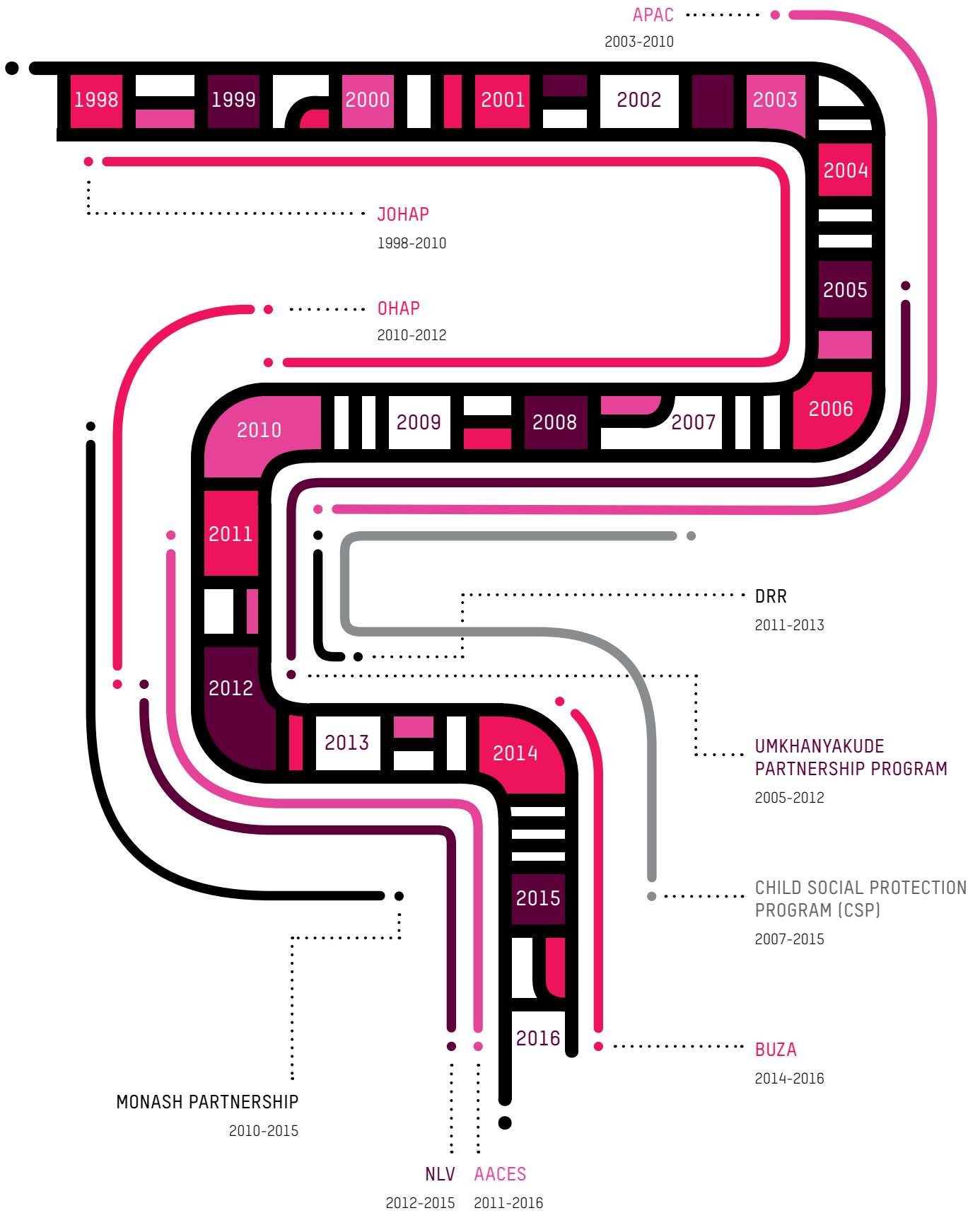


FIGURE 2: Oxfam's program timeline from 1998 to 2016.



REMAINING RELEVANT TO PEOPLE'S LIVES: REFLECTING ON SEVENTEEN YEARS OF PROGRAMMING

BY SCOTT DRIMIE

Program work has been a critical part of Oxfam's work in South Africa and it has evolved substantially over the last seventeen years. There have been some major shifts since the late 1990s when operations started with a focus on HIV and AIDS and the Joint Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (JOHAP) was born. This program was innovative at the time and set the basis for building programs that were deeply sensitive and engaged with people and, as a result, deeply relevant and valued.

By 1998, HIV had become a serious developmental challenge, particularly in southern Africa. Responses to the epidemic were seriously contested and often contradictory in approach. JOHAP set out to work through partner organisations to achieve change in people's lives rather than through the direct implementation of projects. It involved learning what community participation meant in HIV programming. Groups and individuals within communities were drawn in to participate as full and active partners in program design, decisions, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The goal was that the community participated in and influenced processes, decisions and activities. The central commitment of JOHAP stated that "with partners and allies, we will act in solidarity with people living in poverty, especially women, to achieve their rights and assert their dignity as full citizens".

"The goal was that the community participated in and influenced processes, decisions and activities."

JOHAP operated in a context of uncertainty in terms of government's reluctance around its HIV and AIDS policy, as well as a growing groundswell of activism to drive changes in how society was responding to the epidemic. The strategic approach was carefully designed to facilitate a more reflexive, responsive approach to the work. This was the main impetus of JOHAP as it grew, particularly in the way the program became more conscious and inclusive of gender concerns and livelihoods.

In 2010, the program changed to the Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (OHAP), which had various implications. OHAP stayed focused on HIV and AIDS-related issues within its programming. However, it became more and more integrated during this time.

The significant expansion of the Oxfam program in South Africa between 2007 and 2012 was managed principally through the establishment of new thematic programs relating to food security, children's social protection and water, sanitation and hygiene. JOHAP, in time, influenced other programming, including the uMkhanyakude Partnership (Food Security) Program, the Child Social Protection Program and the Disaster Risk Reduction program.



The uMkhanyakude Partnership (Food Security) Program focused on livelihoods and food security, which aimed at strengthening community food and nutrition security responses within the context of HIV and AIDS in a predominantly rural district in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. An important outcome of the program was the active integration of activities other than food production, reflecting the understanding of food security as a discipline that needs a multi-sectoral approach. Some partner organisations emphasised Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) to help address the entwined crises of food insecurity and HIV and AIDS in a holistic manner.

Similarly, the Southern Africa Child Social Protection Program (SACSPP) embraced a more holistic approach in its endeavours to strengthen and support approaches to social protection that effectively addressed the needs of orphans and vulnerable children and their caregivers. This meant an explicit response to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children around early childhood development, HIV and AIDS prevention and care, as well as general support for households and communities in varied ways. Community dialogue was a key mechanism to enable these needs to be defined and the responses co-designed.

The Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES) was another such program. Aimed at developing, demonstrating and disseminating ways of working with marginalised communities, other civil society organisations, and public and private sector service providers across Africa, AACES set about to bring sustainable change in the lives of people in targeted communities in eleven countries. Aligned primarily to address issues relating to food security, water and sanitation, and maternal and child health, the basic approach has been to understand needs, help people access new technologies and, where appropriate, mobilise community assets, and voice and promote understanding of rights and duties. For Oxfam, AACES has focused on WASH in South Africa and Zambia, both countries with large rural populations where WASH services are lacking despite progressive policies. Two over-riding achievements of this work facilitated by Oxfam have been sustainability, as communities have been engaged in all aspects of the program cycle, and an unprecedented commitment to learning, exchange and collaboration.

A deeply innovative program was that of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). As opposed to the traditional models of humanitarian response, which were only activated after a disaster occurred, Oxfam's DRR approach built on the idea that it was better to take a proactive approach. Such an approach sought to reduce the risk that vulnerable communities were exposed to and therefore reduce the impact of hazards. Such action meant that the losses experienced in disasters were reduced and that quality of life could be improved.

As an example, Project Empower had worked with young people in informal settlements to address the particular risks faced by this group. An explicit focus on women underscored an acknowledgement of the disadvantages experienced by young women at home, in relationships, economically, and at the hands of state service providers. These disadvantages created the circumstances through which young women experience heightened vulnerability to HIV. Placing these experiences at the centre of the work meant that a young woman's perspective of disaster became key, even if it did not link clearly with conventional notions of 'disaster'. A range of combined factors make women in informal settlements especially vulnerable to what they consider to be disaster at a very personal level, in particular poverty, gender inequality and HIV. Poverty further entrenches this vulnerability, with women having little or no negotiating power within a range of relationships.



ABOUT PROJECT EMPOWER

Project Empower has been an Oxfam Australia partner organisation for many years.

Their work is focused on strengthening and supporting civil society's responses to HIV and AIDS.

Project Empower works with civil society organisations responding to the impact of HIV and AIDS on communities. These include formal and informal community-based organisations, faith-based organisations and formal non-governmental organisations.

Project Empower focuses on helping people to critically assess the impact of HIV and AIDS in their own lives and the network of relationships that support them. Using the learning from this personal exploration, the organisation helps people to develop contextual responses to the issues they are confronting.

For more information, see: www.projectempower.org.za



A joint program, Promoting and Protecting Human Rights of Sexual Minorities in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Pakistan was initiated in 2014 with the overall objective of supporting the rights of sexual minorities in these countries by improving approaches through knowledge sharing, and providing robust models for related programs globally.

As programs evolved and became more complex, Oxfam staff realised that the differentiation between programs was blurred in reality as they and their partners were addressing multiple, overlapping issues facing communities. A redesign process led to a new framework which addressed the need to reflect the subtleties of programming, making an effort to better align with a 'one program' approach. The experiences of JOHAP, AACES, SACSP, the uMkhanyakude Partnership Program and the DRR program, were drawn together. The new framework called No Longer Vulnerable (NLV) represented a consolidation of Oxfam strengths.

A consistent strategy was working with partners at the core of programming. Partners were seen as organised groups or institutions that are actors for change, who represent directly or have close relations with vulnerable and marginalised people in society. By placing partners at the centre of the new framework, Oxfam set out to enable communities to become agents of change in their environment, whether that is their family, community, municipality, region, country, or at a transnational or global scale. A clear way of working had emerged: strengthen civil society organisations, empower communities, change society. In thinking critically about how this could be achieved, Oxfam staff identified variants of the mechanisms inherent in specific programs as being key to the change process facilitated by themselves, leveraging different resources (money, time, skills, networks, partnerships, issue knowledge) to enable partners to work with and within the communities they served and belonged to.

Another major emphasis of Oxfam's work has been around integration. At the close of NLV in 2016, it was striking how many examples Oxfam staff and partners could give on what integration meant in practice. These had evolved from a few tentative suggestions at the beginning of NLV into a cascade of examples. There was naturally some variation in understanding among staff about what integration is exactly. These vary from emphasising the core area or issue that a partner, project or programs coordinator is concerned about and allowing other related issues to be iteratively brought on, to taking a more comprehensive approach to addressing multiple facets of vulnerability simultaneously.

An overriding point about such activities was that they often emerged at a local level through careful community facilitation and learning. At the outset of NLV, a number of staff indicated that integration in the past had taken many different forms across partnerships. For example, the uMkhanyakude Partnership Program had 'built in' a food security and WASH element, as the reality of people living with HIV required far more than access to treatment or training in positive living. The emphasis of the work has been on providing appropriate food that would contribute towards the achievement of positive health outcomes.

Key learnings to emerge from NLV include that the integration of food security work with WASH, livelihoods work, HIV and DDR has resulted in partners developing a stronger understanding of the interconnectedness of systems and processes, which has maximised the impact of their work on development-related issues. This is a fascinating insight as in many ways the early 'integration' experiences of Oxfam were based on HIV and nutrition security, which continues to provide important insights for the organisation.

As such, integration was intuitively appealing to staff directly involved in programming, partly because the evolution of programs has stemmed from an initial focus on HIV with an incremental 'integration' of additional issues identified as being vital to effectively address the epidemic: nutritious food, access to broader healthcare and WASH. The separation of programs in the past was therefore, in one sense, artificial, as an alignment existed and was reinforced by the way of working. The conceptual separation between the programs was deemed necessary for program design, planning, funding allocation, monitoring and evaluation and auditing. However, almost as a body, Oxfam staff agreed that an integration of issues was how partners working within communities operated: "They are ahead of us in this regard." Reflecting on this, some staff believed that the 'one program', integrated approach was actually in place for many partners and that, by-and-large, most successful partners would not have to adapt much to a new framework, as this is how they had been working for years.

Oxfam also readily adopted and adapted an integral framework to give a strong conceptual basis to what it was doing in practice. The integral framework allowed Oxfam to review its entire body of work more holistically, particularly in reviewing efforts to address a specific objective or overall aim. For example, where partners' work did not coherently address laws, policies and networks (one of the quadrants of the framework outlined on page 75), partnerships can be established with advocacy and policy organisations. This might, for example, be an opportunity for an organisation like Biowatch, which stated clearly the challenges of trying to influence or shift provincial government in issues around agro-ecology.



ABOUT BIOWATCH


Biowatch became an Oxfam Australia partner in 2009.

They work with smallholder farmers, other civil society organisations and government to ensure people have control over their food, agricultural processes and resources, and other natural resources, within a bio-diverse agro-ecological and sustainable system.

Biowatch has a two-fold approach, which involves working simultaneously at policy level and directly with projects on the ground.

This means any policy interventions are grounded in the experiences of people working the land in rural areas. Through the policy work, farmers become more aware of their context, of what needs changing in society, of their collective power, and of the need to ensure the accountability of decision makers in a democracy.

For more information, see: www.biowatch.org.za



It is also important to realise that the approach pivoting on community participation and ownership underpinned the emphasis on integration. Many communities had been engaged in dialogue to understand and identify issues and to then prioritise what needed to be done. Task teams were established to ensure key members of the community meet regularly with dialogue facilitators to implement community decisions. These committee members were involved in feeding information back to the larger community. In other words, an accountability ethos was also stimulated.

Strengthening community participation in society to define their future was a key contextual factor facing Oxfam. Narrowing the gap between state and society required not only that elites be assisted to develop deeper social roots, but also that those at the local level – who were at the time not heard in policy debates – be empowered to engage with the state and others whose access to power and resources gave them the capacity to impact on the lives of vulnerable people. It was recognised that support was most likely to be effective in building capacity to participate in democratic institutions if it supported existing organisations rather than trying to stimulate new ones and if it concentrated not on dispensing money, but on supporting opportunities to engage with power-holders.

A key lesson has been that, in practice, integration has meant Oxfam staff and partners have addressed many overlapping issues facing communities. These issues, which people face on a daily basis, seldom adhere to strict program boundaries. Under more rigid programming, opportunities to create more substantive change often go unrealised, as these fall between the ‘silos’ of differentiated programs, leaving limited options to capitalise on opportunities to consolidate learning and apply them across programs.



BIOWATCH

Winnie Mngomezulu works in the fields in Ingwavuma, KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Max Bastard | OXFAM





TSELA YA RONA YA GO DIRA

INDLELA ESISEBENZA NGAYO

TSELA EA RONA EA HO SEBETSA

OUR PRACTICE

INDLELA ESISEBENZA NGAYO

KUSHUMELE KWASHU

TSELA YA RONA YA GO ŠOMA

INTRODUCTION BY PINKY KONDLO

(DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS, UMZI WETHU, WILDERNESS FOUNDATION OF SOUTH AFRICA)

This section examines the development practice adopted by Oxfam Australia in the delivery of its programs in South Africa and explores various aspects that helped inform and shape Oxfam's practice framework.

It begins by defining and unpacking the partnership model Oxfam Australia adopted for its programming in the South African development context. It is important to note that through Oxfam's engagements with stakeholders and the progressive mindset of its program staff, the model evolved organically and consistently to a point where it was totally contextualised.

The complex socio-political and economic environment in which programs were delivered in South Africa necessitated the adoption of an integral and all-inclusive program design, planning and management approach to traditional approaches, which tend to take on a linear approach. This approach allowed Oxfam to take on a multi-faceted and multidimensional approach in designing its development programs.

Oxfam's HIV and AIDS programming in South Africa has made a name for itself as a good practice program within and outside the Oxfam family. This is mainly due to Oxfam's approach, which was highly robust and responsive to the changes affecting intervention programs targeting HIV and AIDS. This section unpacks the evolution, taking the reader from the humble beginnings of the program to the development of a successful No Longer Vulnerable program.

"...the model evolved organically and consistently to a point where it was totally contextualised."

Oxfam's choice of an integrated, as opposed to an isolated, approach to programming encouraged integrated thinking within the institution, something which strengthened the practical, innovative and creative aspects in the work of Oxfam. The piece on this aspect reflects how Oxfam has been more of a development partner than a funding agency.

In spite of the fact that Oxfam had a robust and solid financial management system, they tended to be flexible in their approach to partners. Oxfam always preferred strengthening and empowering partners' financial management systems to ensure sustainability beyond Oxfam grants.

One of the unique things that can be noted about Oxfam's practice in South Africa is their relentless efforts aimed at empowering and strengthening the knowledge, skills and organisational systems of their partner organisations. From the onset, Oxfam adopted a relational approach as opposed to a power-based approach in conducting its business with partner organisations. This was based on their belief on collective success: that is, when the organisations are empowered to succeed, so does Oxfam.



Partners were also afforded an opportunity to document their stories and approaches. This was done to help the partners reflect on their work and recognise the role they were playing in bringing about the desired change in South Africa.

Although partners initially perceived monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) as something they needed to do in order to meet the requirements of Oxfam, once there was buy-in across the board, MEL worked well and assisted many partner organisations put systems in place for meaningful data gathering and documentation and afforded them an opportunity to reflect, learn and improve areas that required improvement.

“...Oxfam adopted a relational approach as opposed to a power-based approach in conducting its business with partner organisations.”

Oxfam’s efforts have concentrated on delivering interventions focused on analysing the interplay between gender and vulnerability, specifically harnessing programs that recognise and respond to the need to place women more centrally as actors in development and in the communities where we work. The main objective of this analysis is to identify the issues that make one gender more vulnerable than the other and devise mechanisms to address these in order to reduce vulnerability.

Reading through this section, one gets the sense that Oxfam’s development practice and general approach to development in South Africa has been one of the most progressive. It is worth noting the high degree of interconnectedness amongst all the aspects mentioned above and how the adoption of one approach has led to the conceptualisation of the other, and *vice versa*. It is fascinating to see how Oxfam consistently strived to be relevant in its practice, ensuring that each concept they brought to life targeted a realistic need or challenge.

For access to the full papers featured in this section, please go to: <http://power-is-in-people.wordpress.com>



PINKY KONDLO

Pinky Kondlo, the Director of Social Programs, Umzi Wethu, Wilderness Foundation of South Africa.
PHOTO © Karl Schoemaker | OXFAM

AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIP

BY ALLAN MOOLMAN

THE ECOSYSTEMS METAPHOR

The evolved Oxfam Australia's partnership model in South Africa was founded on ecosystems thinking:

All viable ecosystems contain many organisms, each with a particular function that, when healthy and in balance, ensures sustainability of the ecosystem. Each organism is part of a network of dependencies which are essential for the health of the whole system which itself, may be part of a larger system.

The model recognised that organisations, like their organic counterparts, are related to each other and interact in complex ways. In order to ensure a 'healthy' program, organisations of various kinds needed to be brought together in a partnership that mimicked natural ecosystems. Organisations, in order to grow and develop, needed to work together and be influenced by one another. Within this ecosystem, the Oxfam office itself occupied an active role and was also acted on or influenced in a very direct way.

Partnership models that are built on this ecological metaphor are potentially more robust, agile and sustainable than traditional approaches that are often linear and utilitarian. Using this approach, partnership formation and management becomes more of a dynamic and reflexive activity.

"In order to ensure a 'healthy' program, organisations of various kinds needed to be brought together in a partnership that mimicked natural ecosystems."

To ensure a just and equitable future for all people on the planet, there are immense challenges that need to be overcome. This agreement extends further: to accept that in order to address these challenges successfully, civil society organisations (CSOs) are compelled to be collaborative and act in a mutually reinforcing manner. This acceptance is normally articulated in the catch-all concept of 'partnership'. This often (mis)used term has come to encapsulate a range of cooperative behaviours, all the way from donor/implementer relationships to loose alliances and platforms. This generic use of the term is often cause for confusion.

In South Africa, Oxfam applied the articulated model of partnership put forward by Oxfam globally. The implementation experience influenced an evolution of the model, which drew on learning from program practice in South Africa.



The partnership approach emerged organically from the experience of implementing a program and working in partnerships with a wide range of South African CSOs over more than twelve years. Partnership, as understood by the program, describes the complex relationship that exists between Oxfam in South Africa and the CSOs it collaborated with in the delivery of the program. The idea of partnership and partnership formation encompassed the range of interactions, commitments and expectations that existed in the bilateral and multilateral relationships that constituted the program partnership. Partnership was not considered a static notion.

The Oxfam program placed high value on the relationships with partner organisations. More than just contractual arrangements, partner organisations were engaged through people. Relationships were managed through high levels of personal contact, strengthening individual relationships between multiple staff, and regular engagement with all parts of Oxfam operations.

PARTNER-LED PROGRAMMING

Partnerships were carefully constructed to meet the ambition and strategic vision of the program, which, wherever possible, was co-created. Through ongoing analysis and sharing in consultation meetings with members of the partnership, Oxfam was able to keep pace with the shifting development environment in South Africa. More than only using the external analysis, the needs articulated by communities through Oxfam's partner organisations formed an integral part of strategy development and testing undertaken by the program.

For example, in 2007, the program was still largely focused on HIV and AIDS response, with an emergent area of work focused on food security and livelihoods for HIV-affected households. One partner, Operation Upgrade (OpUp), had long realised that access to food was important for the successful delivery of education programs and had worked with groups to start a vegetable growing project to supplement household nutrition.

OpUp approached Oxfam to assist with what they thought was a humanitarian crisis – water access was poor and impacting on households' ability to grow food. An analysis and consequent small-scale water-harvesting project, established in partnership with OpUp, went on to form the basis of a five-year Australian Government-funded program to improve hygiene and sanitation in South Africa. OpUp and other partners' lobbying efforts greatly influenced the country strategy to respond to an emergent issue in South Africa.

This example of joint reflection and adaptive practice provided a much needed short-term intervention into a community, improved the contextual understanding of Oxfam and the rest of the partnership, and gave rise to a new area of programming that has subsequently proved critical to the South African development context. The Oxfam approach elevated partner experiences as serious programming questions and limited the expert status of Oxfam, which mediated inherent power imbalances. Together this allowed for a nimbler, almost prescient, approach to programming.



ABOUT OPERATION UPGRADE (OPUP)

Operation Upgrade (OpUp) has been a funded partner of Oxfam Australia since 2007.

OpUp assists social change and development in South Africa through the support and provision of adult literacy and adult basic education and training.

The organisation has four main functions:

- *Supporting adult basic education and literacy groups through literacy educator training, the development and supply of low-cost reading materials, literacy class monitoring and adult literacy project advice;*
- *Adult literacy program management;*
- *HIV and AIDS education through adult literacy; and*
- *Food security through vegetable tunnels and water support, working through adult literacy groups.*

For more info, see: www.operationupgrade.org.za

MEMBERSHIP AND SELECTION

At its most basic, the partnership model could be described as a hierarchy, with community-based organisations (CBOs)² at the base of a pyramid (see Figure 3) and national advocacy organisations at the apex. An important, but often undifferentiated group of organisations, loosely termed NGOs, were included in this description to ensure their role in the 'ecosystem' was not overlooked. This role, to actively facilitate information flows and relationship building and deliver essential capacity and information to the system, is central to the dynamism and sustainability of the ecosystem. And despite this critical role, these organisations are increasingly being overlooked in favour of nascent movements and 'grassroots' or community-level organisations. Oxfam considered it essential that the partnership it created was diverse and representative of the broad range of experiences of South Africans.

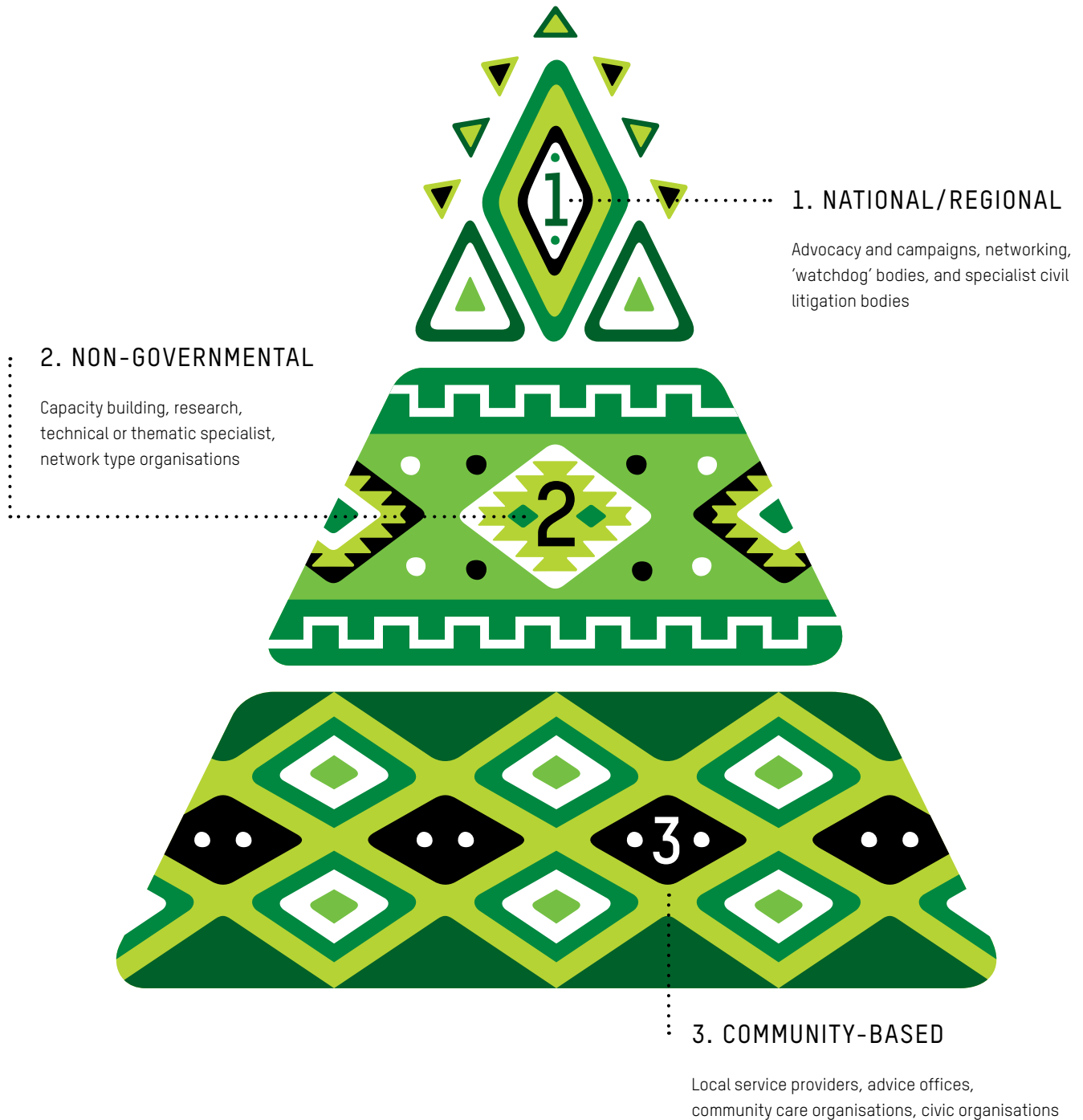
The hierarchical description should not influence the reader to think about the organisational forms (organisms) as having orders of importance. Like any natural ecosystem all of these types of organisations are essential to the success of the partnership (ecosystem) as a whole. It is important to remember that it is the functions of the ecosystem that will need to be maintained and this is the analysis of utility that needs to be made when considering altering the membership (adding or removing partners).

2. The term community-based organisation refers to the nature of the organisation's program, not its registration. This term will then be used to refer to organisations whose programs are embedded in the community, have a high level of local ownership and are generally staffed and managed by the people most affected by the issues.



Figure 3 below, describes the partnership approach for the No Longer Vulnerable program framework, highlighting this hierarchy, and inferring relative numbers and the shape of participating organisations:

FIGURE 3: Partnerships approach for the No Longer Vulnerable framework³



3. Adapted from the No Longer Vulnerable Program Framework 2012-2015.



UNLIKELY PARTNERSHIPS

Diversity of partnerships was important for program success. Having a mix of partners with a range of thematic foci and differing approaches and models allowed for a broad range of actions to be undertaken. This also supported critical reflection and learning: important areas of success and a marker of the program.

For example, in 2008, to further shape the work of the program when it expanded into the Eastern Cape, a fairly unique partner was taken on. Umzi Wethu, the skills development arm of the Wilderness Foundation in South Africa, was supported to integrate HIV and AIDS modules into the psycho-social support component of their program.

Support for Umzi came under quite strong internal criticism because, in one senior leader's opinion, it was a 'boutique project' – reaching too few people to have impact. Umzi's impact on the overall program cannot be overstated though. Through its exploration of appropriate psycho-social support models for young people at risk, Umzi has provided invaluable insight that is, with the support of Oxfam to document and disseminate the Umzi model, informing skills development programs across the country.

ABOUT UMZI WETHU, THE WILDERNESS FOUNDATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Wilderness Foundation has a number of programs engaging in conservation and socio-economic issues. This includes the Umzi Wethu Academy, which began in 2006 and focuses on vulnerable youth.

The Umzi model is about personal wellness, employability and sustainable job placements within the ecotourism industry. It is a distinctive response to the youth unemployment crisis in South Africa.

For more on Umzi Wethu, see: www.umziwethu.org

ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership formation: Potential and existing partners were encouraged to constantly evaluate their relationship with Oxfam to test whether the strategic fit, ambition and values of the organisations remained in alignment.

Partnership management was an active process that was supported by regular contact and robust engagement on issues.

Monitoring was approached in a participatory manner, the basis of which was joint agenda-setting for monitoring visits to guide monitoring visits.

Every opportunity had to be taken to strengthen inter-organisational **connections** between all members of the partnership.

Individual and joint learning allowed the partnership to adapt and evolve and to respond to the shifting environment.





THE WILDERNESS FOUNDATION

The Umzi Wethu program supports young people in the Eastern Cape around livelihoods work in the conservation and hospitality sectors.
PHOTO © Karl Schoemaker | OXFAM



PEOPLE, POWER AND PRACTICE

Development organisations have to accept that partnerships, whether these exist between individuals or organisations, are difficult and dynamic. Partnerships are driven by self-interest and gain, are sometimes temporary and expedient, and are neither value nor power-neutral.

Because of this, partnership principles and the resultant practice have to address issues of power, contestation, trust and complexity for all parties involved in a partnering arrangement.

DEFINING PARTNERSHIP

Oxfam's formal definition of partnership, as stated in Working Together, a publication of Oxfam Great Britain, prepared for Oxfam International and dated February 2012, is as follows:

"Oxfam understands partnerships as mutually empowering relationships, which are aware of power imbalances and focused on mutual growth, organisational development, institutional strengthening and above all, on achieving impact. We believe that programs implemented in partnership increase the collective knowledge, skills, reach and experience applied to an issue or challenge. Programs implemented in partnership are likely to be better at encouraging and enabling the real participation and investment of people living in poverty."

This is then supported by key principles:

"At Oxfam, we strive to ensure that these principles underpin all our work – with local communities, with local civil society organisations, with other actors – both in funding and non-funding relationships. While differences in context may require different approaches, we strive to ensure that all of our work respects these six Partnership Principles:

- *Shared vision and values*
- *Complementarity of purpose and value added*
- *Autonomy and independence*
- *Transparency and mutual accountability*
- *Clarity on roles and responsibilities*
- *Commitment to joint learning."*



Organisations like Oxfam are powerful. In order to deal with it effectively, power has to be consciously managed. Without a consciousness of one's own power, awareness of the effects of having 'conferred power' and actively managing partnerships, staff run the risk of developing practice that is paternalistic and condescending. Healthy power relations are mediated by critical reflection on practice and a consciousness of action and consequence.

A central feature of a healthy partnership is the willingness, ability and freedom to disagree. Contestation is important in that it allows ideas to be tested and refined, and sheds light on the core beliefs of the partners. Contesting ideas is critical to the maintenance of a developmental partnership that results in mutual growth and benefit.

“Contestation is important in that it allows ideas to be tested and refined, and sheds light on the core beliefs of the partners.”

Having trust and mutual respect for every member of the partnership is an important enabler for developing healthy power relations. This trust and respect is built over time and earned through contact, consistency of engagement and the willingness to speak directly and openly to one another.

The importance of honesty in joint reflection and problem-solving has to be seen as both a consequence and a driver of strong partnerships.

CONCLUSION

This piece puts forward a model that is human-centred and highly reliant on the relationships between people. It asks practitioners to, in the same breath, be more adventurous and more thoughtful and conscious of how they work. It asks that practitioners be more hurried and more patient. It asks that individual relationships be placed first and that the interest of the whole be advanced.

It is much like life itself.



A COMPLICATED FRAMEWORK FOR A COMPLEX PROGRAM?

BY ALLAN MOOLMAN

The Oxfam Australia program in South Africa has, since its inception, been concerned with creating a supportive development environment where people have greater control over their lives. Control however, is not a neutral concept. People are complex, and their choices, actions and relationships often result in consequences that cannot be predicted. As a result of the interconnectedness of peoples' lives and the complex environment in which these play out, development practice can be more likened to an art than a science. Accepting this, it has become clear to the team that sound development praxis relies on an understanding and acceptance of complexity and change.

The program approach in South Africa has evolved over time, influenced by the awareness that traditional program design, planning and management approaches were inadequate for the rapidly changing and complex socio-political and economic environment in which programs were delivered. Based on this understanding, the 2012-2015 phase of Oxfam's No Longer Vulnerable (NLV) program framework gives explicit recognition to non-linear causality, and working with complexity and vulnerability. Recognising that human activity takes place in a complex, rapidly changing environment where causality is difficult to define and unintended consequences are common, the team in South Africa adopted an adaptive, highly reflective program management approach.

DESIGNING FOR COMPLEXITY

In the program design, it was accepted firstly, that intended program outcomes are difficult to achieve if insufficient recognition is given to changes in the operating environment, that is, if fundamental assumptions are proven wrong in the course of program delivery. Neither the strategy nor its base assumptions would be sacrosanct. Emerging from the above statement is then an imperative to review the program on a regular basis and *manage delivery actively* in response to changes in the environment. It was also accepted that programs, despite the best intentions of managers and designers, have variable outcomes: positive, foreseen and unforeseen, but also unintended and damaging outcomes shaped by the highly localised context in which they are delivered, and the choices and relationships of program participants. To address the imperative for regular review, a deliberate learning practice was built into day-to-day management and decision-making processes.

The approach was also highly relational. As much as people affected by a program intervention are acted *on*, they are also actors *in* the program and affect program delivery. It is therefore important to understand the actions and motivations of program actors from a 'human perspective', with strong analysis of individual and institutional



power, a keen awareness of the political drivers of decision-making, and constant monitoring of the relational aspects of program implementation and how these impact the decision-making of the Oxfam team, partner organisations and community members.

There are limitations to this way of working though. The chosen approach was, and to a large extent still is, not well supported by traditional analytical or program management frameworks, which are limited by linear and often reductionist perspectives. In the interest of 'logic', much of the nuance and freedom to be responsive to shifting contexts is lost. Building critical self-awareness within the team was another significant challenge that needed to be overcome. Developing more appropriate measures, that could better be used to describe and analyse this dynamic environment, was the next challenge to overcome. Further limitations included insufficient time and human resources to complete all activities, budgetary constraints and the realisation that some activities were irrelevant as the process evolved.

USING THE INTEGRAL FRAMEWORK

Reflection on the limitations of programming in South Africa, especially the gender components of the program, provided a starting point for a framework that would support adaptive program management approaches. In building understandings of the shaping forces that define/limit women's social progress, Aruna Rao and David Kelleher's (2005) adaptation of the integral theory⁴ showed great potential as both an analytical and program design tool. An adaptation of the Rao and Kelleher's model has been used in the program.

FIGURE 4: The Integral Framework



Source: Rao and Kelleher's 2005 Integral Framework

4. Rao, A. and Kelleher, D. (2005). "Is There Life After Gender Mainstreaming?", *Gender and Development*, 13(2):57-69.

Tested through a series of engagements with staff to assess its viability as a more universalised program design and monitoring tool, the framework seemed to provide a more ‘whole of system’ view of the program that our analysis indicated we needed. A second, and no less important, idea that emerged during discussions about the Rao and Kelleher framework was its potential to interrogate causality and, possibly, strategy.

While it confirmed that there were definite synergies between the program management approach and the chosen framework or theory of change, the question of praxis still remained. The program has, at its core, a vision to make ‘people living and working in South Africa less vulnerable’. Vulnerability is a complex term though, being highly contextual and dynamic. The framework seemed to provide a more ‘natural’ way of approaching complex, ‘real world’ program challenges. Several of the challenges that had to be overcome in the use of the framework, including the fear of uncharted theoretical ground, are highlighted in the NLV Mid-Term Review.⁵

In using the framework, challenges did arise such as the tendency to see it as gendered, given its historical use. Practitioners additionally tend to use or see the quadrants as separate and don’t take into account the potential to describe non-linear connections, consequences and feedback loops. In this way, when relationships between the quadrants are identified in practice, often they do not adequately recognise this feedback. Mapping against the framework often fails to recognise scale or the relative importance of the problem or impact.

PROGRAM PRACTICE

A deliberate decision was taken not to work explicitly with the framework during the program cycle due to staff anxiety about using a theoretical model. While the approach was validated in partners’ acceptance of the ‘instinctive nature’ of the framework during the mid-term review, a call was also made by partners to work more explicitly with it. The quadrants provide a useful framework for conducting a contextual analysis as they cover the spectrum of social, political, institutional, legislative and economic spheres, but more than that, by using the framework in design, planning and monitoring sessions, relationships and, more importantly, inter-relationships between issues, outcomes and events become more apparent. Thus, using the framework allows for a more nuanced understanding of causality. In practice, the framework improved different stages of the program cycle including design, monitoring and management, and learning.

“The quadrants provide a useful framework for conducting a contextual analysis as they cover the spectrum of social, political, institutional, legislative and economic spheres...”

In terms of program (re)design, the application of the integral framework, drawing on specific learning from the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) program, is demonstrated in detail in a published case study⁶. In summary, while the design of the program was traditional in its orientation⁷, seeking to build a network of community-based DRR practitioners in KwaZulu-Natal, it became evident during the pilots that the space was more complex than evident in the original design, and the implementation framework needed adapting. In assessing, for instance, the starting point for the interventions in the urban inner city and informal settlements, it became evident that

5. The NLV Mid-term Review was an extensive learning process conducted in 2014. Many of these reflections on Oxfam’s ways of working stem from the lessons and challenges that emerged from it. The Mid-term Review Learning Note is available online at <http://power-is-in-people.wordpress.com>.

6. Ryan, G. (2014). *Case Study 17: Redeveloping Disaster Risk Reduction*. Durban: Oxfam Australia

7. The program’s delivery was informed by principles and ways of working that had been tested and refined in humanitarian and emergency response settings.

the social and behavioural norms required to deliver the program were absent. For informal settlements, notions of 'legality', in the instance of electricity and water connections, are often set aside in the face of a real need for health, safety, security and comfort. Over and above this, institutional and legislative frameworks to support interventions in these 'high risk' communities either did not exist or, if applied, would cause additional burdens on the groups they set out to help. Most significant though, was the varied and complex interpretations of risk and hazards articulated by individuals, and how these would impact on the chosen program implementation strategies.

Using the integral framework as an analytical tool resulted in changes to the program design and approach. Oxfam and its partners worked with established groups of community educators who already had the trust of affected communities. This included carefully realigning language (moving from the use of the term 'illegal electricity connections' to 'unsafe connections'), which led to a significant reduction of risk in informal settlements.

For program monitoring and management, the Program Team regularly mapped country program monitoring information against the integral framework to help build a more nuanced picture of overall program progress, unexpected outcomes and potentially causal relationships. For example, by mapping the outcomes of a Transformative Women's Leadership learning series and livelihoods projects in the craft and agriculture sectors, a decision was taken to bring a new partner, Sinamandla, into the program.

The analysis of program monitoring data revealed an income ceiling many of the crafters in the program could not break through. This was driven by a lack of access to markets and a lack of investment capital, a poor set of public institutions supporting scale up or leveraging for micro enterprises, and a sense that while social power was being addressed, it had a finite impact unless it was accompanied by economic 'empowerment'. The analysis suggested that a relatively simple intervention by incorporating Sinamandla into the partnership, would help leverage a number of program gains and create multiple shifts across the quadrants or spheres.



ABOUT SINAMANDLA

Sinamandla became an Oxfam Australia partner organisation in 2013.

They promote the self-help group (SHG) approach throughout South Africa and currently work with implementing partners in KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Free State.

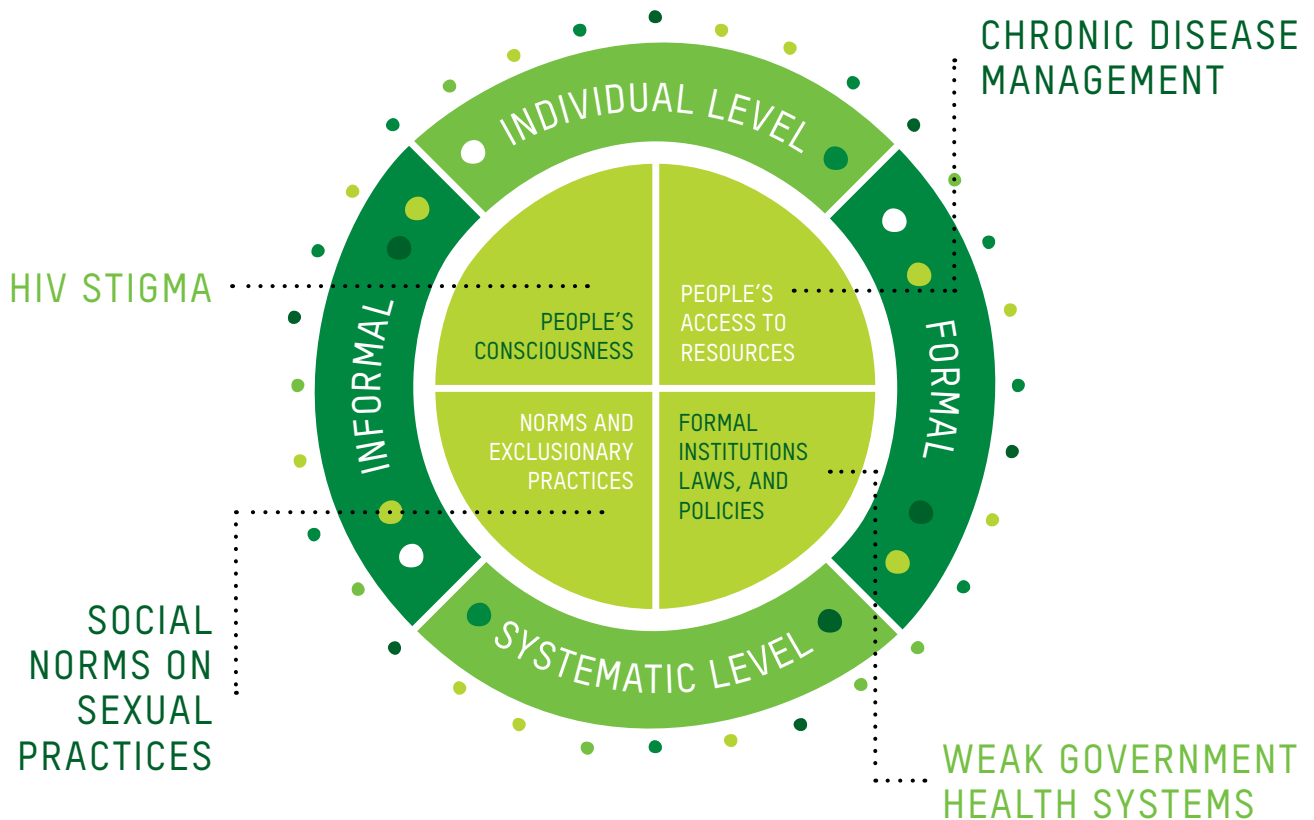
The four main components of the SHG approach are:

- *Working with vulnerable women in the community to self-organise;*
- *Initiating a savings and loan scheme with members;*
- *Providing capacity building and training; and*
- *Clustering SHGs for challenges requiring collective effort.*

For more info, see: www.sinamandla.org.za

Lastly, to understand the potential the integral framework has on program learning it is only fitting to examine the HIV and AIDS response in South Africa as this is where the Oxfam program has its roots. While the epidemic and the response have evolved over time, much of the learning has not been translated cross-sectorally. In light of a very successful rollout of the South African anti-retroviral treatment program, less attention is paid to the response, both in terms of funding to support HIV and AIDS-related development work, as well as the analysis of the epidemic and the threats it presents to development gains.

FIGURE 5: How do we understand the HIV and AIDS response in South Africa?



Source: Rao and Kelleher's 2005 Integral Framework

The initial analysis of the future program to support the HIV and AIDS response in South Africa, made it clear that the policy, and to some extent individual consciousness, is less problematic than a few years ago, and that it is largely the institutional set-up, particularly the Department of Health's human resource planning and supply chain management, and some social norms relating to sexual practices and chronic disease management, that still have to be addressed. On closer examination, and using the integral framework, a few critical issues emerged.



ONE SET OF QUESTIONS ARE:

1. While successful programming resulted in a reduction in infant mortality and transmission and an increase in life expectancy, what is the long-term impact of these successes?
2. What are the consequences for the health system (institutions and policy frameworks) when they have a comprehensive chronic treatment program, and as a result, increasing HIV prevalence due to an increase in life expectancy of the HIV positive population?

With this in mind, and based on the analysis of monitoring information and input from partners, the team developed a research and documenting agenda to better understand what, if any, learning could be gleaned from the years of program delivery.

The integral framework supported decision-making at all points of the program management cycle and provided a useful reminder to the team to look beyond the surface and explore causality in greater depth. Understanding change as a non-linear process and mapping against a framework that supports and reinforces systems thinking, like the integral framework does, results in improved analysis, which in turn informs program design and strategic steer.

CONCLUSIONS

The integral framework shows great potential as a multi-purpose tool that, with minor modification and procedural support, could provide a very nuanced analytical approach for program design and management. The framework, when used as a means to interrogate progress and performance, makes available useful program management information that provides a better simulation of complexity. Coupled with adaptive management practice, the framework provides a robust and rigorous program tool.

“The framework, when used as a means to interrogate progress and performance, makes available useful program management information that provides a better simulation of complexity.”

The experience of working with the integral framework in this way suggests a natural logic, and that the methods and approaches could be quite rapidly assimilated into the practice of program teams. The experience reinforces the need to give recognition to complexity – acknowledging that program designers never have complete information, are not prophetic and cannot predict every action and consequence, and that change processes, by their very nature, result in uncertainty.

Developing an adaptive program management practice is not only possible, it is essential to the future of development as we grapple with increasingly complex problems on a daily basis.



'WE WERE FULL OF IDEAS': RESPONSIVE HIV AND AIDS PROGRAMMING

BY FRANCESCA ALICE

The Oxfam Australia program in South Africa has been described as “a flagship for Oxfam Australia [and] for other countries as [an example of] a good practice program”. It is an example of an external program (in the sense that it is funded by foreign agencies with some contextual analysis) that has been able to keep pace and respond to changes in the operating environment. What sets it apart is that it was allowed to ‘naturally’ evolve to respond to changes as they emerged.

The perceived success of the program culminated in the current, integrated program framework, No Longer Vulnerable (NLV) (2012-2015), and can be attributed in no small way to the involvement of partners: their opinions, what they were seeing in communities and how they engaged with Oxfam to feed this back.

This is best evidenced in Oxfam’s work on the HIV and AIDS response which began in the late 1990s, and grew over time from prevention, treatment and care-related activities, to the current, more holistic responses encompassing broader health ‘systems’, including food security; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); livelihoods initiatives; and social protection and rights-influencing and advocacy activities.

THE UNDERLYING PROGRAM APPROACH

From its foundation and initial conception as the Joint Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (JOHAP) in South Africa in 1998, the program was set up to explore and be responsive to cutting-edge theory in HIV and AIDS prevention. From a traditional design perspective (and perhaps to appease donors and Head Office), it was conceptualised as four phases, each approximately three years in length, up to 2012. In practice, the four phases were delivered, but at key moments included ‘bridging years’ – a response to shifts in the environment significant enough to commission an entire year’s worth of reflection. This allowed for exploration and experimentation with new approaches to implementation and monitoring and evaluation, as well as giving space to keep abreast of emerging theories, though in some cases the program was already one or two steps ahead, such as with its work with men on HIV and AIDS prevention.

The changes in program and partner practice that emerged over time therefore responded to what was happening in the external environment, which was in turn communicated to Oxfam staff through the relationship and engagement with partners based on their work in communities.



These changes saw the shift from an initial focus on stigma (demonstrated through partner advocacy to create an enabling environment and facilitate greater access to services) and gender (as part of the conversations about prevention). The focus moved to include nutrition issues among children (the large numbers of orphans or children living in HIV-affected households) and food security (both being unable to take antiretroviral treatment medication without food, but also being unable to produce food due to limited access to water), and WASH as a way of addressing poor hygiene, food security issues and supporting home-based care initiatives led by partners. Initial advocacy to create an enabling environment grew to influencing health systems, with the work undertaken around community health workers and establishing home-based care policies, and the proposed policy on National Health Insurance (NHI).

PHASE 1:

IN THE LATE 90S; DESIGNED AS A PILOT PROGRAM

- Working through local civil society partner organisations;
- Focused on improving HIV and AIDS service delivery;
- Building the organisational capacity of South African partners; and
- Advocating for an improved HIV and AIDS response.

At this time, HIV and AIDS was still an emerging developmental challenge and people started wanting to know more.

“It was a time when people started talking openly about HIV as opposed to whispering or blatantly avoiding the topic (because otherwise you then had to talk about sex!).”

- PUMLA MABIZELA

Partners were also undertaking awareness-raising campaigns about HIV and AIDS prevention.

Addressing stigma was a key aspect of the program, defined in one of the program objectives: “to create and sustain enabling environments with particular focus on the rights of people living with and affected by HIV and/or AIDS (PLWHA)”.



PHASE 2:

BUILDING ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FIRST

- More specific focus on supporting partners in the development, documentation and dissemination of good practice;
- Furthering the creation of an enabling environment;
- A focus message conveyed by Oxfam and its partners became the importance and need for antiretroviral treatment (ART) and voluntary counselling and testing; and
- Advocating to government and sharing information with other partners about proposed government policies and plans was important.

A breakthrough from the South African government came in November 2003, when it announced and approved the rollout of ART to all South Africans who needed it.

“When the treatment came into existence, we were all excited, that means less death, more people were healthier, people were bringing income, livelihoods. children had parents, children were born without HIV, but we dropped prevention work. For me that’s the big one ... And then I think, also one other thing that happened was around influencing around women having more power and alternatives around prevention.”

-OXFAM STAFF⁸

WORKING WITH MEN

The integration of a gender focus into program delivery recognised women’s higher vulnerability to infection compared to men. It came about through a process where Oxfam and the partners would be coming together, to learn, to look at the trends, to look at the things and be learning together.

“So when partners were asked: ‘what are your challenges around HIV?’ the response was: ‘working with men. Men don’t want to come to the events, men don’t want to do that’.”

- OXFAM STAFF

Partners attributed women’s higher vulnerability to:

- Cultural practices preventing them from making decisions about their own sexual and reproductive health;
- The gendered societal context in which women live, how they access information about their rights; and
- The fact that they were often the only carers of terminally ill family members.

8. The reflections attributed to Oxfam staff were gathered during a focus group session at the end of 2015 with Oxfam Australia staff, Thabi Khoza, Nancy van Whye and Pumla Mabizela.



Engaging men was seen by some as a viable strategy to mitigate some of these factors, so a Community of Practice was born.

“ [It was] driven by Oxfam but it was in response to some of what partners were talking about and trying to be innovative [in] looking at how we can use other mediums, which was the social media ... for people to have conversations around working with men.”

- OXFAM STAFF

While Oxfam set up the Community of Practice, it worked with people from the partner organisations. The following are characteristics of the Community of Practice, which reflected the special relationship Oxfam had with partners:

- Built on mutual respect and trust
- Worked towards strengthening the civil society response to HIV and AIDS
- Strengthened organisational capacity
- Identified and shared lessons
- Celebrated the positive outcomes of the work

INFLUENCING HEALTH SYSTEMS

A key contextual issue for Oxfam 's work in South Africa was the idea that development will be better placed if duty-bearers are held to account by the rights-holders themselves. The role for advocacy was seen as an important dimension to working in an integrated way. Right from the beginning, advocacy was essential in creating and maintaining the conditions for partners to conduct their work, engaging with power structures to influence change, the impacts of which reach beyond the realm of direct activities. These ranged from engagement with institutions such as local, provincial and national government departments, to working with other structures such as traditional and religious leadership.

Partners regarded stigma and discrimination towards people living with HIV as the most pervasive negative force shaping resistance to the implementation of HIV and AIDS programs. The program's focus on destigmatising naturally evolved into advocating for better access to treatment and care, and looking at alternatives to inadequate government-provided services:

“ That's where we also started ... looking at home-based care and ... working with partners and building their capacity to work around policies. ... there was one time when [partners were] looking at volunteers, you know policies around home-based carers as volunteers who were delivering HIV services in South Africa and how that also evolved, and actually how really Oxfam worked with partners building their capacity, to a point now that partners really do engage with policy discussions and also contribute to some policies that have changed.”

- OXFAM STAFF



Emerging from the home-based care Community of Practice (led by CHoiCe, a partner already leading in home-based care work and able to train other partners), were initiatives to influence national policy on community health care workers – leveraging off past work with partners to develop gender and HIV policies within their own workplaces. These platforms were Oxfam’s way of both responding to and supporting partner work in these critical areas:

“ We needed to respond to an issue with innovative ideas and things like that because if we left it to partners, partners wouldn’t have time to think about other innovative ways, so we had the resources, we had the skills, we had the platform to do that.”

- OXFAM STAFF

ABOUT CHOICE TRUST

CHoiCe Trust has been a partner of Oxfam Australia since 2003.

The main focus of CHoiCe Trust is on home-based care in rural communities.

The organisation has two main programs: training and outreach.

CHoiCe Trust offers highly skilled training to community-based health workers, as well as to farm workers, men’s groups, children’s counselling groups and the elderly.

Their vision for the future is the empowerment of rural communities to take responsibility for their own well-being, thus enhancing the quality of their lives.

For more info, see: www.choicetrust.org.za

Later work that Oxfam and partners did around treatment and care contributed to other impacts. New health issues emerged as result of people taking ARTs or being on long-term treatment, and led to questions about whether the health system would be able to cope in the long-term. Concern grew about the health system as a whole: was there infrastructure, support and capacity to cope with the evolution of the HIV and AIDS response?

A proposal for NHI was put forward by a trade union in 2010, but there was a sense that this could not be delinked from existing work and dialogues around access to the health system and quality of services. Oxfam identified that the community voice was missing and that the role of partners in influencing the proposal was important due to the potential impact on the quality of services for communities. There was a risk that patient-



centric approaches, as fought for by the HIV/AIDS Prevention Group (HAPG) in Bela Bela, would be diluted. Drawing on past successes with partners to influence national policies on gender and HIV helped focus Oxfam's thinking and action on the NHI in communities, and a process commenced to bring the end-user voice into the policy conversation. Community consultation processes to identify gaps were initiated, and ways for local organisations to participate tested and practiced.

ABOUT HIV/AIDS PREVENTION GROUP (HAPG)

The HIV/AIDS Prevention Group (HAPG), located in Bela Bela, became an Oxfam Australia partner organisation in 2003.

HAPG has led the way in Limpopo in pioneering layperson-managed clinics supervised by an HIV and AIDS specialist administering antiretroviral treatment.

The organisation has proved that, even in a context of poverty and social exclusion, community residents can access a well-administered health and antiretroviral program.

For more info, see: www.hapg.org.za

What is clear, through both research and staff reflections, is that Oxfam was influencing health systems through its work with partners and its engagement with civil society and government, but perhaps not as effectively as it could have been. This is linked to reflections on the way the program monitoring and evaluation (M&E) outputs (that is, reports, research, case studies and learning papers) were used, as well as aspirations around sharing and socialisation, which were not fully realised.

TOWARDS INTEGRATION

Partner work continued to evolve as the epidemic demanded programming become more holistic. This was reflected in the overall program approach, which was starting to become more integrated in response. Despite numerous challenges, the interventions that partners adopted attempted to address all of the issues.

At the same time, new ways of working or thematic foci were emerging that didn't necessarily fit into the country strategy and program design. Internal processes such as M&E were also changing, and there was increasing recognition on the program side that, according to Oxfam staff at the reflection, Oxfam was "forcing partners to fit into an objective ... that was how the funding was framed or organised at that time".

The program's growth in its last phase had seen the establishment of new thematic programs relating to food security, children's social protection and WASH. However, donor and programmatic reporting and management had become overly complex and cumbersome because in reality, the differentiation between these programs was quite blurred. Despite partners working across multiple, overlapping programs to address complex issues facing communities, they were forced to fit into one program funding stream.





HAPG

Cecile Manhaeve is the Director of the HIV/AIDS Preventative Group located in Bela Bela in Limpopo, South Africa.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



Responding to a disconnect between the practice and conceptual frameworks, NLV emerged, building on past programming, rather than taking on a new direction or focus. NLV provided a more effective way of seeking linkages between issues confronting communities, predicated on a lack of basic needs, and ensuring that these needs were met over time.

STAFF REFLECTIONS ON THE PROGRAM

“We [are] happy to see people not dying anymore, getting well, going to work and ensuring having parents ... somehow prevention got lost, fell along the way, and maybe now, the lesson in this time in NLV we’re learning that actually prevention should be elevated, should be the priority.”

“Remember we started off as a prevention organisation, that’s what we were doing, and then we tracked the epidemic and we went along with it, and now our partners are saying, ‘well we forgot about prevention as we got into the treatment and care thing’. So if we were doing this anymore, we would also be building a stronger prevention focus in our work I think ... which is exactly what we are trying to talk about, is the fact that we’ve had the observation through [staff] around the lack of prevention activities, it comes through in one of our reports [on adolescent health in 2013] ... we discussed that, and then, that’s been confirmed by partners. So again ... its evidence that we are tracking the progression of the epidemic, and its impact on the health system.”

COMING FULL CIRCLE? SOME CONCLUSIONS...

There is indeed a lot of evidence that the Oxfam program was able to keep pace with changes in the development world. It is one of the best documented Oxfam programs globally⁹, despite the sense that this was not leveraged as much as it could have been. In many instances it was even ahead of emergent issues, particularly in HIV and AIDS, and health systems. The responsiveness to partners and the external environment was a hallmark of the South Africa program: recognising that reflection and learning is an important enough part of practice to occasionally stop and undertake a process of contextual analysis, consultation with partners and external stakeholders, alongside internal reflection, to then redesign and put forward the next phase.

It seems inevitable that had the program continued, the next phase would have come full circle to focus once again on prevention but also have a much stronger focus on disseminating and influencing the lessons and best practice examples. As one staff member commented:

“We were driven by ideas. ... We [were] full of ideas, full energy of ideas. We needed just another three years.”

9. See Oxfam Great Britain’s Policy and Practice website: <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk>



LEVERAGING CONNECTIONS: THE VALUE OF AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

BY PUMLA MABIZELA AND INGER HARBER

Integration has been at the heart of the work of Oxfam Australia and our partners, culminating in a fully integrated program being implemented in the last three years. It has been complex and messy, but within that dynamism and uncertainty we found a responsive and intuitive way of working. We now understand integration in a completely different way – through experience – and we truly feel that this lends something new to development work in South Africa.

Program teams use integration in both the abstract phases (planning, analysis and evaluation) and in the practical (implementation) stages of development work. Integration also acts as a link between these two spheres of programming. The most consistent understanding that we encountered was integration as the recognition that all aspects of development work (and ultimately, human life) are connected or overlap and that subsequently nothing can be considered in isolation.

“The most consistent understanding that we encountered was integration as the recognition that all aspects of development work (and ultimately, human life) are connected or overlap...”

This is because everything is connected, some connections can be leveraged for increased benefits or greater impact. Accepting that these connections exist and can be beneficial, allows one to strengthen work in practical, innovative and creative ways by using difference components of what would have previously been ‘silo-ed’ in other projects or elements of development work. Moving away from isolated models of working to ways that draw on a broad network of ideas, skills, creativity, methods and resources allows fluidity in responses and can create an adaptive, flexible model of acting, reflecting and revising. Ultimately, integrated development should not be viewed as a tangle of indivisible projects but as an evolving organic body of work that actively seeks, and is receptive to, opportunities for change and improvement.

In our experience of development work in South Africa, examples of the value of an integrated approach are most clearly illustrated by work aimed at addressing the HIV and AIDS pandemic. A few years into this response, it became evident that it was not sufficient to focus solely on treatment and/or prevention but rather that there was a wider web of issues that needed to be addressed. Nutrition, protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) became core complementary components of more integrated responses. Issues such as the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, child-headed households, stigma, the burden on carers, and the impact of illness in the workplace and in the housing and education sectors were all incorporated into programming. The importance of interventions addressing other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), tuberculosis and, more recently, cervical cancer has been recognised. The expansion and inclusion of these considerations and areas of programming illustrate the recognition that HIV and AIDS needs to be considered within a broader context and with a multitude of integrated responses.



Given that Oxfam Australia's model was to work with local partner organisations, we were able to witness the evolution of this response and draw on these ideas in the development of our program framework. Oxfam didn't want to impose an interpretation of integrated development work but rather worked to create an inclusive program framework in which all partner organisations could be included and with which partner organisations felt an affinity.

“Oxfam didn't want to impose an interpretation of integrated development work but rather worked to create an inclusive program framework in which all partner organisations could be included...”

In order to foster and support integration, the majority of the grant money offered to partner organisations came from a common pot that could be utilised for a diverse range of work or to supplement smaller, specialised funding or areas of work that were difficult to fund. Flexible grant making allows for more and better pilots and provides an opportunity for organisations to test innovation. Oxfam also recognises the importance of securing funding for the core functions or operational costs of the organisation and understands the difficulties many organisations experience in trying to secure this money.

Oxfam found that rather than working only with specialists, capacity building should be supported across the partnerships to expose partner organisations to new areas of work, to strengthen and develop existing areas of work and/or to allow for exposure and engagement with different organisations. To allow for this, technical capacity building of partner organisations has taken many different forms, from individual support to collective actions that connected partners under common themes¹⁰.

For example, work supported by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) saw support offered to all our partner organisations to work with Resources Aimed at Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN) and CBR Education and Training for Empowerment (CREATE) in developing and updating their Integration of Child Policy and Inclusion of People with Disability Policy.

By working in a way that sought to strengthen and support partners rather than to dictate to them how they should work, even compliance issues (which are so often viewed as limiting) can become valuable opportunities.

Program Coordinators from Oxfam worked with diverse groups of organisations across many areas of work and every two months, the Program Team met to formally discuss all partner organisations and all areas of work. Using these methods of working enables models and ways of working to be shared and, if desired, adopted and adapted, or even contested. Such engagements and discussions are key in developing a robust integrated practice.

It is our experience that those implementing directly, especially those who are permeable to new ideas, are more adaptable to the needs of people. For there to be a genuine opportunity for engagement and learning, the power dynamics between organisations (of different sizes and influence levels) as well as donors and back donors needs to be honestly acknowledged, interrogated and addressed. In order to integrate, one must recognise the different histories of people, the issues at hand (both the needs and the wants), and the (formal and informal) power dynamics that affect society. Drawing these together contributes to recognition and the construction of a space in which to engage and learn.

10. The Link and Learn platforms or events utilised by Oxfam were workshops that brought all partner organisations together to learn and connect with one another about a crosscutting issue. For example, in 2013, a Link and Learn event named Voices was hosted to discuss advocacy in the development sector.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND LEARNINGS

EMBRACING COMPLEXITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING AND SOLIDARITY

Those with means (especially donors) must work in a way that secures core operations while also fostering and creating opportunities – including opportunities for organisations to link and learn with one another – and for those working in the sector to consider and action their work within a broader context. Unequal (formal and informal) power between organisations must be honestly and critically scrutinised and challenged.

DEPTH VS CONFUSION

There are various interpretations of how work can be integrated. Some people we spoke to have an integrated conceptual understanding of their work and some have programs that are integrated in their implementation. Others spoke about integration being the link between implementation and conceptualisation and some believed that they both understood and programmed in an integrated manner. The most common definition of integrated work included seeing and leveraging linkages across what may have otherwise been treated as separate areas of work. It is for these reasons that it is important that teams come together in regular reflections and discussion processes to **build and challenge understanding of where the linkages are and how they can be maximised.**

SUPPORTING YOUR TEAM

It is important to adopt a conscious, purposeful approach to the work. Reflection and engagement, importantly including constructive criticism, are fundamental. All staff must be part of the process. Recognising that people learn in different ways is very important and offering support to explore different methods is valuable in assisting those staff to understand and practice integration, but also to better understand themselves.

KEEPING YOUR CORE

Mistakes will happen but they should be recognised as opportunities for learning rather than things of shame which should be hidden from peers and donors.

Another key question for fostering an integrated approach is 'where do you stop?' While many organisations speak fondly of how their work has evolved organically to meet the needs of the people with whom they work, they have also shared how overwhelming it can be to try to do everything. This is especially the case for organisations in more remote locations where alternatives are limited. In order to address this issue, it is important that organisations **constantly reflect, question their work and hold their centre or core.**

FLEXIBLE AND STRATEGIC FUNDING AND INVESTMENTS

Funding needs to be sufficient, flexible, strategic and useful. Testing and innovating are essential in building integrated programming. Real innovation is bred when sufficient resources are provided to create the space for testing and reflection.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING (MEAL)

There is a definite need for the creation and management of MEAL processes that allow for integrated reflection and learning. This challenge probably comes about because donors often believe that they must dictate (directly or indirectly) what and how information is gathered and how it is presented. Given that donors often assume this compliance role (that is, they need to ensure that the money is spent 'correctly'), they set rigid boundaries and rules that regulate (and possibly limit) opportunities that would otherwise develop. We are not sure what a **simple, accessible and achievable MEAL system** would look like on paper for an approach that embraces complexity, but there is certainly a need for it.







ABOUT CREATE

CREATE is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2012.

CREATE focuses on advocacy for disability rights and community-based rehabilitation.

The organisation works with disabled people's organisations, parents' groups, communities, municipalities and government departments.

Their expertise is in training and advocacy work, with advocacy and lobbying activities taking place at local, provincial, national and international levels.

CREATE is skilled at developing participatory training courses supported with interactive materials for participants at various literacy levels in English and isiZulu.

For more information, see: www.create-cbr.co.za



ABOUT RAPCAN

RAPCAN joined the Oxfam partnership in South Africa in 2012 due to their expertise in child protection.

Through practice, research and legal reform, RAPCAN contributes towards creating a safe society where children are acknowledged as rights-holders, and the rights of all are respected.

The organisation works for the prevention of child maltreatment by focussing on children's safeguarding, protection and realising participation rights.

For more on RAPCAN, see: <http://rapcan.org.za>



UMZI WETHU

Mantho Sehapi, an Umzi Wethu graduate, and her mother Pontso Tsatsi at their home in Port Elizabeth.
PHOTO © Karl Schoemaker | OXFAM



FIRM FOUNDATIONS:

HOW GOOD STAFF, BUSINESS SYSTEMS & PROCEDURES SUPPORTED OUR WORK

BY WENDY LUBBEE

When many people think about financial management they don't get a warm and fuzzy feeling. Somehow it conjures up a sense of nervousness or trepidation. However, without proper management of budgets and resources – in homes, businesses or NGOs – we will have challenges that will impact on our ability to meet the needs of those who depend on us.

For Oxfam, the Business Services Team played a key role in providing the necessary functions that supported the roll out of its program. These functions were concerned with finances, human resources, risk management, IT services and logistical support. For the Oxfam team, good organisational and program management was only possible because of the successful execution of all these tasks; with each one mutually reinforcing and supporting the other.

In terms of the history and growth of the Oxfam office in South Africa, one cannot but reflect on the key role the Business Services Team played in laying the foundation that allowed the organisation and program to grow from strength to strength and take on funding that would otherwise not have been secured for South Africa. Their skills and capacity to adopt and implement Oxfam's financial policies and practices allowed the South African office to manage and report on its financial affairs and keep instances of financial mismanagement to a minimum. The office was able to grow a strong, successful and sustainable program in South Africa because it was able to continually review and update its program management systems, procedures and processes to ensure they were 'fit for purpose' and could be carefully monitored. This included systems that supported contract management for both partners and consultants, and asset, human resource and financial management.

“ Their skills and capacity to adopt and implement Oxfam's financial policies and practices allowed the South African office to manage and report on its financial affairs and keep instances of financial mismanagement to a minimum.”

From the inception of the JOHAP project, the Durban office managed this complex program, which included managing funds from different affiliates, including Oxfam Ireland, Oxfam Hong Kong, Oxfam Novib (Netherlands) and Oxfam Germany, all with their different back donor requirements. As the South African program grew, Oxfam was able to secure and allocate a larger percentage of Australian Government funds (through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program) and secure other income streams for program areas, which included Australian



Partnerships with African Communities (APAC), Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES), Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and, more recently, BuZa (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Dutch Government). This allowed the South African Program Team to be responsive to current partners needs as their individual programs grew, but also allowed the team to identify new partners who could add value to the partnership.

“As the South African program grew, Oxfam was able to secure and allocate a larger percentage of Australian Government funds and secure other income streams for program areas..”

The team carefully monitored the financial position of the organisation, ensuring that funds were available at the right time in the right quantity to support the organisation’s operational plan, ensuring that funds were spent as per predetermined plans, and highlighting any deviations and risks on a regular basis. All the functions of the Business Services Team make up the many legs on which program work rests. If one leg of the table is not there, the table will not be able to stand!

The Business Services Team not only played a key role in managing the local office, but their impact was felt far and wide with the team being actively involved in supporting other Oxfam offices in Zimbabwe and Mozambique as they went through their own change processes.

There are countless stories of how the Oxfam partners’ work has been impacted by the Business Services Team, from the ‘friendly voice and face’ at the Oxfam reception, to the building of their financial capacity, to supporting them in the development of their IT systems, to supporting them to get to and from many Oxfam supported events in the country, region and other parts of the world.

The Business Services Team has provided much needed support to the growing Oxfamily who, at the height of its programming, had over twenty-five staff disbursed across four offices (Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg and East London) and supported forty-six partners based in four provinces. The team provided excellent support to staff, partners and consultants for the many partner visits, meetings and capacity building activities – and not forgetting the very large Link and Learn events – that were successfully conducted over the life of the program. The team consistently ensured that the Oxfamily were always in the right place at the right time!

A house without a strong foundation will take shape but if the foundation is not strong enough, the house will eventually collapse. The introduction of good business service systems and procedures that meet all necessary funding requirements and are well managed, monitored and flexible enough to grow with the organisation will ensure that an organisation is sustainable and able to support a diverse growing program. This is well known, but in our times of complexity and rapid unprecedented change, it is critical to remind ourselves of the importance of firm foundations.

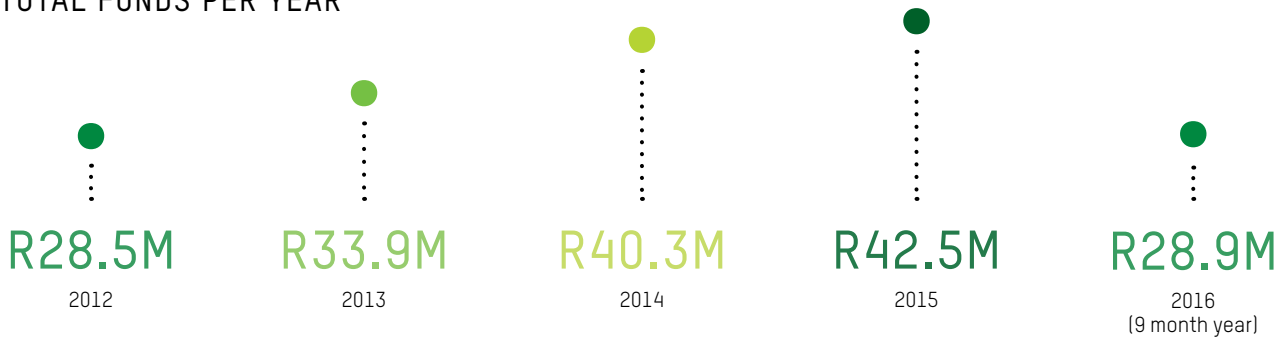
The infographics in *Figure 6* clearly show how the income for the program grew, which in turn supported the growth of the programs, the staff and the infrastructure over the life of the Oxfam program in South Africa.



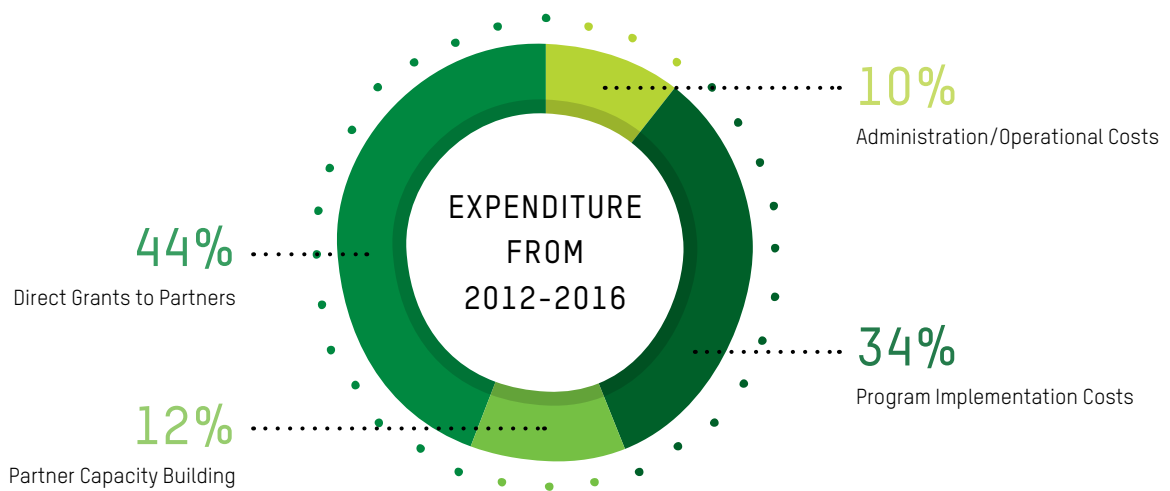
FIGURE 6: Finance in Numbers

What better way to get a sense of Oxfam Australia in South Africa's finance systems than through the numbers themselves? The graphics below give you some insight into the depth and breadth of Oxfam's systems in South Africa.

TOTAL FUNDS PER YEAR



GROUPED FUNDING SOURCES FROM 2012-2016



CUMULATIVE TOTAL OVER FIVE YEARS

R174 235 528.19



ENOUGH TO EAT

A commercial farm worker harvests wheat for livestock in Rawsonville, Western Cape.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



ACCOUNTING FOR 'THE DOBERMAN EFFECT': LEARNING ABOUT FINANCE

BY SAMUKELE KHOZA¹¹

(Our youngest and newest staff member)

Accountants or 'finance people' ... they come in different species, namely auditors, tax consultants, management and financial accountants. Now whenever 'ordinary people' see these certain types of people, fear strikes them, as if there's something wrong and they need to 'account' for it.

Let's be honest, if you were to close your eyes and picture an accountant reincarnated as a domestic animal, you'd never think of a harmless sheep grazing a patch of grass in the field. No! But just pan a little to the right ... yes, see that Doberman with pointy ears and an emotionless face right there in the background next to the entrance, guarding the whole property and whatever is in it? That's how most people see finance people.

Now you can imagine how daunting it was for me to find out that I'm probably the 'boogieman' who nobody wants in their organisation's closet, and that I'm better off in my little corner with all the calculators and unnecessary papers with figures and tables. But after all the jokes have been said, is that who we really are? What if I could tell you that my finance team is the most understanding and laid-back team in the Oxfam Australia South African office? Through my journey with Oxfam I have learnt that the work shapes the people and the people shape the work. I have realised that you can do so much more with the little that you have without compromising the principles you live by.

"Through my journey with Oxfam I have learnt that the work shapes the people and the people shape the work."

It is no secret that Oxfam Australia in South Africa has a different approach to financial affairs compared to other donors. I mean, yes, every donor is different, but Oxfam is 'Different'. Why am I saying that? Well, besides the obvious reason that it is my employer and I have to back it (typical finance person) ... beyond that Oxfam has a more flexible, friendly approach to finance as opposed to the 'Do this now and don't ask me how' approach. We prefer more of a close, family-like relationship with partners rather than a dictatorship. When I visited partners for audits for the first time, I sat there in awe as I witnessed our Chief Financial Officer and Company Secretary Blessing Zama advising partners on financial matters and helping them through the process of auditing; telling them what they need to do when external auditors come to do their books. I watched how our Senior Business Services Coordinator Arthi Harisinker explained to partners whenever they queried something regarding financial

¹¹. This piece is a personal reflection, which has been influenced by conversations with the Coordinator and Bookkeeper from Vhutshilo Mountain School, Khathu Nemafohoni, the Office and Finance Administrator of Sophakama, Brenda Lalela and Oxfam staff.



reports, and I thought to myself, ‘what is wrong with these people, aren’t they supposed to be ruthless and demanding?’. Then it hit me ... Oxfam doesn’t approach finance as a weapon of mass destruction but rather a tool to help better the life of the partner organisation and the communities where they work. I learnt that Oxfam’s finance team also does capacity building to strengthen the systems of partners. It is always great to be in a team that does more than what is expected from them, it teaches you not to stop where you are mandated to, but to go a step further in helping others. We all know how certain donors are: you know those funders that require their financial reports on a month-to-month basis, never communicate around the time of reporting, and keep you in suspense because they never tell you when they are visiting but you just hear a knock at the door; some even ask you to send all the necessary documents where they verify them remotely and call you for any issues so you can go through documents with them on the phone. Wow, that stresses me out even as I type it; these examples are not the mutual relationship that Oxfam prides itself in.

“Then it hit me... Oxfam doesn’t approach finance as a weapon of mass destruction but rather a tool to help better the life of the partner organisation and the communities where they work.”

I guess what I am trying to say, if I’m saying anything at all, is that Oxfam has a Labrador approach to finance (a friendlier dog than our steely eyed Doberman, but still super-effective). It’s about giving you the resources and support, giving you the space to do what you said you’ll do in a way that you want, but at the same time having that strict nature of your typical donor. We give support to partners who need administrative skills development. We help strengthen the policies and procedures. We know all forty-two partners on a first-hand basis because during the partner audits we interact with them to know and familiarise ourselves with the type of environment in which they operate, which in turn can help justify the financial affairs should there be any influence on them caused by that environment. So flexible and understanding that we once had to reschedule a partner audit due to the fact that there was a miscommunication which led to the partner not being notified of our visit and, as a result, not being ready when we arrived. Now isn’t that on fleek¹²?

The objective of partner audits is solely to help improve the systems in place and check that they are adhered to. Bearing in mind that partners go into the community with the objective of helping, it’s not always the case. Some people take advantage and it’s important that donors make sure that there are systems in place so it is easy to detect discrepancies. I understand that we live in an era of fraud and corruption and it is up to us (as the finance team) to pick it up, but in our processes it is not always the case of us trying to find what is wrong in the organisation, but more about understanding what is weak and needs more attention.

Oxfam has helped a lot of partners, not only in them fulfilling their missions but also on the administrative side of things. Personally, Oxfam gave me an opportunity to open my mind and made me realise that it’s okay to help others, even if it is not your place to do so. It has shifted my mentality to not only be a finance graduate who is performance-driven, but also a social activist. As Linda Thomas from the Head Office in Melbourne says, “It has taught us finance nerds that the world doesn’t revolve around debits and credits” and that united, we can achieve greater heights (clichéd, but true). This is Oxfam’s legacy ... the spirit of family is manifested from the boardroom to the open plan office, and ricochets to all the partners. This is what Oxfam lives by and it definitely fuels me every time I enter these walls.

12. For those of you who aren’t big on social media, ‘on fleek’ is the term used to describe something that is perfect.





LISTEN, PAY ATTENTION:

OUR APPROACH TO DEVELOPING CAPACITY AND DOCUMENTING OUR WORK

BY BERENICE MEINTJES

This reflective piece focuses on two of these core intertwined threads of Oxfam's work: the capacity building initiatives that Oxfam has undertaken to strengthen and support partners and programs, and the documenting of the work of Oxfam partners and the communities they serve. The voices in this document are those of the Oxfam staff, partners and consultants, who were asked about their experiences of capacity building and documentation. Through their journey, we trace the changes in Oxfam's approach to capacity building and documentation and their key lessons learnt from this process.

"They came to hear."

- Michael Matanzima from Sophakama is clear about the core ingredient of Oxfam's capacity building success, explaining:

"Their approach of working with us, with respect and care, it formed part of the capacity building to strengthen us and our systems. I think one of the first things is that they didn't come as a donor to say what Sophakama must do. They came to hear about what Sophakama needs and assist us with that. It was not about what Oxfam needs. It was about what Sophakama needs."

Concepts of learning, innovation and self-organisation are clearly at the core of how Oxfam understands how change happens. Here is what Oxfam staff had to say about why Oxfam engages in organisational strengthening, skills development and information sharing with its partner organisations:

CAPACITY BUILDING TO ACHIEVE AND LIVE OUR RIGHTS:

"Development is in essence about facilitating the development of capacity. If development is even vaguely about moving towards enacting and achieving all of our rights, then capacity building has to be part of it. We all need the maximum capacity possible to ensure that our rights are achieved and lived."

- COLIN COLLETT VAN ROOYEN

WATER SECURITY

Fancy Stitch founder Maryna Heese (left) explains to the Summers family how this windmill came into existence and how the community members of Ingwavuma, KwaZulu-Natal, were all a part of seeing that they receive clean water.

PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



CAPACITY BUILDING IS EMPOWERMENT:

“Development tends to be about putting in taps and building schools, but building capacity is considered the ‘soft’ side of development. Yet it is often more difficult to do. When you work with communities it’s called empowering and when it’s with organisations it’s called capacity building, but they are often the same thing. Capacity building is a critical part of the Oxfam framework because they are not implementers – they are partners.”

- CAILI FORREST

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT:

“Capacity building is part of good development. It goes back to our main aim of being a responsible donor which is about strengthening civil society. It is vital to have a strong capacity building aspect to strengthen good governance.”

- WENDELL WESTLEY

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR GREATER EFFICACY:

“Things have changed, with a push from donors that NGOs need to be more efficient and effective, to demonstrate impact more clearly. NGOs have to operate in a more corporate manner with checks and balances. So capacity building is important in this day and age.”

- GLENISE LEVENDAL

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STRATEGIC USE OF LIMITED RESOURCES:

“South African civil society is facing a major crisis regarding resources, and organisations are expected to do a lot more with less resourcing. That means looking at locally available resources and building on local communities of practice in order to deliver on their programs. Capacity building is about future-proofing organisations.”

- ALLAN MOOLMAN





ALLAN MOOLMAN

Former Country Director, Allan Moolman, at the Clark Road office in Durban.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



CAPACITY BUILDING FOR ADVOCACY:

“Through capacity building we strengthen organisations to link with government. In this way advocacy is not jargon – it is about the depth of the work that our partners do in creating change, linking the community with government.”

- WENDELL WESTLEY

CAPACITY BUILDING MEANS REALISING OUR STRENGTHS:

“Capacity building is not a patronising approach – it is around realising that our partners within themselves have capacities in terms of human resources and in other components in order to program better.”

- GLENISE LEVENDAL

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR EQUALITY:

“Development is not stagnant – it evolves over time. So if you don’t look at strengthening the organisations that you work with you won’t be able to achieve as much. Oxfam prioritises work with rural-based organisations which may have limited access to information and we hoped to bring them up to par with other NGOs who operate at a national level and who may have more resources.”

- PUMLA MABIZELA



GROUP SHOT

Staff from the Oxfam Durban office pose in the garden for a group shot.

PHOTO © Micaela De Freitas | OXFAM

PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Thanks to mutual learning from strong partners, Oxfam's partnership model has increasingly become one which is characterised by a realness of equal and collaborative relationships. 'Respectful' and 'caring' are the words most commonly used by their partners in describing this hard-working team and these are qualities they exude in abundance.

"With respect."

Former Country Director for Oxfam Australia in South Africa, Allan Moolman explains the internal debate around the core ingredient of a relational approach when it comes to capacity building:

"This means having high contact with people, for example, when you see them at an event we might say: 'We hear you are experiencing staffing issues – can we help?' We try to open up that relationship in the true sense of the word, where we build strong trust."

"The capacity building is not only the activities that were defined as capacity building – it included a wide range of support provided to our partners, support provided by finance team, conversations around strategic ways of looking at programming, networking opportunities and connecting people specifically. There is a whole range of connecting work which doesn't always become very clear when you talk about capacity building from a traditional perspective – this is about the approach, how you manage the process and the relationships within the process."

The relationships between Oxfam and its partners are not formal or hierarchical. Varied relationships are formed with different people on both Oxfam's side and partners'. Oxfam encourages contact through a variety of channels, to the point of saying that partners should feel free to pass criticisms through the consultants to Oxfam or directly to staff.

Since the relational approach is considered central to development work, where people are often the primary instruments of change, this means working on one's self and one's own development as a professional practitioner. Engaging in capacity building therefore requires a self-reflective approach to nurturing the attitudes and mindset of the people involved in this work so that they enable development.

Learning processes are designed through consultative processes out of which a response and implementation plan is developed. These processes may take the form of once-off workshops or learning events or longer, more integrated accompaniment processes.

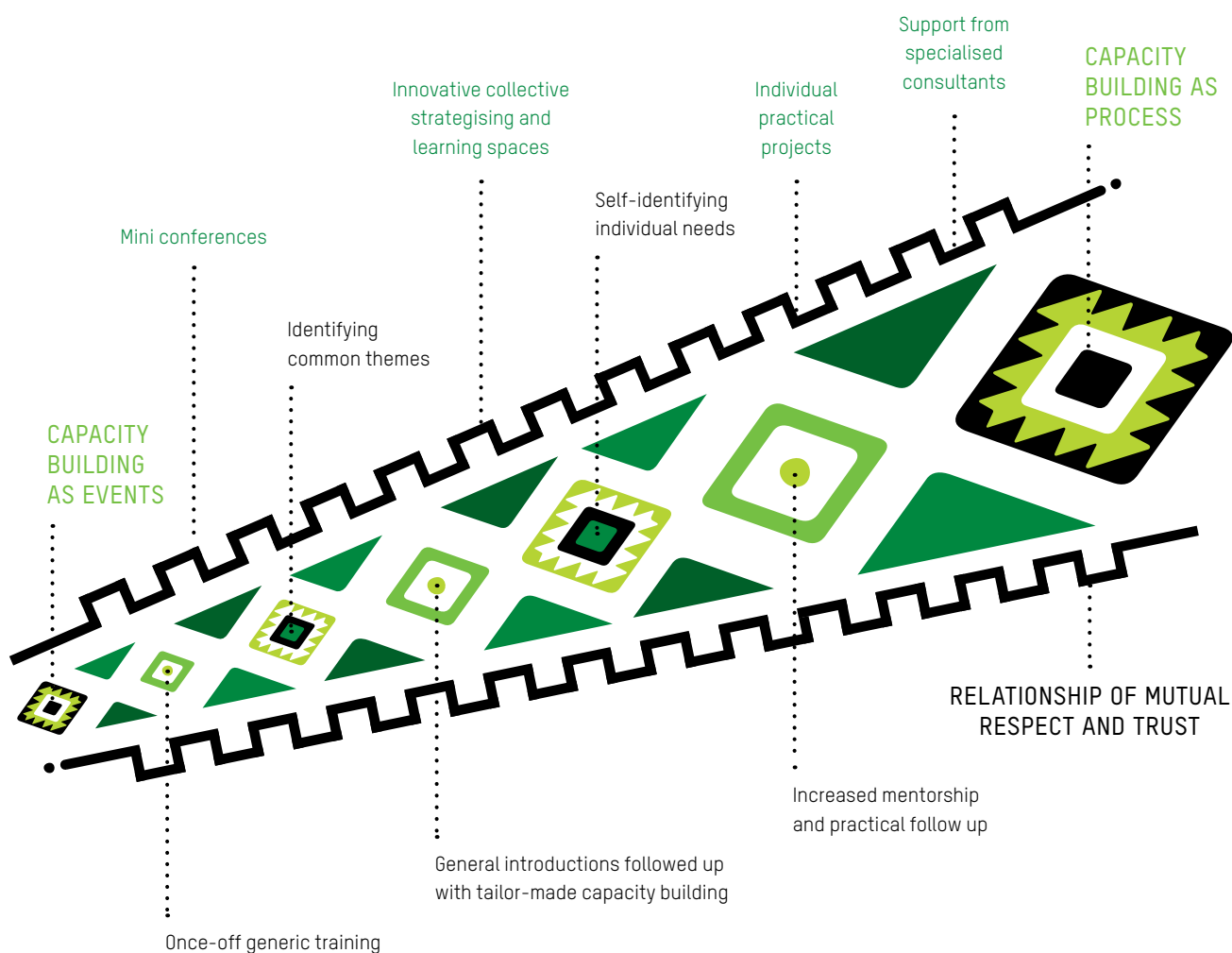
Partner organisations are encouraged to learn with, and from, their peers and like-minded organisations. In order to facilitate this, Oxfam sets up and manages a number of larger learning events, supports partner exchange visits, encourages the documentation and sharing of good practice, supports partners to attend local, national and global conferences relevant to their work and facilitates contact with other program partners and civil society organisations outside of the partnership.



The approach has changed over time and is outlined in *Figure 5* below. The move from one-off generic workshops to very customised and fit-to-purpose learning processes are summarised in the diagram below, with the following key changes:

- A move from individual partner work to recognising collective trends and shared learning;
- A move from high level conference-type training to collective strategic discussion spaces;
- Offering a broad introduction to a new topic, with opportunities for individualised follow-up;
- Follow up with individual organisations on specific needs, directed at practical organisational changes with longer term support from specialised consultants; and
- A move from thinking about capacity building as once-off events to conceptualising capacity building as a process.

FIGURE 7: Oxfam’s evolving approach to partnerships



The changes in Oxfam’s approach to capacity building highlight key lessons learnt about undertaking this role in the development sector. The common learning points, based on a thematic analysis of consultations with Oxfam staff, partners and consultants, highlight the following important learning points about capacity building in the development sector:



- The assessment of partner needs is a process, which may involve both formal and informal strategies.
- It is important to spend time listening and paying attention, with care, to the needs of partner organisations as this yields important insights into their capacity development needs.
- It is useful to start with a general introduction to a topic, then follow up with tailor-made capacity building interventions with partners who are especially motivated and ready to engage in that topic.
- Where possible, work with the whole organisation and work on strengthening systems and leadership to benefit the organisation beyond one or two individuals.
- It is beneficial to offer long-term mentorship, with practical implementation of learning.
- Maintaining a flexible approach and being responsive to guidance from partners is important.
- Partners benefit from being connected so they may learn from one another.
- It is important to allow processes to be discontinued if they are not working.
- Take care to focus on one's own internal development and capacity building as a development organisation, bearing in mind that one's own attitudes and learning may be mirrored with the partner and between the partner and the community in which they operate.

LISTEN, PAY ATTENTION

“Listen. Pay attention. Care.”

Program Advisor Wendell Westley explains the change in Oxfam's approach from a 'one size fits all' to more tailor-made, partner-requested processes. These processes now include mentorships of six to eight months, rather than once-off trainings. She explains how capacity building processes are much more sustainable when the needs are self-identified by partners and when partners are ready to engage in a particular organisational strengthening process, rather than having this imposed on them. Adding to this idea, she says:

“If the organisation is strong they can carry any community through that process.”

The relevance of capacity building to each organisation has become a key consideration in the design of any initiatives. Furthermore, the assessment process is not only to identify capacity building needs, but to listen for opportunities where a partner organisation could share their innovative approaches with other partners. To avoid organisations 'reinventing the wheel', the capacity building process included a strong peer learning component, allowing learning from those who have tried and tested the methods. In terms of Oxfam's capacity building through Link and Learn events and webinars, different, unlikely organisations are being connected. This supports the model of integration where each partner can still focus on their expert area but have the knowledge to bring other partners into their work where relevant. The aim is not to make everyone experts in everything but to strengthen interconnectedness and mainstreaming of important developmental considerations.

“They came back taller.”



Oxfam partner Woza Moya especially appreciated the opportunities provided by Oxfam to network with other partners:

“Them simply bringing all of us like-minded NGOs together, setting us up on exchange visits – they have left an incredibly rich heritage of networks for us. Right now I am working with two different groups of partners on practical issues. If it wasn’t for Oxfam bringing us together we would never have found each other in the same way.”

Oxfam combines the provision of funds with sensitive, ongoing collaboration between individuals within Oxfam and partner organisations, networking with other individuals and organisations, joint learning, the transference of skills and technical knowledge, coupled with appropriate research that develops partners’ capacity. This combination approach ultimately empowers communities to take control of their own development (rights-holders), particularly through advocacy for government delivery (duty-bearers). It is also this combination that creates the flexibility to respond to shifting, integrated issues that undermine communities through a broad spectrum of program options and innovation. Oxfam’s commitment to participatory, reflective capacity strengthening of locally based partners embedded in communities thus allows for a number of positive outcomes to emerge.

Strengthened civil society organisations will lead to empowered communities, which will ultimately help transform society.

“As a small local organisation, one would never venture into such undertakings due to lack of resources, lack of knowledge, lack of experience, but to document a cause which is found to be worthwhile fills us only with deep gratitude and is a reminder to keep going even in difficult times.”

- HIV/AIDS PREVENTION GROUP (HAPG)

Oxfam sees a close connection between documentation and capacity building, which has been described by Oxfam staff as “forming two banks of the same river”. Some of the documents have been produced as a result of the capacity building processes, while at other times, capacity building has been done on how to tell a good story, produce documents and make information live through social media.

There is a wide range of documents produced by Oxfam, which include more formal documentation, such as research conducted as well as case studies, vignettes and practical guides have been created to contribute to sharing and linking in the development sector. Some of the documents focus on personal stories, some on institutional history, and others on outlining a particular intervention model or approach to development. Digital and social media have been used to share development work, using video storytelling, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, blogging and other multi-media platforms.





EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Enslin Lupke playing outside his house in Wentworth. Enslin attends Little David Educare where his mum Joyce Lupke is the treasurer of the school.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM

THE LESSONS...

Through trial and error, valuable lessons have been learnt in how to facilitate documenting processes. Some of these lessons are:

PROCESS IS IMPORTANT:

The central ingredient of success, Oxfam has found, is to make documenting a relational and process-oriented approach. Oxfam prioritises the highest levels of respect and sensitivity in learning about and sharing their partners' work.

FOCUS ON PEOPLE AND THEIR STORIES:

Oxfam has found that highly theoretical documents attract less interest and that people are more naturally drawn to human interest stories told by others. Focusing on a change process, the experiences of a particular person or the unfolding story of an organisation is helpful.

OWNERSHIP AND INVOLVING PEOPLE FROM THE OUTSET:

The documenting process should be owned by the partner organisation, and it is important to keep checking that people are being represented in a way they would like to be represented, and which is dignified and respectful.

Pumla Mabizela reminds us to maintain clear developmental principles while doing documentation.

“It is when the project is owned by the people themselves – when they are stories from the people on the ground – that you see the most powerful effects. These case studies have even been used at a university level where people can interrogate and analyse the situation, based on the experiences of community members. When you take that product back to the owner and that person sees him or herself in a document that is shared worldwide, where people can learn something from their story, that is empowering.”

MATCHING CONSULTANTS WITH PARTNERS:

It has become increasingly important for Oxfam to find the right consultants to work within this particular philosophical approach to both documentation and capacity building. Pumla explains:



“It was important for us that the consultant will fit in with the organisation. Their respect of the organisation and what it has done was very important to us. They need to come in and understand where the organisation is, and ask ‘How would you like to be represented?’ and ‘Where do you want to be?’ not impose where they want the organisation to be. We try to find a local person to link with each partner, rather than helicoptering them in.”

CONSTRUCTIVE PORTRAYAL OF AFRICA:

Each process involves a lot of thought about portraying Africa in a different light internationally and trying to put forward a more balanced approach to the context which includes challenges and positives where people are at the centre of improving their situation.

CHALLENGES FROM OUR DOCUMENTING WORK

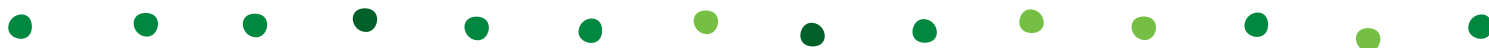
Implicit in this sensitive process-oriented approach to documenting are similar challenges as described in the capacity building work of Oxfam, such as the challenges of time, resources and dedication to the process. The inclusive approach, along with giving everyone a chance to edit and approve their contribution, can be protracted and expensive.

A further challenge in documenting the work of partners was that some of the new forms of communication were intimidating to partners. For example, video storytelling was seen as something quite difficult for partners to do themselves. Therefore, the process of video storytelling was broken down into smaller topics and smaller groups worked in developing their stories. A month later partners were helped to develop their ‘shot list’ and then later how to edit their final product.

Further challenges encountered during Oxfam’s documenting work included:

- Finding ways to keep the momentum of digital sharing platforms going beyond the initial excitement of engaging in a new form of communication;
- Moving the discussions into more critical reflective spaces; and
- Convincing people who are community development workers and ‘do-ers’ of the value of documenting and reflection.

Partners express similar challenges, and Sue Hedden from Woza Moya adds that it is difficult for people involved in development to ‘see the stories’ in their work.



“What you see as a story other people might not. Important moments of change are not always seen as significant by staff – trying to see the kernel of the story and why it is important and learning how to extract that. We are getting better all the time though at finding those stories. Oxfam’s capacity building with our media team and training on storytelling and how to see and extract stories added to a conscious process of how to tell a good story. They had storytellers come here and help us in the process. It is about us growing in awareness.”

OUTCOMES

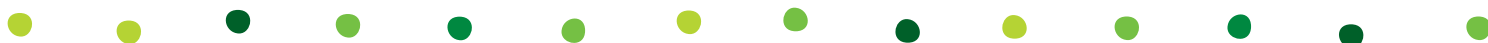
The outcomes of the documenting processes have been very rewarding for both Oxfam and its partners, and include:

- Generating small spaces where partners are able to step back from their work to reflect on it;
- Learning new lessons about the work and developing models which can be shared for further replication;
- Addressing collective issues in the sector and experiencing a sense of solidarity through the communal processes;
- At times the storytelling was an emotional healing process for partners and the communities that they work with;
- Gaining a sense of pride in what has been accomplished;
- Building confidence in partners;
- Gaining materials that can be used by both partners and Oxfam in promoting their work; and
- Widely disseminating Oxfam’s documenting work such that it hopefully goes on to influence practice beyond the partnership.

Combining funding with a sensitive approach to developing the capacity of partner organisations, the South African Country Office of Oxfam Australia made a sustainable investment in this country of ongoing development and hope. A legacy of respect, rich solidarity networks, shared learning and affirmation has been left by this remarkable, small team of dedicated people.

“The institution is made of people, and if those people’s beliefs and their heart, their principles and values are grounded, they will shape the institution and its culture. Oxfam Australia in South Africa had a lovely culture which will be missed dearly. We acted this way because the partners themselves opened their hearts, their work spaces and made themselves vulnerable to the team and in return we responded with humbleness, openness and vulnerability. I have a strong belief that good development should be based on listening and really listening carefully ... and in most cases we lose opportunities because we don’t pay attention.”

- PUMLA MABIZELA





VHUTSHILO MOUNTAIN SCHOOL

Learners from Vhutshilo Mountain School in Limpopo eat soft porridge mixed with goat milk for breakfast.

PHOTO © Oupa Nkosi | OXFAM



BEFRIENDING THE 'MEL MONSTER': LESSONS IN LEARNING FROM OXFAM AUSTRALIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

BY THABI KHOZA

It is all about learning. Sometimes in the middle of donor reports and multiple deadlines and numbers and interviews and evaluations, we lose sight of this very important fact. Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL, for short) is the 'monster' we 'love to hate'. She is necessary – she teaches us about our work, she helps us improve, she makes donors happy, and she can even help us get that all important grant. On the other side though, she can be extremely frustrating – taking time away from our core focus, confusing us, and involving us in what seems like endless processes and paper. I know this, more than most.

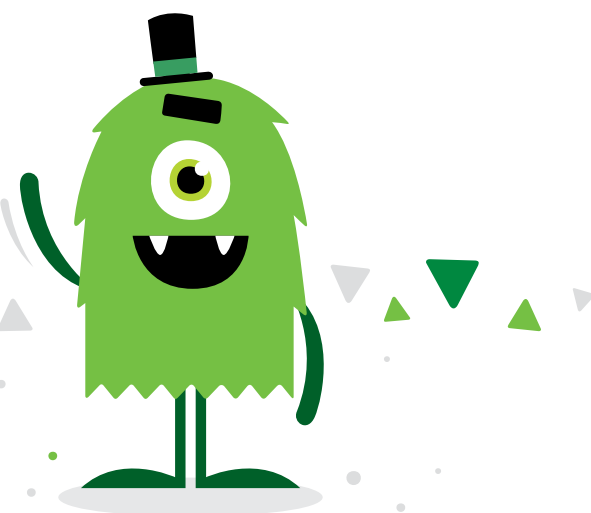
Having worked in the Program Team for many years, I moved into working with MEL in 2011. I was the 'middle woman' between back donors, Head Office, the country office and partners. It was a strange place to be, but I have come to know MEL better and I have found out that she is not so bad. Some-way, somehow, I would say that we are now good friends. This experience confirmed for me that within the chaos of development work, the art of learning from within with the help of MEL is probably the most useful and unused skill in our organisations.

MEL OR MEAL?

It is common practice in the development sector to refer to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL). We at Oxfam Australia in South Africa agree with and practiced the 'A' for accountability through our various processes. However, in our daily use of these terms we used monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL). In other words, we had a 'silent A' in our terminology.

MEL is a complicated creature. So how do you make friends with this 'monster'? There are a couple of things I can share with you, but I must firstly say that (like all of us) I still have a lot to learn. But, as they say ngesiZulu (in Zulu).

"INDLELA IBUZWA KWABAPHAMBILI."
(A way forward is asked from those who are in front.)



This means that if you need advice, ask those who have been in such situations, and I definitely have. So, from my experience here are some things to remember as you (donors, civil society organisations, and everyone in between) improve your relationship with our little 'MEL monster':

YOU AND YOUR INFO MATTER

It is sad when information does not get used. Many of us have been part of those kinds of processes that were mainly done for compliance reasons and all of that juicy knowledge gets left as soon as the deadlines are met. Despite having a MEL team and being a big international non-governmental organisation, we still had processes that I believed we could have used better. This is sad because all the information that organisations gather about their work, their context, and their changes is extremely valuable. If there is one thing I would like to say to partners, it would be for these organisations to use the information for their **own benefit** to improve their programming. I think this should be their first priority rather than thinking of it only as compliance. The more that MEL becomes a part of us and our own organisations, the better it is for us. We can't let the challenges get in our way, even though it is difficult.

There is a great saying in Zulu for this:

"AKUKHO NDLOVU YASINDWA UMBOKO WAYO."
(The elephant trunk can never be heavy for the elephant.)

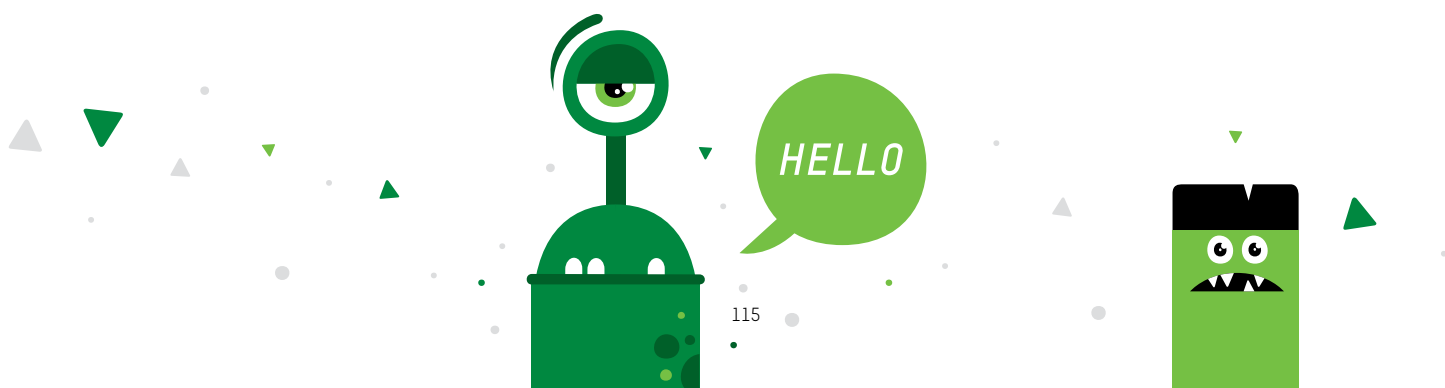
So when something is our responsibility we have to believe that we have the ability to handle it.

KNOWING YOUR NUMBERS

Working with numbers is not easy for everyone. We worked with both qualitative (the stories) and quantitative (the numbers) data. With the numbers, we were able to disaggregate, amongst the communities where partners worked, people's gender (to some extent) and people who were living with disabilities. This level of detail is unusual in a program of our magnitude and complexity. This was also beyond the numerous indicators we collected information on from partners every six months. All of this was extremely valuable information and was vital as the program grew. However, I often felt that we leaned towards the narrative information in our reporting and detailed analysis of the numbers, as well as bringing it all (numbers and stories) together, remained a challenge.

LEARNING (LIKE FRIENDSHIP) TAKES TIME

Oxfam Australia in South Africa spent a lot of time developing meaningful partnerships and trying to strengthen organisations as we worked with them. The biggest improvements we saw when it came to MEL were those organisations who had sustained support around their own internal learning processes. Yes, we did do 'once off' workshops and follow ups when we had new templates but any improvements in quality and reporting was momentary.



So, what are the implications of what we learnt? It is critical to understand that we found the longer term, sustained processes that were iterative and aimed at building up partners were the most successful. In other words, giving support to an organisation to understand MEL on their terms and as it relates to them, really works.

SOMETIMES CONFUSION MAKES SENSE

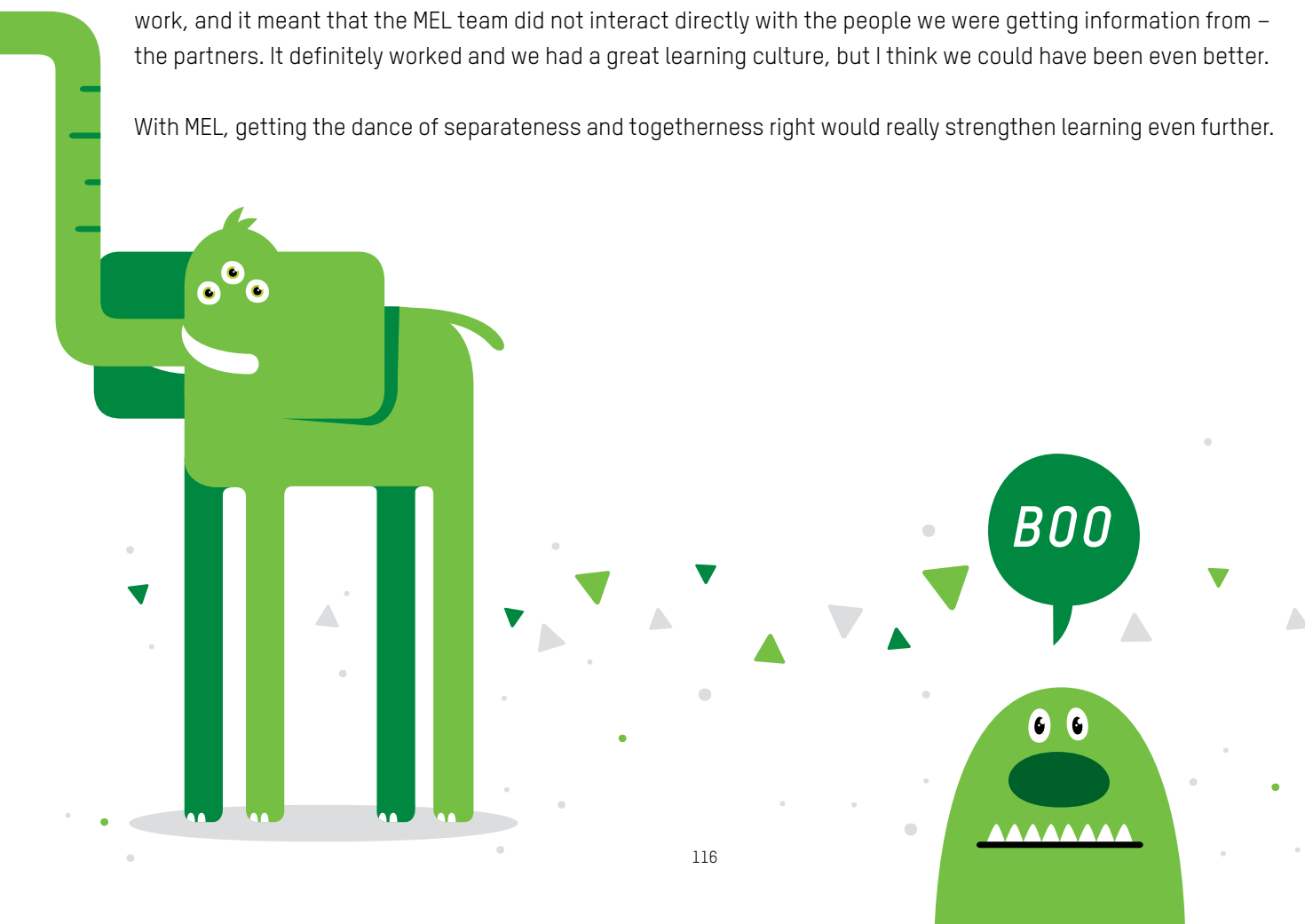
As we moved towards integrated programming for the No Longer Vulnerable phase, our learnings definitely made sense when looking at the work and where partners and communities found themselves. However, reporting in an integrated manner is more difficult than it looks. Many of our back donors during this time still requested separate information based on key focus areas and we had to adjust and discuss throughout. A complex program like this one, with multiple donors, was difficult, but we made it work because that's what the program needed.

Over the years we also tried to improve the way we understood gender with MEL. But this was a complicated process. I think, as a team, we had different ideas of gender which really made it difficult because we couldn't come up with a shared understanding of what exactly we mean by gender, what exactly we hope to achieve, and what indicators we want to include when developing a gender framework. This was challenging for me. I wouldn't say we know the answers, but we did move further along in how we think about gender with staff and partners.

BE SEPARATE, STAY TOGETHER

Like all good relationships, there needs to be a healthy sense of the self and others. When it comes to MEL within an organisation, the same applies. Oxfam Australia in South Africa started with a very small team where the learning element to the work was done within the Program Team. In later years, a separate team was formed for this work. We would think that by having specific resources for MEL would be a good thing and in many ways it was, but there was a downside. It shifted the responsibility from the Program Team and it was no longer 'our' work, and it meant that the MEL team did not interact directly with the people we were getting information from – the partners. It definitely worked and we had a great learning culture, but I think we could have been even better.

With MEL, getting the dance of separateness and togetherness right would really strengthen learning even further.



UNDERSTANDING GENDER AND VULNERABILITY: CONSIDERATIONS FROM THEORY AND PRACTICE

BY GLENISE LEVENDAL AND RENEE JEFTHA

In development work, we often use concepts to inform what we do, but not enough time is spent on understanding what is really meant by these, what we actually do, and how we do it. We therefore sometimes need to step back from both theory and practice to deepen our insights. Oxfam's No Longer Vulnerable (NLV) program recognises that the broader aim to reduce vulnerability is essential gendered work and provides women with spaces to bring their own solutions, make their own choices and build solidarity and is pivotal for ongoing program work.

In particular, our program learning processes reviewed, questioned and made recommendations specific to 'gender' and 'vulnerability' as two separate responses, but in this paper the two 'concepts' will be used interchangeably and as intrinsically connected, and thus build on the sentiment that recognises that work around vulnerability cannot be gender-blind and gender neutral.

Both concepts of gender and vulnerability are very central to the NLV program. Not only is 'vulnerability', explicit in the title of the program, but the concept of 'vulnerability' was a collective 'word' that resonated with the Oxfam Program Team [and partners] throughout various processes that informed the initial evaluation and confirmed the Program Framework in terms of objectives, focus areas and theory of change. However, what is lacking is an agreed upon definition of 'vulnerability', and thus difficult to use the concept as a 'measure' and for required interrogation.

Despite vulnerability not being fully defined *per se*, the program makes a strong statement around the employment and utilisation of a power analysis. This approach is strongly in line with how gender work is approached. Beyond the centralisation of the importance of power analysis, the two concepts also 'share' similar theoretical investigation of what 'it' is, and is clearly articulated in the NLV Program Framework (July 2012-June 2015) as follows:

“Oxfam understands 'gender' as being reflective of the unequal power dynamics that exist in a society/community/organisation/household whereby those rendered most vulnerable are predominantly girls and women across categories of marginalisation i.e. race, class, age, literacy/education, geographic location, disability, sexual identity, sexual orientation ... These unequal power dynamics are a consequence of beliefs, values and practices, all of which inform the opportunities that either facilitate or hamper access to resources and services.”





WASH

A community member of the Ufafa Valley collects water for the day.
PHOTO © Max Bastard | OXFAM



Just as gender is not fixed but fluid and dynamic, so are the concepts of 'vulnerability' and 'power'. An individual, or a group of individuals, move in-and-out of vulnerability and powerfulness or powerlessness. This is where understanding intersectionality becomes imperative: intersections of class, race, location (in the world, country, community), sexuality, gender orientation and so on.

The ambition of the NLV program was of women being 'actors' and 'primary beneficiaries' of Oxfam's work. In this way, 'gender' was being used synonymously with and meaning 'women' and this is where the NLV program is lacking. If it had to be serious about 'gender', it would attempt to address the aspects of power in gender relations as through civil society partners' work, and/or to strengthen more directly partners' approaches to look at the totality of social organisation, economic and political life. Through this, it would address vulnerability in a more holistic way, which navigates privilege and power given by social and cultural hierarchies. Despite this, our civil society partners' work and Oxfam's support through funding, organisational development, capacity development, networking support and information has shown impact which demonstrates that incrementally women's conditions (and those of their families and other dependants) improved.

OXFAM PRACTICING 'GENDER'

Since around 2010, new ways of working emerged in Oxfam Australia in South Africa. One of the new ways was to intentionally work towards 'gender' being a crosscutting issue in the program, as well as actively ensuring that women are centrally placed within the program. This brings us to the 'how' of the gender work which took place. The key aspects are as follows:

SHARING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

A couple of processes were happening concurrently at this stage. In an effort to consolidate underlying objectives and practices of NLV, a couple of programmatic interventions are highlighted to demonstrate what could be considered achievements.

With regards to building a gender knowledge base with partners and the team, Oxfam Australia contracted Gender DynamiX¹³ to develop and facilitate a seminar series in 2011 around sex, gender, sexual identity and orientation with representatives from Oxfam in South Africa and partner organisations that work around gender within their organisations and communities. This allowed for in-depth discussions to deepen understandings of the complex issues around gender, sexuality and identity, with the aim to be able to recognise and integrate how this could impact on the ability to deliver on programs where 'women' and 'gender' are at the centre of 'capturing data' and programmatic reflection. This was a very important step in bringing together 'unlikely partners' and this was a foundation that contributed to gender being more considered by partners who did not have an overtly gender program, deepened gender work and allowed for the creation of alliances and networks where these conversations could continue, and/or gender coming through more strongly in, for example program work, proposals, publications. The Voices event held in 2012 provided an opportunity for partners to share their experiences and some of the strategies they were using to influence change for the respective groups with which they work, such as LGBTI persons and sex workers.

13. Gender DynamiX is a Cape Town-based NGO that uses a human rights framework to advance, promote and defend the rights of trans and gender non-conforming persons in South Africa, Africa and globally. See www.genderdynamix.org.za



This bringing together was not always a space of comfort, but often was riddled with tensions. This also surfaced in work that solely focused on fostering solidarity between women, as a category. The case in point is the culmination of the four-year project that brought together sex workers, home-based care workers and farm workers and, through the process of reflective writing, encouraged them to find ‘the power within’ and ‘the power between’. The response to this process demonstrated that the program was on the right track by stating a power analysis is at the centre of vulnerability and to move towards measuring it. Power analysis is always at the centre of gender analysis and programs, as one wants to build solidarity across divides, confront patriarchy, dominance and oppression in all its various manifestations.

More examples lie in the Community of Practice that was set up by Oxfam Australia between April and June 2013 around the theme of Transformational Women’s Leadership. Initially, the focus was on understanding and engaging as a team and as partners on the theme. The work undertaken during this time aimed to facilitate networking, sharing and linkages between the South African partners, gender activists, academics and other interested parties around the proposed topics relating to Women’s Transformational Leadership and to contribute to continuous learning among partners and affiliates in and across countries. This was undertaken through a Community of Practice facilitated webinar series with the Oxfam team in South Africa (consisting of Oxfam Canada and Oxfam Australia staff) and some of the Oxfam Canada and Oxfam Australia partners.

“Initially, the focus was on understanding and engaging as a team and as partners on the theme.”

This was a ‘learning, linking and sharing’ virtual platform to further promote the South African program focus on gender and to deepen the understanding of women’s transformational leadership through networking, linkages and sharing between academics, activists and women and men working in marginal sectors of gendered work. Participants experienced the webinars as enriching lessons that enabled them to theorise from their specific experiences and identities, and to identify aspects of difference between women’s realities and how this informs the diversity of feminists’ perspectives.

Sharing and learning together should ideally be a critical part of any program but more so around gender (and vulnerability), given the need for collective understanding of, and continual engagement with, its complexity and power relations.

BUILDING THE PROGRAM: BRINGING IN ‘GENDER PARTNERS’

During 2012, Oxfam Australia recognised the need to include two partners who were part of the previous Oxfam Canada program, namely, Women on Farms Project (WFP) and Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust (RCCTT) to strengthen the gender component. Support to WFP focused on the viability of food cooperatives to improve food security for poor and vulnerable women who have organised themselves into a worker cooperative. The support to RCCTT enabled the organisation to continue its program supporting young peer educators and transferring the skills and knowledge to support and refer victims of sexual bullying and violence. Programmatically, this demonstrates a move towards bringing the concepts of ‘gender’ and ‘vulnerability’ together in implementation.



ABOUT WOMEN ON FARMS PROJECT (WFP)

Women on Farms Project (WFP) is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2012.

WFP's primary constituency is women who live and work on commercial farms. Children and men who live and work on farms are secondary constituents.

The core work of WFP includes training and capacity building, research, lobbying, campaigning and organisation building. WFP has many programs that contribute to the building of a rural social movement of farm women, including a women's health and empowerment program, women's cooperatives, land and housing initiatives and a young women's program.

WFP brings a strong feminist or gender analysis to all their work and programs.

For more information, see: www.wfp.org.za

ABOUT RAPE CRISIS CAPE TOWN TRUST (RCCTT)

Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust (RCCTT) is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2013.

The goal of RCCTT is to promote an end to violence against women, specifically rape.

The organisation aims to reduce the trauma experienced by survivors and encourages them to report rape.

Their activities include:

- *training for volunteers at police stations*
- *a 24-hour helpline giving people advice on how to access the justice system*
- *psychological first aid to rape survivors at forensic health units*
- *support to survivors and other witnesses testifying in court*

For more information, see: www.rapecrisis.org.za



WOMEN AS PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES OF OXFAM'S WORK

Women's inclusion, as beneficiaries, in the program featured in many ways through partners' work in food security and income generation, for example. Through these actions, women have become financially independent, however, this challenged other cultural issues such as women's ownership and role reversal in terms of being the provider in the family.

Such integration evidenced positive impact on unemployed, illiterate women and children who had previously reported struggles in accessing food due to being unemployed, their parent/s being unemployed, or being orphaned. This clearly is a move to bettering women's conditions, where the integration of more focused gardening and crafts projects into these programs contributed to supporting some women's access to food security thus contributing to their health and wellbeing.

Women's leadership was promoted, in some instances, as an unintended effect of the partner's project work, through increased community dialogue. Women's leadership groups are strongly represented on clinic, early childhood development and policing forums. Partner activities supported **women's participation in leadership** to boost their confidence and self-esteem. As a result, women actively participated in partners' projects that supported them to become economically empowered and ensure their households become food secure. Due to increased awareness and knowledge around gender issues on both the personal and collective levels, improvement was noted around skills and practices in contesting gender inequality. Such activities and shifts provided an opportunity for both men and women to engage with inequality, and ensured that women were in a position to make informed choices, and mobilise other women around policy engagements and decisions.

“Due to increased awareness and knowledge around gender issues on both the personal and collective levels, improvement was noted around skills and practices in contesting gender inequality.”

The question around working with men and boys has come up in various forums hosted by Oxfam, by both staff and partners during the lifespan of NLV. Before NLV, Oxfam facilitated a multi-stakeholder Community of Practice on Working with Men and this position came from this early reflective work. Responses to these were usually that NLV is a women's focused program and would not primarily focus on work around men and masculinity to promote women's rights and gender equality. However, if the NLV was to be continued then work of some partners around 'involving men' would have contributed much. This includes PACSA's setting up of men's groups, conversations held by Justice and Women (JAW) with mixed groups through their gender dynamic, and Project Empower's internal conversations and reactions.



ABOUT JUSTICE AND WOMEN (JAW)

Justice and Women (JAW) is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2008.

JAW is a gender-justice organisation based in KwaZulu-Natal, working to challenge and transform inequitable power relationships within the organisation and outside in the community.

They aim to create spaces where people can experience power in a new way.

They work to build voice and agency, foster a sense of personal dignity, and model the change they want to see in the world using the organisation as their core teaching and learning tool.

For more information, see: www.justiceandwomen.blogspot.com

MOVING TOWARDS 'MEASURING'

Early on in the program it was realised that dynamism and fluidity, together with intersectional analysis, contributes to the richness of development programs and implementation. However, these also add to complexity and can bring 'fuzziness' to prioritisation, intervention, and what change we want to bring. For example, although a group of women together may be stronger, less vulnerable and have collective power, an individual woman from the group may actually experience more vulnerability and ostracisation at a personal level because of conscientisation and 'empowerment', and this goes both for being physically woman, but also around the choices we make – sex, sexuality, employment, and so on.

In this way, there was a programmatic move towards bringing the concepts of 'gender' and 'vulnerability' together in implementation. Furthermore, there was the ambition through drafting of a gender MEL framework¹⁴ to move towards measuring 'gender' and 'vulnerability' and their interplay.

The way we understand and measure these dynamics is inherently complex, and although a draft framework was developed with the intention that there is a deepening of the analysis along the reporting chain, it was never fully implemented. The draft MEL framework brings together these two concepts through the following examples:

¹⁴ Parenzee, P. (2014). *M&E Framework: A guide to track shifts in addressing unequal power dynamics that maintain the vulnerabilities confronting girls/women.*



EXAMPLES: COMPLEXITY OF POWER DYNAMICS AND THE RESULTING VULNERABILITIES

Fatima is a manager of an ECD centre in the community. She is assertive in staff team meetings, but less so at board meetings as she is self-conscious about her lack of formal education compared to other board members: the owner of the centre, who is a white woman and university educated; the treasurer who is a university educated white man and the chairperson, a university educated black man.

Thoko is a 23-year-old lesbian woman who is confident to negotiate around safe sex practices with her partner, but when seeking sexual and reproductive health and rights services from the local clinic, does not reveal her sexual orientation or identity because of the negative treatment she has observed others receive when revealing their sexual identity or orientation to medical staff.

UPON REFLECTION

Organisations should be explicit and unapologetic about being 'strategically essentialist' by including **women as a programmatic focus**. Binary data that captures the categories of women and men may be necessary and important when there is this focus on women as the primary people we work with and an aim to combat poverty and improve the overall standard of living of the poorest and 'most vulnerable' sections of society.

Consideration needs to be given to the **use of the term 'vulnerability'**. First, it can be patronising and relay a state of victimhood. Second, there is also a need to have a clear definition of what state of 'vulnerability' needs to be shifted, and what the positive shift will look like.

It is helpful to realise the **important role of the 'imagined community' of women**. This is especially the case in a community established from shared oppression. Building temporary, negotiated coalitions across various spheres of specific issues can be beneficial, such as the four-year writing project that brought together sex workers, women farm workers and women home-based care workers. However, these coalitions, networks and efforts to foster solidarity can be conflictual and bring about tensions. Thus we have to be mindful of the importance of changing identities like race, class, sexual orientation and gender identity. However, bringing together 'unlikely partners' brings in new skills and approaches that contribute to the integration of programming and can result in the creation of new alliances.

"...we have to be mindful of the importance of changing identities like race, class, sexual orientation and gender identity."

Consistent internal **gender training** can address discriminatory attitudes and strengthen the organisation's capacity to use gender as an analytical concept in planning, monitoring and reporting. This is central to ensuring that shifting states (negative and positive) are documented and strategies developed to contribute to the betterment of women's position in society. Gender training with men is an important part of the strategies needed to end sexual oppression and gender equality.

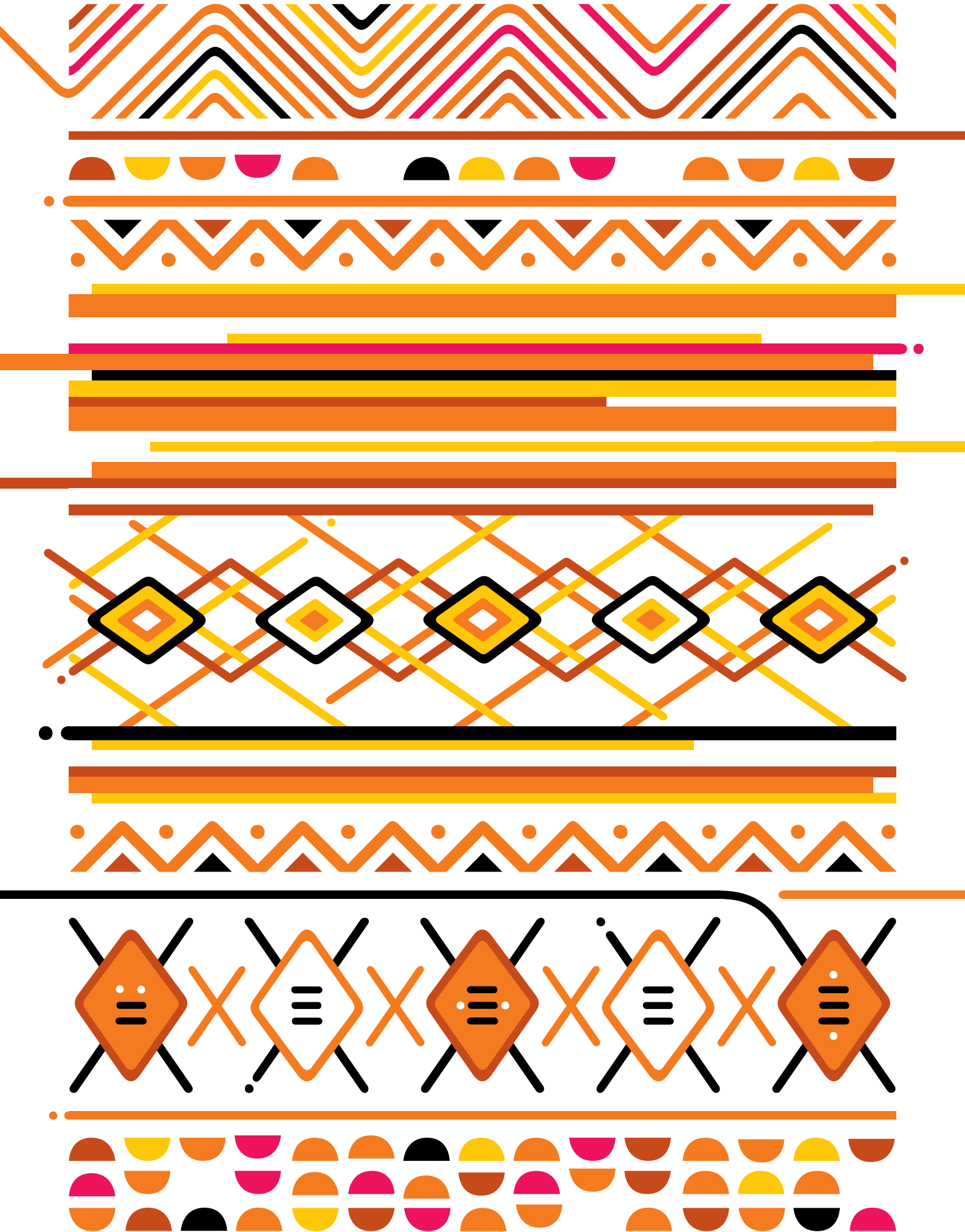




SAVE THE CHILDREN

Koketso Ratala is interviewed by Gladys Ryan from Oxfam at the Khulakhle David Beare Centre where her child goes to school.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM





UKUBAMBISANA KWETHU

UBUMBANO LWETHU

BAO RE SEBEDISANANG LE BONA

OUR PARTNERSHIPS

BA RE DIRISANANG LE BONA

MUTINGATI WASHU

BAO RE ŠOMIŠANG LE BONA

INTRODUCTION BY COLETTE SOLOMON

(DIRECTOR, WOMEN ON FARMS PROJECT)

Oxfam Australia has a range of different partners in South Africa: from community-based partners who work directly within communities around service delivery, to partners with an explicitly empowerment approach, and there are various permutations in between. It is this diversity that has produced a rich, deep and textured partnership that addresses development challenges with communities in various ways.

While it is a broad range of approaches and understandings of partnerships which different partners demonstrate, Oxfam's understanding of partnership is underpinned by the central notion of trust, which manifests in the strong relationships Oxfam has with its partners. The aspects on which trust is built lead to positive outcomes in the intersections with partners and the communities in which they work. Important, too, is that Oxfam invested the time necessary to build trust with partners, thereby establishing relationships of mutuality and reciprocity. At the heart of such practice, is Oxfam's recognition that partners (and communities) are the experts of their own contexts and realities and should therefore be supported and strengthened in their interventions and strategies. To this end, Oxfam has always documented and provided full acknowledgement of the achievements of both partners and communities. In a funding environment where support for work on gender and women is often patchy or non-existent, we as a partner particularly valued Oxfam's consistency on gender and LGBTI concerns. This ensured that our focus on empowering women to know, claim and realise their rights was supported and deepened by the partnership with Oxfam.

“...Oxfam's understanding of partnership is underpinned by the central notion of trust, which manifests in the strong relationships Oxfam has with its partners.”

While partners have numerous and varied approaches to community engagement, which reflect the diversity of communities with which they work, they do share important common approaches. A central feature is their belief in community-based and community-driven initiatives. These tend to be more sustainable, mainly because they are owned by communities, and more importantly, because they also contribute to behaviour change and, thus, immediate improvements in the lives of individuals, households and communities. Another commonality that characterises Oxfam partners is their capacity to remain relevant to the changing priorities of communities through consistent and meaningful consultation and participation; that is, through listening.

The last two related aspect of partners' work is their engagements with government and their advocacy and lobbying, both of which varied from partner to partner. Partners generally strive to contribute to structural change through meaningful engagement with government. The precise nature and extent of such engagements vary depending on the partner, the issue and the specific government department. It also relates to their approach to advocacy and lobbying. This lies at the heart of the dialectic which faces all partners: on the one hand, there is a realistic need to have cooperative relations with government departments, while on the other hand, it is almost inevitable to sometimes have more adversarial interactions with government.



It is fitting to conclude this introduction with a few words on what the Oxfam partnership meant to the partners. Many partners articulate the same basic sentiment about their experience with Oxfam – that Oxfam in South Africa was a partner, not merely a funder; that Oxfam respected and supported partners; that Oxfam was never judgmental, domineering or prescriptive; and that they valued the expertise of partner and communities.

“Many partners articulate the same basic sentiment about their experience with Oxfam – that Oxfam in South Africa was a partner, not merely a funder; that Oxfam respected and supported partners...”

Please allow me to end on a personal note. WFP was especially blessed with the Program Officers who were directly responsible for our program. Beyond the call of duty, they supported our campaigns, to the extent of even bringing their families to participate in our Nelson Mandela birthday activities, including working with women on the agricultural cooperative’s land in wet, windy weather. Farm women, with whom they have engaged, remember them personally, by name, and always ask after them. This is simple testament to Oxfam’s general approach, ethos and culture. Their unique style of partnership will be missed by all their partners in South Africa.

To engage further with the lessons from Our Partnerships, please see: <http://power-is-in-people.wordpress.com>

COLETTE SOLOMON

Collette Solomon, Deputy Director
of Women on Farms Project.

PHOTO © Michael Myers | OXFAM



KHAYELITSHA

Khayelitsha informal settlement on the Cape Flats in the Western Cape.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



PARTNERSHIPS WITHIN PARTNERSHIP

Internal partnerships and alliances are a feature of the Oxfam partnership model. Partners are encouraged to work together on issues of common concern. These partnerships may be mutually reinforcing and ideologically aligned or they could be reinforcing and ideologically contested. The partnerships are exemplified by high levels of trust and a willingness to engage in robust debate on methods and approaches.

For more on our ecological approach to partnership, see page 66 in the section on Our Practice.

AN 'INSIDER-OUTSIDER' REFLECTION ON PARTNERSHIPS

Fiona Kotvojs is an Oxfam Australia Board Member, and was their representative at the partner closure Link and Learns called Re-Vision, held in November 2015. After attending the regional sessions in Cape Town and Durban, she had the following to say:

“What has been significant for me is the relationship between Oxfam and partners. It became really clear while I was in Cape Town that the relationship was not the normal donor-partner relationship, there was something completely different. This was again reinforced when I went to Durban – the (I would say) unique relationship was a function of all of Oxfam Australia in South Africa rather than just the people in one of the offices.

[Partners] described us as an honest friend. When things are difficult, our team members were people you could talk to, would help work a way through the challenges, and provide non-judgmental support ... I seemed to be drowned in people making comments like ‘I have never worked with a donor who cared like you’, ‘the team haven’t set themselves up as experts, but have expertise’. One person described this as ‘Oxfam is like a big sister’, supportive but not domineering or judgmental. Perhaps it was best summarised by the comments from one person who has worked with many donors: ‘Oxfam is a partner, not just a funder, and that is really rare.’

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

From an absolutely pragmatic perspective, in my experience, ***the relationship is critical to what can be achieved in development.*** A positive, open relationship based on trust achieves much; the results will be limited where the relationship is not based on trust. For me, what I saw was a best practice example (and I am not one given to giving this label easily).”



ONE SIDE OF THE COIN: UNDERSTANDING TRUST

BY WENDELL WESTLEY AND NICHOLAS MOLVER

Trust is an essential part of any partnership for many reasons – it provides foundation, allows for healthy conflict, and increases joint creativity. Trust is something we think we understand, which is probably why in professional spaces we take trust for granted. In Oxfam’s approach to partnerships we have tried to focus more directly on building and maintaining trust in a number of ways over the years. We found that when we look a bit closer at this idea there are layers of complexity around context, the organisation, and the personal. This is why we want to take this space to understand what trust is. We are going to unapologetically highlight the theoretical understanding of trust in order to take us back to basics.

WHAT DOES TRUST ACTUALLY MEAN?

We can always pop open a dictionary and rifle through the definitions, but such things are simply not enough to fully understand the deeper implications of trust within a working context. Indeed, “[trust] is the underpinning of all human contact and institutional interaction”¹⁵. Such statements begin to point us in the appropriate direction. As a way of better understanding what trust means in a functional context, and in a limited number of pages, it was decided the best way forward was to decide on a relevant model: Rotter’s model¹⁶, which was revised by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman in 1995¹⁷. And, of course, with any model comes new or unusual terms. In this case, luckily, the terms make sense. Two key ones that are useful to explain now are ‘trustor’ and ‘trustee’. This are easily unpacked in an example – I lend a friend money trusting they will pay me back. I am doing the trusting and so I am the ‘trustor’. My friend is being trusted and so they are the ‘trustee’.

Now, to understand this model and the various interactions that occur within it, we must first consider the factors of trustworthiness. What are the conditions that allow for the building of a relationship of trust? There are a number of precursors to trust, and a range of terms that can be used. To name a few: competence, consistency, integrity, loyalty, receptivity, ability, benevolence, goodwill, reliability. The list goes on, but one can quickly start grouping them for similarity which the adapted model attempts to do. Here there are three core trust precursors: ability, benevolence and integrity. These work along with the ‘trustor’s’ tendency to trust, something unique to every individual, their personal and situational circumstances. Depending on existing relationships or knowledge, a person may be more or less likely to give high scores to the various trust precursors depending on the people and/or circumstances involved. A brief overview of these factors is as follows:

15. Tonkiss, F. Passey, A. Fenton, N. and Hems, L. (2000). *Trust and Civil Society*. London: Macmillan.

16. Rotter, J. (1967). A New Scale for the Measurement of Interpersonal Trust. *Journal of Personality*, 35, pp. 651-665.

17. Mayer, R. Davis, J. and Schoorman, F. (1995). An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), pp. 709-734.



ABILITY:

For this to be an active factor, the trustee would have prominent skills or proficiency in a particular area, a competence that balances against the risk and risk-taking behaviour, which the trustor must take account of.

BENEVOLENCE:

The *Oxford Dictionary* definition is “The quality of being well meaning; kindness”. This focuses on the suggestion or perception that there is a positive or beneficial connection that exists between the trustee and the trustor that does not have any reliance on self-serving outcomes.

INTEGRITY:

This focuses on the trustor’s perception that the trustee abides by a certain set of conventions and principles that the trustor regards as permissible.

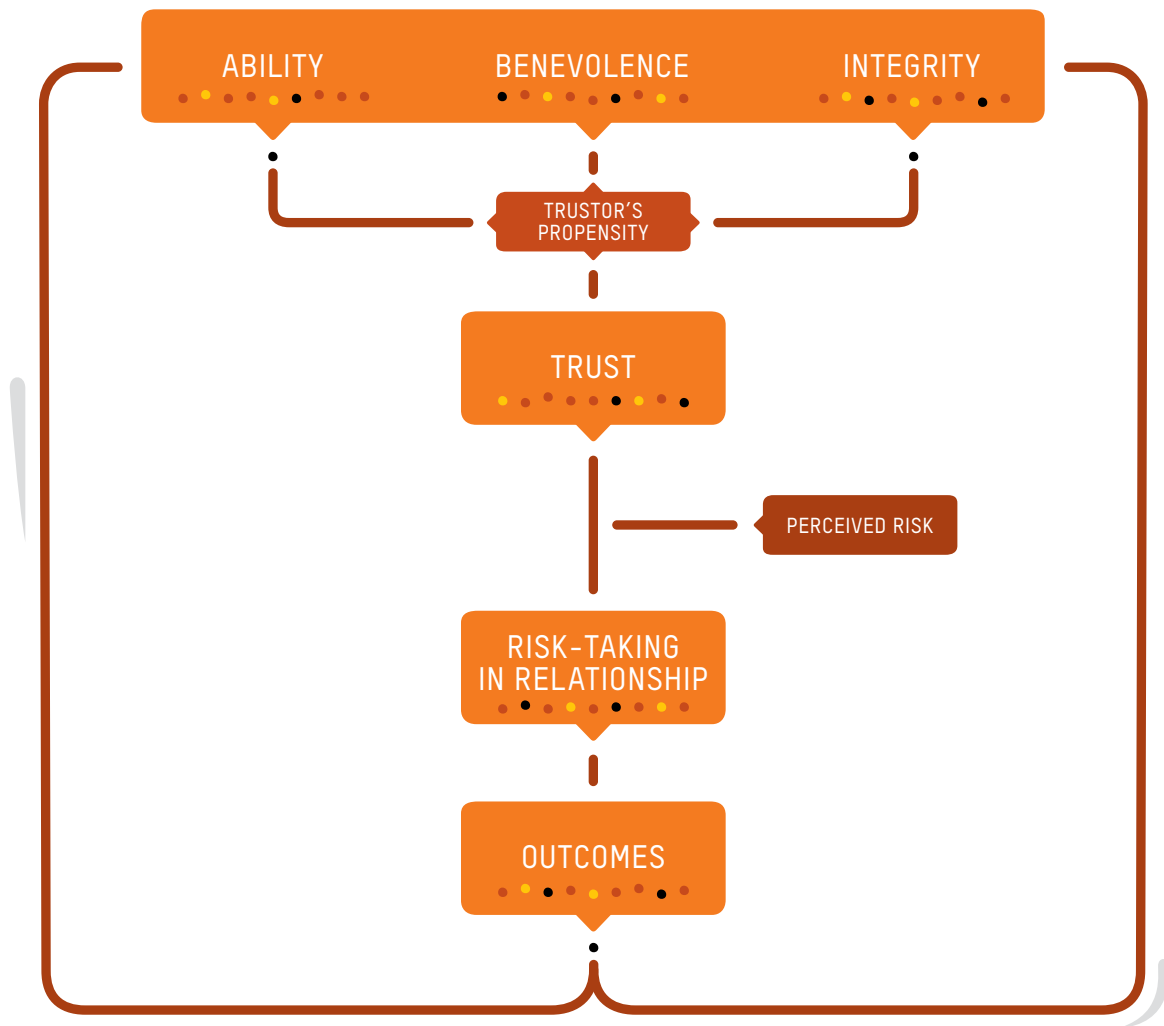
For the model to function, these three factors all interact and interrelate with one another, though depending on the case being put through the model, their specific importance and impact may vary. ‘Trustworthiness’ should also be considered as a scale or continuum, rather than one of two absolutes; that is, trustworthy or not trustworthy. Depending on the situation, these three factors can be measured differently, and would then need to be taken as a whole in assessing the final level of trustworthiness. Obviously, a high level of all three factors would result in a high level of trust overall, but meaningful trust can still develop with examples of lesser levels from all three points. That said, in the same way that high levels of the three precursors build trust, low levels, or lack thereof, can actively undermine trust.

“For the model to function, these three factors all interact and interrelate with one another, though depending on the case being put through the model, their specific importance and impact may vary.”

An added factor to this is the element of risk. It must be noted that within this model, risk is situational, and heavily reliant on context. It is completely dependent on the specific players and scenario in which the model is being used. A further consideration for this model is the acceptance that there is a functional difference between trust and a trusting action, and that it is the insertion of risk that creates this difference. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman state: “The fundamental difference between trust and trusting behaviours is between a willingness to assume risk and actually assuming risk.” As an over-the-top example, I could say that I trust my friend would not harm me when shooting an apple off my head. It is easy to say and mean when there is no imminent risk of my friend actually firing an arrow at my head, and therein lies trust. Trusting behaviour occurs when I actually go forward with that risk-taking behaviour and allow my friend to fire an arrow at me. The concept of risk manifests itself in this model as ‘perceived risk’ and ‘risk-taking in relationship’. Below, in its simplest form, is the trust model being utilised for this paper.



FIGURE 8: A Useful Model for Understanding Trust



At the top are the three core factors (**Ability, Benevolence, Integrity**), which feed into **Trust**. Note how the **Trustor's Propensity** interplays with the precursors as well as with **Trust** itself. Following on from the establishment of **Trust**, but before trusting action is taken, (leading to **Risk-Taking In Relationship**) we see **Perceived Risk** inserting into the model. Once the **Perceived Risk** has been established, **Trust** becomes a trusting action, which, in this model, is referred to as **Risk-Taking In Relationship**. There are then the **Outcomes** that result from the **Risk-Taking In Relationship** (trusting actions). These **Outcomes** feed back into the three primary trust precursors, with either positive or negative reinforcement, thus starting the cycle again.

HILLCREST AIDS CENTRE

Nokuthula Phewa makes her beaded necklaces from her home in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



'CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PEOPLE':

PACSA'S PERSPECTIVE AND EXPERIENCES ON SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AND WORKING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

BY PIETERMARITZBURG AGENCY FOR COMMUNITY SOCIAL ACTION (PACSA)

PACSA's analysis of the South African context is one of injustice, inequity and indignity located in South Africa's socio-economic and socio-political structure. It is one where the state and economy has not yet been transformed and we have not yet arrived at the democracy we imagined. Our contextual analysis therefore compels us to position our work within a framework of struggle to shift power so that justice, equity and dignity are achieved. Our practice becomes an expression of how we work within this framework.

We are guided by two major **principles** as a consequence of our conceptualisation of the problem:

1. Those for whom injustice, inequity and indignity are greatest, are those who should articulate, think and lead the struggle.
2. Substantial and prolonged transformation (shifting power) requires widespread support, joint consciousness and solidarity in struggle.

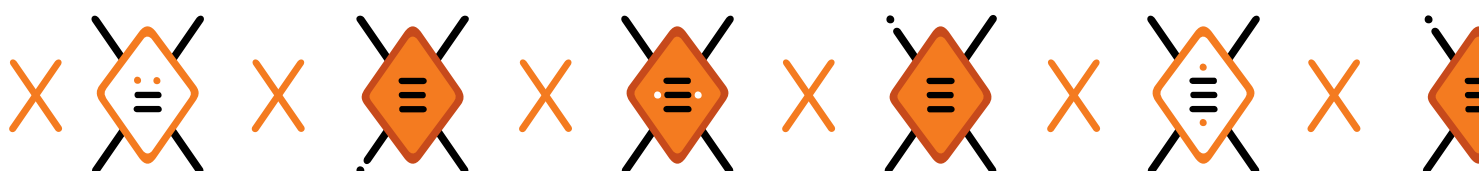
PACSA employs two **strategies** in response to our contextual understanding:

1. It supports eighteen community groups that are in struggle (termed community partners); and
2. It seeks to build broader social justice conscientisation and activism.

This reflective piece considers aspects of our practice in how PACSA supports groups in struggle (under strategy 1) as a moment of sharing our learnings on practice and connecting groups in struggle to others; and (under strategy 2) it provides a specific case of an alliance PACSA was recently part of, to draw out broader lessons on alliances.

SUPPORTING GROUPS IN STRUGGLE

As PACSA, we have no practice blueprint. Every group and every context is different. Our job is to listen. We don't know everything and we are also learning and unlearning. Our initial connection with groups is therefore one of solidarity, and co-creation emerges as we find each other. We build our relationship on our broader visions of justice, equity and dignity which we try and organise around 'now'.



In the process of this work we build relationships with groups in struggle. Our relationships are ones of negotiation and integrity. Groups in struggle existed before we were invited to support them. We meet them while they are already travelling. In many cases, they would be just fine if we didn't have a relationship with them, as such we are sensitive to this. If, together, we can see some value in working together and having a better chance of achieving our joint visions, learning and being in solidarity with one another, then we move forward together, asking as we walk.

The issues around which groups are struggling are their own issues. They are issues that are real for them. This comes from the ground and is important to them. Groups struggle around their immediate issues. We stay with the group at this level and structural change (for PACSA) is therefore not our first entry point (even though it is the reason why we work). Through finding one another, listening slowly and intentionally working on deepening joint consciousness and meeting with other groups in struggle, we find that groups link immediate struggles more broadly to their structural causes. In doing so, the recognition that a local struggle is best dealt with more widely for substantive change to be achieved emerges.

“Through finding one another, listening slowly and intentionally working on deepening joint consciousness and meeting with other groups in struggle, we find that groups link immediate struggles more broadly to their structural causes.”

PACSA's relationships with groups follow different trajectories. In some cases, our relationships fall away, but in most cases our relationships are long, slow and substantial. Some struggles revolve around the same initial issue, some (on the basis of principles established in struggle) morph into different terrains; some struggles keep their core membership relatively unchanged and narrow; in others, membership expands and changes. Struggle is in flux. We find that our principles of practice and our relationships based on integrity, accountability and trust guide us in manoeuvring through different stages and challenges whilst allowing us the confidence to remain relevant and responsive to that which is continually emerging.

Before we look at connecting groups in struggle with one another, it is important perhaps to say what PACSA does and does not do. We do not speak for, think for, or act on behalf of, our community partners. We do not make decisions for our community partners. We will not do anything which people can do by themselves. We are very clear that PACSA is PACSA – we are autonomous and we speak for ourselves and we act on our own. We have our own spaces and strategies to influence (mentioned earlier under strategy 2). Our relationship with our community partners is very clear. If we over step the boundaries we are immediately disciplined, both by our partners and by ourselves as a team within PACSA. Our principles around autonomy as PACSA are therefore respected also in our community partners. Struggle must be led by groups in struggle; and substantial change requires deep rootedness, analysis and leadership by the actors in struggle. Any intervention by PACSA which does not build the power of groups in struggle to lead, think and articulate the struggle is actually the enemy and should be seen as such. We take this seriously.





WOZA MOYA

One of Woza Moya's handcrafted Sock Monkeys sits on the window sill of a crafter's home in Ixopo, KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Max Bastard | OXFAM



WHAT DO WE DO?

We create spaces for groups to reflect on struggle. Our primary role is to seek out spaces and then assist with processes of reflection – making meaning, learning and strategising around future actions. We also work in a way to assist groups to practice principles of radical democracy in how they organise, how to build credibility in the wider community on the basis of report backs, integrity, transparency and accountability, and how to build joint leadership and joint analysis. When asked, we can assist in building capacity around certain competencies identified by the group. We also try and eliminate some of the risk of actions by seeking out experiences for the group to build their confidence, work hard to think through actions (the politics is in planning!) and be there on the street (or in the room during the telephone conversation, meeting, interview, etc.) providing solidarity and accompaniment. Lastly, we work to create spaces where groups in struggle can connect with one another. The value of this final point is critical and is a core methodology of our practice.

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

We have found that connecting people to people – groups in struggle with other groups in struggle – either via way of exchange visits (where groups go and visit and spend time with each other), through reflection sessions (where groups come together to jointly reflect), through meetings, or through solidarity actions (a group will go to another group’s protest march or picket and develop greater consciousness through dialogue on the street), and by undertaking joint actions, is extremely useful to support struggle.

These types of connections between groups in struggle provide spaces of confidence, inspiration and imagination. This is because those directly involved in the thinking, in the experience, and in the consequences of action are able to engage and reflect directly with others for whom these experiences resonate. Not only do these spaces say that *‘your’* struggle can be fought. But they also say *‘your’* struggle is legitimate, and courageous. It can be done. Don’t be dissuaded. It is hard. Organise! Do it.

“...those directly involved in the thinking, in the experience, and in the consequences of action are able to engage and reflect directly with others for whom these experiences resonate.”

We find that the quality of the information shared in these spaces is so good because it is rooted in actual experience. Groups in struggle, albeit struggling in different contexts, understand context. Experiences and strategies land so much better (and can be taken up more quickly) because they are real.

Connecting across groups also provides opportunities to build theory and therefore move towards structural causes. Here we find this is very simply achieved: if groups are saying “this is happening to us here”, and another



is saying “this is also happening to us where we live”, then the question of cause moves beyond the ‘local phenomenon’ to the structural. Apart from being almost liberating in that the individual can no longer be held responsible for her context, it immediately creates a legitimacy for the struggle, as well as a solidarity around the struggle because ‘this thing is not just happening to us, so something bigger than us must be the cause’. If a partner group has done something to revolt against the oppression, then this meeting space also provides the confidence and support to act.

Lastly, and importantly given the nature of struggle, connections with struggle groups provide opportunities for immediate solidarity. Relationships tend to be long-lasting and very rich. The solidarity connections provide spaces for advice and act as a sounding board. They also act to encourage groups and sometimes provide an external accountability mechanism. The new connections also provide scope to access other networks, alliances and connections and (in many cases) provide solidarity around future actions – many through actually being with people in the street.

PACSA’S EXPERIENCES OF ALLIANCES AND NETWORKS

As indicated earlier, PACSA works to shift power and therefore finds its work located within the struggle to change structure to achieve equity, justice and dignity. Our advocacy is embedded in our vision – whether it be around access to affordable and sufficient volumes of electricity; access to good quality nutritious and affordable food; incomes, grants, jobs and employment; quality of health care and access to treatment; or gender inequalities. Our core work is around putting credible, good quality, defensible information into the public domain; providing clear analysis of what we see happening (cutting through a lot of the hegemonic haze and debunking certain ‘economic fundamentals’); and creating spaces for people to talk about and be provoked by social justice issues, to not look away but to take some form of action.

PACSA has rich experience of working with various alliances and networks to advocate on a variety of issues framed within the equity, dignity and justice milieu. One example is an alliance around Eskom’s request to the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) for a 25.3% electricity tariff increase in 2015 – the ‘Stop Eskom’s 25% Increase Coalition’.

REFLECTING ON ALLIANCES

There were a number of lessons we learned from the Stop Eskom’s 25% Increase Coalition. Many are useful for alliances more broadly.¹

ALLIANCES ARE USEFUL TO ELEVATE LOCAL ACTION ON TO THE NATIONAL AGENDA

A localised protest lead by PACSA alone, with a few well known and regular partners would not have been successful as a strategy to influence a national decision.

18. For more information, go to www.pacsa.org.za where the coalition’s work was profiled.



DIVERSITY WITHIN AN ALLIANCE PROVIDES GREAT VALUE IN GETTING THE ADVOCACY MESSAGE OUT MORE BROADLY.

Our diversity was able to capture the imagination of constituencies, sectors of society and geographical areas well beyond Pietermaritzburg. The diversity also offered a colour, imagination and creativity, which we alone could not have delivered, and it was this that provided fuel to keep pushing.

DON'T GET STUCK AROUND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

We don't always know what principles and practices organisations adhere to. We found when we invited everybody and agreed why we wanted to protest and how we wanted to work amongst ourselves that there was enough symmetry on which to work.

INDIVIDUAL CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS DON'T HAVE TO LOSE THEIR PRINCIPLES TO JOIN AN ALLIANCE

We can hold on to our principles as we work with others. We found the alliance experience was a space where we could model our principles together and that the more intentional we were, the easier it was to work.

ALLIANCES SHOULD FOCUS ON THE 'WHAT', NOT THE 'HOW', OF THE DEMAND

Part of this was linked to an idea that the 'how' part could be worked out once the principle had been achieved, but we were also open to the possibility that we might not even reach the stage of the 'how'. The fact that we could figure this out at a later stage provided us space to bring people on board (the idea of the 'funnel' in advocacy strategy). What we found in agreeing to this process is that the 'how' divides us; in many cases before we have even reached the streets. Something we learnt as the process moved forward, however, was that when you trust one another and when you get to know and build relations with one another (through planning action), you tend to find that the 'how' becomes easier to negotiate and contest because you have established the relationships to listen.

TRANSPARENCY AND REPORTING BACK IS ESSENTIAL IN ENSURING EVERYONE IN THE ALLIANCE FEELS RESPECTED AND INCLUDED

It also helped to keep people excited and believe that we could win. Communication, linked to this, was critical. The basic message was developed by a task team and all alliance partners were free to speak on their own behalf (not on behalf of the alliance). Hence alliance partners were not restricted and they retained their autonomy of speaking about the message – in their own voice and on behalf of their own constituency. A media team was elected to speak on behalf of the coalition – which it did – but it kept to the script as agreed by all coalition partners. The alliance secretariat ensured that all meeting outcomes were reported back to the alliance partners at each step of the campaign.



ORGANISATIONS THINKING AND ACTING TOGETHER BREAKS DOWN BARRIERS (REAL OR PERCEIVED) TO CIVIL SOCIETY SOLIDARITY

Many of the organisations within the coalition (some who had never worked together before and who really are very different) built solid relationships through the coalition. Many of these organisations are interacting quite a lot since the Eskom protest; with us, but also with one another, well removed from our spaces.

CONCLUSION

PACSA's experiences reflect our belief that alliances and networks within and across civil society provide a very important tool for shifting power, building solidarity and making development work. The work that PACSA does with our partners has highlighted the value of grounding struggles in people's own experiences and walking with them to achieve their desired change. It restores people's dignity, builds people's power, reaffirms struggles and provides real solidarity. Additionally, we continue to learn that walking and working together has far better outcomes and makes us better, than when we work separately. Working together with other organisations in networks and alliances creates energy for dreaming and visioning, as well as the solidarity needed to shift power.

SAVE THE CHILDREN

A young learner stands at the entrance of the Little Stars Educare Centre in Wentworth, KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM





LITTLE STARS
EDU-CENTRE



PERSISTENCE, PERSISTENCE, PERSISTENCE! THE COMPLEX PROCESS OF ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT

BY NOBHONGO GXOLO

Engaging government is a complex process, regardless of the why, how and what – whether it is for cooperation or resistance, directly or indirectly, formally or informally. This is as true for individuals and communities as it is for civil society organisations, especially given our history and the current context of the democratic post-apartheid South Africa. It is something we have discussed many times in many different ways within the Oxfam partnership in South Africa. We have seen that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the state can establish a symbiotic understanding where both parties communicate effectively and remain on the same page. We know that there are various strategies that Oxfam partner organisations have been using to engage with government, and we also know that there have been successes and challenges of engaging with government in an attempt to achieve their mandates. We would like to crystallise and share some of these with you based on the perspectives and approaches of seven such organisations: Triangle Project, Sophakama, Save the Children, Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA), CREATE, Lima Rural Development Foundation and the Women on Farms Project. These organisations work in different regions and have different focus areas, making it all the more interesting to highlight the common threads and lessons on how they see, and interact with, government.

“It is something we have discussed many times in many different ways within the Oxfam partnership in South Africa.”

Oxfam was a partner in the second National Gender Summit hosted by the Commission for Gender Equality from April 9 to 11, 2014, on the eve of the national elections. Twenty years into South Africa’s democracy, delegates came together to evaluate the progress made towards the realisation of substantive gender equality and gender transformation in our country. This resulted in the Benoni Declaration and Summit Program of Action. This is one example of how Oxfam and partner organisations have engaged productively with government and raised issues on to the national agenda.

ABOUT SOPHAKAMA

Sophakama is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2007.

Sophakama's mission is to provide a range of community services in Joe Slovo Township in the Eastern Cape. Their programs include:

- *home-based care services*
- *peer and health education focusing on HIV and AIDS and chronic diseases*
- *children's services for orphans and vulnerable children, including an aftercare support program, a feeding scheme, support groups, formal and informal education interventions, vegetable gardening programs, life skills training and sports and recreational activities*

Sophakama also plays an advocacy role in the community, assisting to access official documentation and social grants.

For more information, see: www.sophakama.org.za

ABOUT SAVE THE CHILDREN

Save the Children is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2010.

Save the Children helps children through focusing on:

- *children's rights and campaigning for a strengthened child-rights system*
- *child protection*
- *education with a focus on the foundation years, which has a lasting impact*
- *health and nutrition, because no child under five should die from preventable disease and all children deserve long-term good health*

For more information, see: www.savethechildren.org.za

ABOUT LIMA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

Lima is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2010.

Lima provides a sustainable and integrated rural development service to many urban and rural communities through the establishment of appropriate institutions, local economic development and training to empower people, particularly women, in rural areas, in their own development efforts, in order to overcome poverty.

Lima places a large focus on the transformation of the agricultural sector by striving towards the highest level of black economic empowerment, implementing farm worker equity share programs and working in the area of land reform.

For more information, see: www.lima.org.za

WE ALL WORK WITH MANY FACES

Partnerships are dynamic and continuously evolving depending on a number of factors. These include how the different partners treat each other, the nature of the partnership, the time and energy they put into the relationship to help it grow, being cooperative and considerate of the other partner's needs, as well as achieving their own interests and meeting their own agendas.

“Even though we’ll fight at boardroom meetings, we are not enemies the next day. We take the time to work through our conflicts and reach an understanding.”

- SOPHAKAMA

Bearing this in mind, different CSOs have varying relationships with, and ways of engaging, government. These often ebb and flow within one CSO-government relationship. Around a particular issue, it is common for a CSO and communities they support to cooperate with government processes, as well as resist, put pressure and hold government to account within those same processes. It is a complex dance indeed!

On the other hand, the word ‘government’ is in fact blurry when we think about it a bit more deeply, as it also has many faces. There are the different spheres of government (national, provincial, local), the different sides of government (political and administrative), and the different government departments and ministries within all of that (like Basic Education and Social Development).

“Protests aren’t the end game, they’re a mechanism to build power and get buy-in. To manipulate power we need to have a number of different strategies.”

- PACSA

But what does all this mean? Well, firstly acknowledging this complexity does imply that to give strategic thought to your role as a CSO in any given process, while allowing that role to be dynamic as the process unfolds, is very important. It also means that there is a need to ‘unpack’ who or what ‘government’ you are working with before you engage, and then reflect back continually on this throughout these engagements. For an organisation to attempt to secure a good working relationship, it needs to work at developing a strategy that clearly outlines their wants and needs, as well as the gain that the partnership will have for government.

SO HOW DOES GOVERNMENT WORK?

Once we acknowledge the complexity of government, we must ask how government works. It is important to understand the parameters under which the government operates, when engaging it about one's own agenda.

“As in any sector [in government] there are some truly amazing people extending themselves and going the extra mile and others who have no commitment.”

- SAVE THE CHILDREN

CREATE, for example, noted how understanding government protocol is a good way to get buy-in, and Lima recommended that CSOs locate themselves in positions where they can assist government in achieving their mandate. When dealing with government, it's also important to understand the restrictions under which it functions. Triangle Project pointed out how under-capacitated a lot of departments are, noting that the lack of service delivery is sometimes as a result of this – rather than an overt intention to simply not deliver. The organisation also highlighted limited budget as one of the possible hindrances that can keep government from assisting an organisation in the way that they would like. It helps then to really understand and engage with the policy, political and budget cycles of the different arms of government, particularly as it relates to your focus areas.

“We use research and community networks to build up these [safe] spaces [for LGBTI people]. We speak to policy makers about their lack of intervention in meeting their own objectives.”

- TRIANGLE PROJECT

It is also critical to remember that working with government is often strongest when engagements are both formal and informal; this ranges from the inevitable paper trail of agendas, meetings, contracts, and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). As an official body dispensing funding and resources, this is imperative. Sophakama noted that, where possible, it's important for an organisation to build their relationship with actual departments rather than with individual representatives solely to decrease the risk when new officials or politicians enter the space with different priorities. But it is also equally essential to remember that government is made up of people and it is important to also forge personal relationships with government officials and politicians in an effort to raise awareness, create spaces for meaningful dialogue and to work towards mutual understanding. This may also improve constructive contestation and criticism, which can often irreparably damage tense and fragile relationships. NGOs must be willing to challenge government and hold them accountable to their promises while not 'burning too many bridges'.



WOMEN ON FARMS

Lena Baadjies is a farm worker in the Western Cape. She lives with her mother, father, aunt, two cousins and her own two children.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM

“Before we can even think of implementation there are a couple of steps that we need to follow, like making ourselves known to the councillor. Then you need to go to the traditional authorities. It may also be a plan to interface the two.”

- LIMA

As an extension of this, the partners who formed part of this case study noted the positives and negatives of approaching individuals within government versus the government institution. So what wins? It seems the best is to be somewhere in between.

THE NEED TO LOOK INWARDS

It's important for organisations to be clear and firm about one's own method of engagement. To make a stand when relaying the organisation's and community's frustrations, recommendations, and issues about delivery is important, otherwise, as Sophakama warned, the CSO can be swallowed by government's own agenda and goals. Unfortunately, one of the drawbacks of being vocal about the government's mistakes and where they lack effort is that the respective officials responsible for those portfolios can make it difficult for the organisation to have access to important funding and resources. Nevertheless, it's important for CSOs to be clear about their expectations and what they want so that they are not easily swayed by the government agenda.

“As Sophakama, although we work with the municipality and government we're quite transparent about not having any political affiliations with any party. We are an NGO which commits itself to activities which benefit the community. We are an entity that is independent from the government so it's important that when we function in that space – we always make sure that our voice is heard.”

- SOPHAKAMA

For a CSO's relationship with government to be successful, it's important to always refer to the needs of the people which it represents. Being immersed in community social activism is important for an organisation's own sustainability, this according to Sophakama. PACSA firmly agrees with keeping the community's struggles at the forefront of any process and in fact, they simply play a supporting role. CREATE notes the importance of having the community represent themselves – speak in their own voice. This is one of the reasons WFP encourages women on farms to attend meetings with the municipality so that they can learn to engage with government on that level.

“They [women farm workers] are fearful and that keeps them silent. So getting to a point where they can actually articulate their situation, and to higher governmental officials at that, that's a big deal.”

- WOMEN ON FARMS PROJECT

In this way, representing or supporting the community while maintaining a relationship with government becomes a delicate balancing act. In order for it to be sustainable, these relationships need to remain mutually beneficial.

It's also important for CSOs to note that, although there is some benefit to establishing a good working relationship with government, they should nonetheless retain their autonomy and hold on to their own voice. That's why establishing a clear and firm sense of identity and having a good understanding of the organisation's purpose, as well as its ties to communities is of utmost importance. This will keep the processes from being side-tracked and ensure that it remains true to its mission and value.

IT IS WORK, SO WORK IT

Working with government is a good idea and can be beneficial – but it is work. There is value in CSOs critically engaging and working with government in an attempt to support the communities they work with. This is because often government has resources, funding and access that organisations and communities need. However, CSOs wanting to pursue a reciprocal relationship with government must be willing to put in the time and energy in establishing and maintain a good working relationship.

“Our relationship has grown with many officials to the level where we know each other personally – or at least to the level where you know that someone will take your call, and that you'll take theirs. And that's key to dealing with government.”

- SAVE THE CHILDREN

Probably one of the clearest and most repeated message from civil society when it comes to working with government is 'persistence, persistence, persistence!'. WFP described their approach, in attempt to gain results, as “continuous, determined and repetitive”. It takes perseverance for a CSO to build and maintain a cohesive and mutually beneficial relationship with government. It takes time and a serious amount of work. There is a lot of protocol and red tape which can make working with them in the form of a partnership, or trying to secure resources or funding, a demanding feat that requires care and dedication. In the context of scarce resources, trying to negotiate this takes time and energy away from the CSO's core focus. However, organisations that have put time and effort into trying to build and maintain their relationships with government often find that government engages more openly and is more encouraging of them and their work.

“There needs to be a groundswell of people speaking up in order to force those who hold power to respond.”

- CREATE

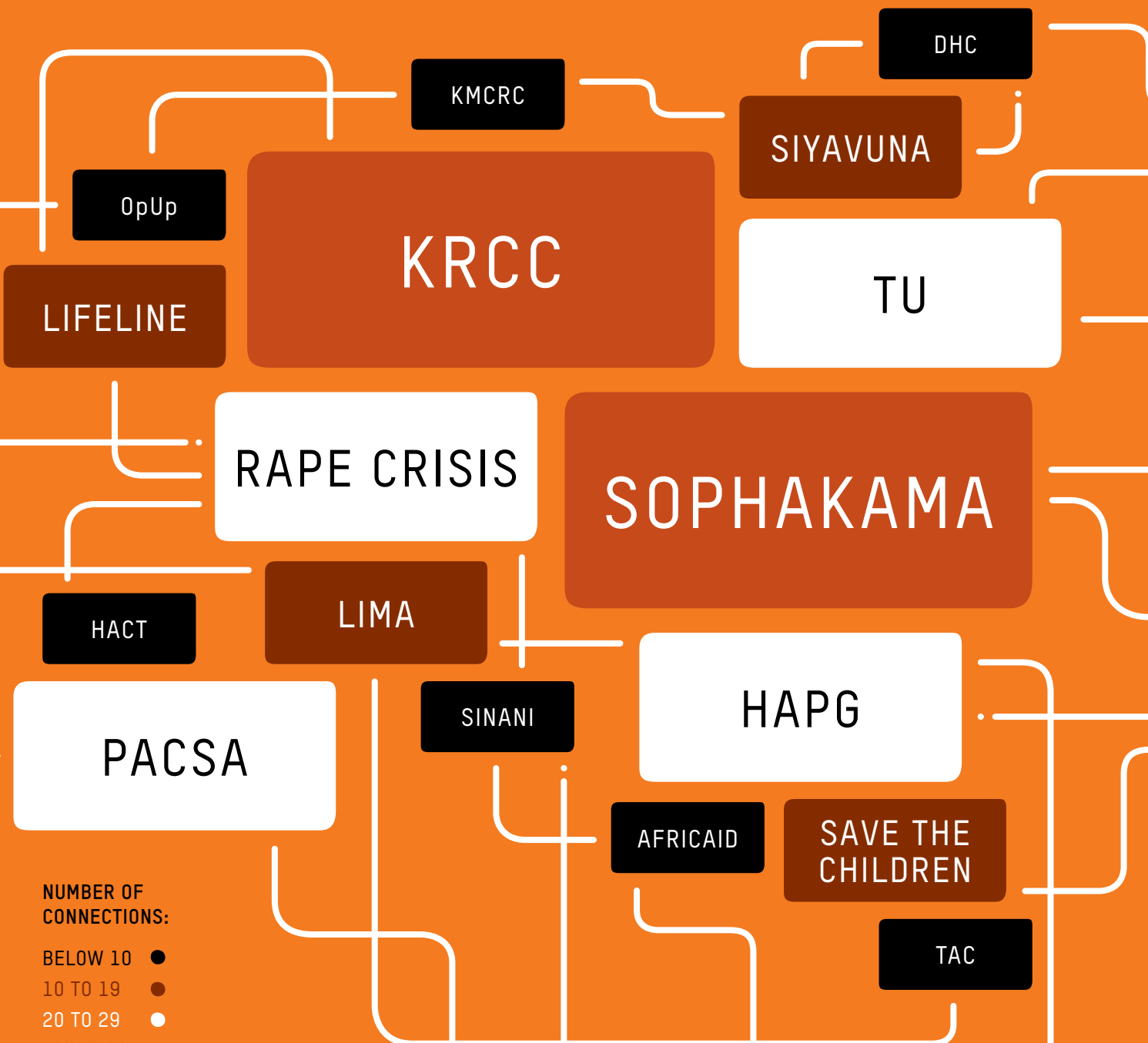


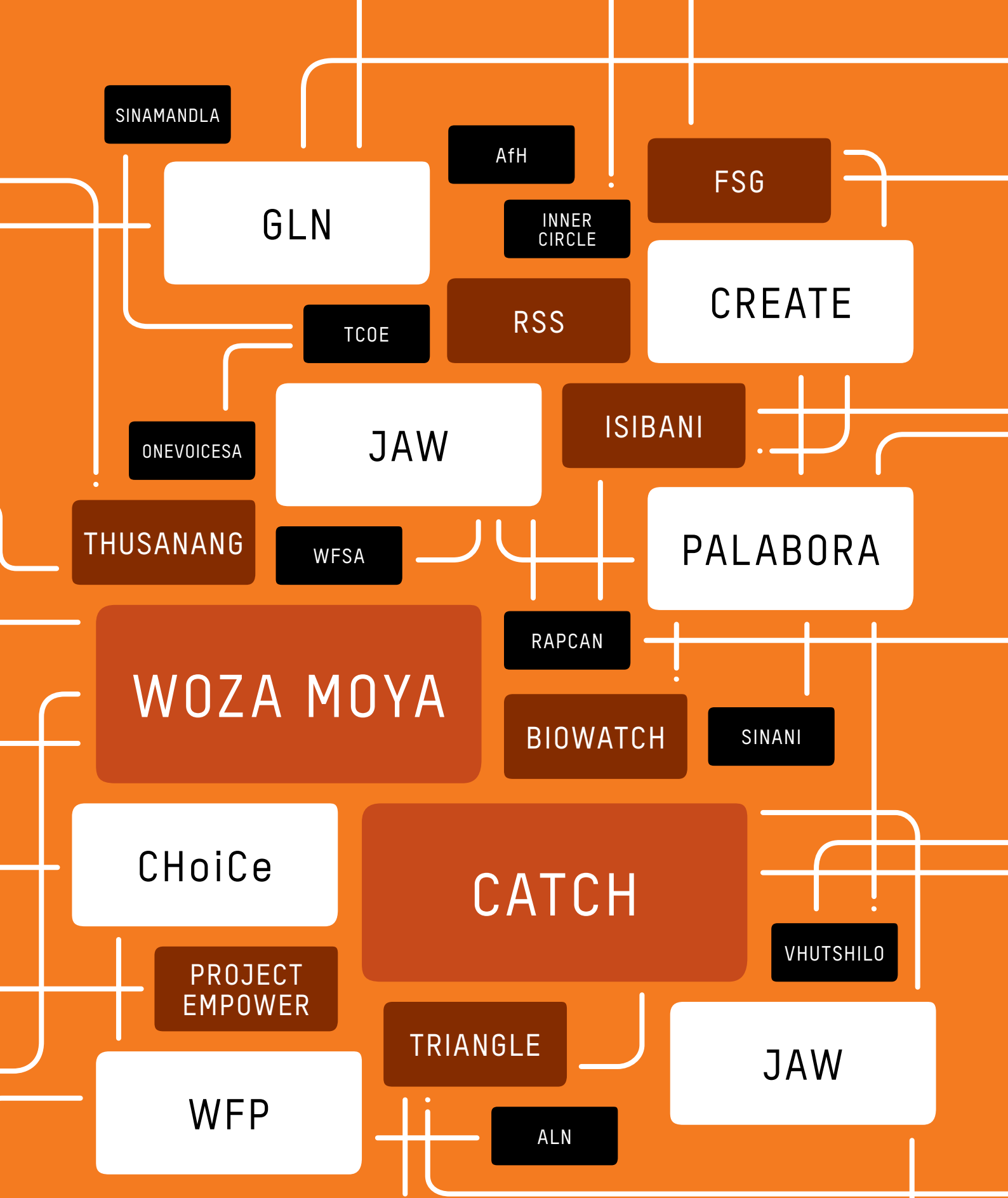
LINK AND LEARN

Artwork produced as part of Oxfam's Intersections Conference in 2009.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM

CAPTURING OUR CONNECTIONS

A critical part of Oxfam’s approach in South Africa was to enhance connections between organisations in a variety of formal and informal ways. This created a Web of Connections across the partnership over the years where partner organisations who were similar connected *and* partners who were extremely different connected. This resulted in changing mindsets, the expansion of work and many other benefits. In this graphic, we try to capture some of the connections over the years. There were so many threads to this web that we are sure there were many more we didn’t capture!





DISCLAIMER: These estimates were gathered from a review of program reports from 2005 to 2015. This graphic only provides a snapshot of some of the interactions between Oxfam partners over the years. We know there were many more connections between partners not captured in documentation, and between partners and other CSOs, government and business outside of the Oxfam partnership. This does not in any way reflect on the overall performance or impact of individual partner organisations, or the depth and impact of their partnerships.

INFLUENCING CHANGE

BY MATTHEW PHILLIPS

In 2010, Oxfam Australia in South Africa commissioned *Influencing Change*¹⁹, a report that mapped strategies Oxfam's partners used to influence change in what was then called the Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (OHAP). To inform the report, Oxfam spoke with partners that were identified as 'service delivery' organisations to better understand how they engaged with power structures from a local to national level.

The report has since had a significant impact on the approach Oxfam and partners have taken in delivering their programs. This impact occurred at a personal level, as the research triggered 'a kind of awakening' as participants realised they already engaged in advocacy in their day-to-day work. Some realised that advocating didn't necessarily mean taking an oppositional or confrontational approach to government. The report also had impacts at the programmatic level, after the analysis contained in the report informed Oxfam Australia in South Africa's theory of change.

THE CONTEXT

The context in which the research was commissioned was characterised by a growing disconnect between government policy, its capacity to deliver, and the reality of people living in poverty in South Africa. More than fifteen years after the fall of apartheid, optimism that the democratically-elected government would improve the lives of poor and marginalised South Africans was giving way to increasing levels of dissatisfaction with the government's failure to provide effective access to public services. This was resulting in widespread service delivery protests.

Despite significant positive developments in some areas of social policy, the state was failing to implement policies adequately. However, commentators and participants in the research identified a shift in the relationship between government and civil society at this time. Understanding its failure to deliver on ambitious policies, government was looking to civil society to assist in shaping the reforms required and as partners in delivery. The example of primary health policy, particularly in relation to HIV and AIDS exemplifies this dynamic. Despite the relatively progressive policy framework for the prevention and management of HIV in South Africa, the stance of former President Thabo Mbeki and his Minister of Health regarding the cause of AIDS and the efficacy of antiretroviral therapy (ART) resulted in the state avoiding its responsibility to deliver treatment to people living with HIV, or medication for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

To bring about change in this environment, civil society adopted an oppositional stance most visible in the campaign of mass mobilisation, civil disobedience and litigation spearheaded by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC).

19. Phillips, M. (2010). *Influencing Change*, Oxfam Australia





ABOUT TAC

TAC joined the Oxfam Australia partnership in 2006 with a focus on the KZN branch.

TAC was founded in December 1998 to campaign for access to AIDS treatment. Today the organisation continues to represent users of the public healthcare system in South Africa, and to campaign and litigate on critical issues related to the quality of, and access to, healthcare.

For more information, see: www.tac.org.za



THE RESEARCH

Oxfam staff interviewed reflected that the research was commissioned to provide a better understanding of this disconnect between policy and the lived reality of poor and marginalised South Africans. They hoped that by understanding this dynamic they could support civil society to most effectively engage with government. The central finding of *Influencing Change* was that it is “impossible to deliver HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programs without engaging in advocacy work”. In addition to working to influence power bearers in various spheres, such as church leaders, traditional healers and leaders to effect changes in beliefs, attitudes and cultural norms, partners also sought to influence institutions such as local, provincial and national government departments.

Many examples of this work fell into the category of governance and accountability activities. Partners convened multi-stakeholder working forums, giving community members and civil society access to representatives of government departments. Others conducted social audits of government service provision, sharing the results with government representatives in an effort to improve performance, and publishing the results in local newspapers when necessary.

“Partners convened multi-stakeholder working forums, giving community members and civil society access to representatives of government departments.”

Partners also demonstrated and documented alternative solutions in an effort to influence government. Several were also involved in active citizenship initiatives. These examples of community-led activism only occurred after years of working with communities to better understand their rights. Community members reported that they felt empowered to raise their concerns with duty-bearers, with partner organisations playing a support role.

The research drew on these examples and on the context analysis to develop a theory of change. The theory cited the ‘Integral Framework’, originally articulated by Aruna Rao and David Kelleher in their 2005 article ‘Is There Life After Gender Mainstreaming?’ In it, the authors propose that in order to effect long-term, sustainable and



FANCY STITCH

A woman outside her home in northern KwaZulu-Natal.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



real change in people's lives, the social systems and institutions – the social and political rules dictating 'who gets what, who does what and who decides' – must be transformed. For this transformation to occur, the model argues that change needs to occur at the individual and systemic level, in both formal and informal spheres.

Influencing Change suggested that given the gap between health policy and the lived experience of poor and other marginalised South Africans, the strength of the integral framework was that it questioned assumptions that change in one area, such as the formal or systemic arena of health policy, would necessarily result in improvements in access to services.

The research made a number of recommendations for Oxfam Australia. These included amendments to systems and processes, such as adjusting monitoring and evaluation tools to capture outcomes of influencing work, and providing resourcing to partners to engage in this work. Others related to program management, including the provision of 'influencing' training and capacity building through the Link and Learn events; including national advocacy organisations and subject matter experts to lead and support influencing work on behalf of the partners; and working with national advocacy alliances or through a Community of Practice model.

The report recommended Oxfam resource organisations that wished to engage in specific moments of policy reform through the provision of technical, logistical, legal and financial support. Finally, it suggested that when no advocacy organisation or coalition was working on an issue of importance to Oxfam's partnership network, Oxfam should use its resources and expertise in advocacy and campaigning to advance these issues at the national level.

These findings were incorporated into Oxfam's program framework, No Longer Vulnerable (NLV). For the first time, three separate programs were brought together under one program strategy. The NLV program focused on improving health outcomes relating to HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and water-related infections and diseases; increased and sustained food security and livelihoods; and social protection and rights.

“For the first time, three separate programs were brought together under one program strategy.”

Staff explained that this research informed the framework's theory of change, and the inclusion of active citizenship and women's leadership as crosscutting themes. This, in turn, influenced Oxfam's program designs, partnership approach, monitoring and evaluation framework, and management decisions regarding strategy, resourcing and capacity building. Workshops, such as the Voices Link and Learn event in November 2012 also provided Oxfam and partner organisations space to explore the themes raised in the report, and to identify priorities for joint work and further capacity building programs.

The changes in Oxfam's approach following *Influencing Change* had a significant impact on the work of Oxfam and its partners. The report itself resulted in 'a kind of awakening' amongst staff of Oxfam and partner organisations as they came to understand that they were already engaging in influencing work and that it was essential to achieving their objectives in a sustainable way.



“The report itself resulted in ‘a kind of awakening’ amongst staff of Oxfam and partner organisations as they came to understand that they were already engaging in influencing...”

Realising that engaging in advocacy doesn't necessarily entail entering into a confrontation with duty-bearers was a “huge change” and allowed partners and Oxfam Australia to begin discussing how they wished to engage in influencing work, and what advocacy meant to the partnership. This resulted in a way of working and style of partnership that focused on relationship building with duty-bearers, dialogue, joint problem solving, and modelling and promoting good practice.

At the programmatic level, the analysis was most explicitly evident in the design and management of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) program in South Africa and Zambia, managed by the Oxfam Australia office in South Africa and funded by DFAT's Australia Africa Community Engagement Scheme (AACES).

While program partners initially provided WASH services to communities, the program was designed to phase out this service provision work. Over time, the program increasingly focussed on influencing activities, such as enhancing access to WASH services by reducing inequalities, strengthening the capacity of duty-bearers and communities to manage and implement WASH programs, and improving WASH governance and effectiveness.

There was initial resistance to engaging in influencing work through this program and Oxfam was perceived to be pushing this prematurely. However, once partners had successfully integrated WASH across their existing activities, they had more time, space and appreciation for the value of this work. Following the mid-term review of the program, influencing work came to be regarded as key to ensuring the sustainability of positive outcomes achieved through the life of the program.

“...once partners had successfully integrated WASH across their existing activities, they had more time, space and appreciation for the value of this work.”

AACES partners frequently engage in effective influencing work in their local area. They work with communities to understand their rights to access WASH services and to document the impact of service delivery failures on their lives. Oxfam support this work through the provision of training in how to use participatory storytelling and digital platforms as advocacy tools.

AACES partners most frequently adopted a ‘problem solving approach’ with duty-bearers. In areas such as the provision of accessible WASH infrastructure in schools (such as piped water or menstrual management solutions), partners engaged in joint problem solving with school boards, principals and relevant government departments. They built trusting relationships, worked to develop a shared understanding of challenges, demonstrated and documented solutions and promoted these for adoption by government.



There is also significant evidence of partners working in alliances with one another and external organisations to effect change on a larger scale. One notable example of this is the work of the early childhood development forum in advancing issues from the local to provincial and national level. It is important to note, however, that this initiative was primarily led by a partner organisation with some support from Oxfam.

“There is also significant evidence of partners working in alliances with one another and external organisations to effect change on a larger scale.”

The research demonstrates that CSOs – even those that identify as primarily ‘service delivery’ organisations – engage in influencing work, including policy dialogue, advocacy and working with campaign alliances.

In their local contexts, this work comes naturally. With the support of Oxfam, partner organisations report that they have developed a deeper appreciation for the importance of influencing activities in ensuring sustainable outcomes at scale. Capacity building and joint work with Oxfam since 2012 has increased partner confidence to engage duty-bearers at the local level in constructive yet critical ways, to raise concerns and jointly identify problems and solutions.

However, outside of their immediate sphere of activity, community-based CSOs only engage in joint policy dialogue, advocacy or campaigning work under specific conditions. Partners engaging in these activities said that it is only worthwhile when they support community members to speak up in defence of their own rights and interests, and are outcome driven, having direct impact on the lives of people that organisations work with on a day-to-day basis.

Leadership is also crucial to success. In all examples that were regarded as successful, a subject matter expert, or advocacy or campaign organisation, was prepared to lead on public initiatives on a provincial or national level to advance the interests of members of the alliance.

As donor funding shifts away from middle-income countries, local civil society faces new challenges and is forced to find innovative ways of working, including the government and private sector. At the same time, struggles for women’s rights, and against inequality, corruption, skyrocketing food prices, persistent drought and climate change continue.

The lessons learned since the publication of *Influencing Change* suggest that advocacy, policy dialogue and campaigning remain important tools at the disposal of civil society in South Africa. However, with donor funding becoming scarce, organisations need to prioritise in order to be effective. In the face of this dynamic, it seems that the strength of civil society will be determined by its capacity to work together.

“...with donor funding becoming scarce, organisations need to prioritise in order to be effective.”

Not all organisations are able to engage in advocacy and campaign work to bring about changes in policy and practice at the national level. But by identifying truly strategic opportunities for reform, community-based civil society organisations can effectively work through alliance and networks with campaign and advocacy organisations to effectively magnify the impact of their work.



FACILITATING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH CONSULTATION

BY RICARDO WALTERS

An excerpt from research on the NHI-Accountability Project in South Africa.²⁰

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to be a functional democracy? Of its many benefits, democracy makes ordinary citizens able to access their rights and to confidently hold duty-bearers and elected officials to account.

And yet, despite strong democratic institutions in place to protect people's rights in South Africa, and robust legislative frameworks, systemic barriers and poor governance inhibit citizens from fully exercising their capacities. In the glaring shortfall of delivery of effective and efficient services to citizens around the country the disconnect between policy and real-world implementation is sharply exposed.

Low levels of public participation in processes where policy is developed is a critical contributing factor to this disconnect, coupled with poor monitoring necessary to keep policymakers accountable for delivery.

It could be assumed, in a democracy whose ideals are so highly prized as South Africa's, that participation by citizens in decision-making processes material to their own development might be more common, and that social and political spaces for formal and informal engagement by ordinary people might be increasingly accessible.

Trends and anecdotal evidence experiences, however, emerging from the work of Oxfam Australia in South Africa and its partner organisations, suggested this was not the case, attributing these low levels of participation, at least in part, to:

1. Communities most in need of services being intimidated by the policy development process and associated legal and technical jargon, leading to their disengagement.
2. Tokenistic consultation processes by public officials, with very little authentic opportunity created for widespread distribution and understanding of policy proposals, for local-level debate and proposition-making, and for feedback by communities. Very little effort seems to be made by those in power to engage responsibly with people at community level, hampering effective and meaningful consultation.
3. Well-meaning organisations being engaged with policy on behalf of communities without necessarily including communities themselves in the process of consultation, inadvertently limiting participation.

²⁰. Walters, R. (2016). *Facilitating Civic Engagement Through Consultation: Learning from local communities through the NHI – Accountability Project in South Africa*, Victoria: Oxfam Australia





SAVE THE CHILDREN

Gail Richards, who works for Save the Children KwaZulu-Natal in Wentworth, stands at the entrance of Exel Nursery School.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



This environment provided an opportunity to explore the questions around appropriate practices and approaches that would make community consultation and participation effectively meaningful. The development process of the National Health Insurance (NHI) policy in South Africa offered a lens through which to filter that experience, form conclusions and propose strategies.

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

This work is closely based on a technical report examining public consultation in the NHI process. The report, *Governance and Accountability in the Health Sector: a People's Policy for Health in South Africa* was prepared in 2015 for the Oxfam-Monash Partnership, following the conclusion of that project. Based on learning from the actions and experiences of three community-based partner organisations that facilitated community consultation around the NHI, the booklet supports the case that good practice in development is characterised by communities taking action, and by organisations responsibly and respectfully supporting that action through facilitation of community response.

It is hoped that this content might offer insight to programmers and policy-makers about practices and principles that stimulate responsiveness in citizens and communities, especially amongst those who are traditionally marginalised owing to socio-economic and political status. The material begins to explore pertinent questions for organisations and governments seeking to contribute to social transformation in the post-2015 development era:

- 'How do we work better to tap into community experience, knowledge and resourcefulness?'
- 'How do we work with communities to promote their leadership and response to issues, and to learn from them?'
- 'How do we better promote active civic engagement, and build personal agency for action?'

In particular, the document reflects on the experiences and strategies of two distinct types of organisations involved in supporting community consultation through the NHI Accountability Project. It draws on those experiences in order to propose effective, legitimate approaches – STEPS, PRACTICES and PRINCIPLES – that might be useful to:

- **Intermediary organisations** that play a supporting role to organisations that, in turn, work directly with people in communities. Intermediaries act in solidarity with community-based organisations, offering technical assistance, skills development, financial resources, program advice or advocacy support to strengthen the ability of local organisations to work properly and deliver on their objectives. In the experience of the NHI project, Oxfam Australia and Monash University in South Africa were examples of intermediary organisations.
- **Community-based organisations (CBOs)** that work directly within specific local communities, contributing to transformation by delivering programs and services that meet the development, health and justice needs of people in the places where they live.



In the experience of the NHI project, three CBOs contributed to the local action of consultation: HIV/AIDS Prevention Group (HAPG), Sophakama and Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA).

This piece is organised around several components, based on the lessons learned about consultation after examining the NHI Accountability Project experience. The components are complementary and interrelated but not linear or sequential. They provide a way to think about how consultation happens and what impact it produces.

COMPONENTS INCLUDE:

1. A **THEORY OF CHANGE**, recognising consultation as one stage in a sequence of stages leading towards active, mature civic engagement by communities. The Theory of Change can be thought of as 'What we believe'.
2. A sequence of **STEPS** for primarily intermediary organisations wishing to support communities towards engagement, response and action, based on the presence of certain **environmentally enabling pre-conditions** necessary for effective facilitation.
3. A set of common **PRACTICES**: essentially, replicable **ways of working** primarily for CBOs operating at the community level. These practices appear to contribute to successful consultation in every instance, despite significant differences in the process design and activities employed by each of the three partner organisations participating in the NHI Accountability Project.

Collectively, the steps and practices can be thought of as 'What we do'.

4. Reflecting on the many stories shared, an assortment of **PRINCIPLES** emerges: essentially, transferable ways of thinking about how the work happens; the character of the approach. The principles describe a simple theory for community consultation that achieves predictable outcomes: that if we apply a certain action according to a particular value, then we can anticipate certain results in the way that communities respond, across a range of issues, topics and themes. The principles can be thought of as 'How we behave' and 'What we value'.

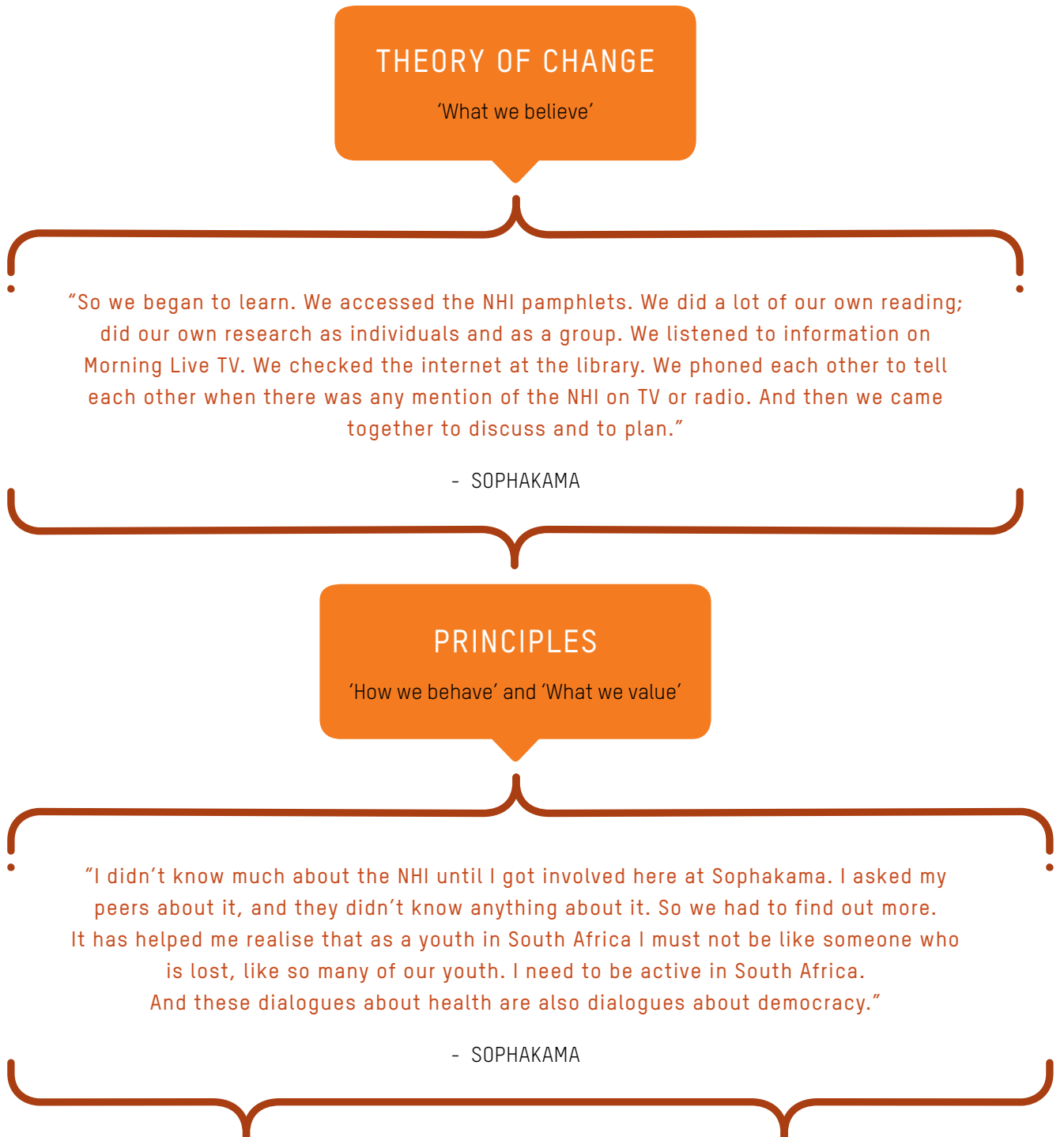


HIV/AIDS PREVENTION GROUP

Caroline Mabusela and her children
Nthabiseng and Johannes Mabusela.
PHOTO © Gcina Ndwane | OXFAM

FIGURE 9: The four components²¹

The components are complementary, interrelated but not linear or sequential, a way to think about how consultation happens, and what impact it produces.



21. Walters, R. (2016). *Facilitating Civic Engagement Through Consultation: Learning from local communities through the NHI – Accountability Project in South Africa*, Victoria: Oxfam Australia



STEPS

'What we do' as:
Intermediary Organisations

PRACTICES

'What we do' as:
Community-based Organisations

“As we were educating ourselves about the NHI, we realised that none of us had any good reference point for proper consultation either. Our only experience was of meetings that were always about information, but not real engagement, or rubber-stamping something someone else had already decided. It made us want to design a better process for consultation that was not about information, but was about experience.”

- PACSA

“If we don't know what good health care is, how do we know/imagine/dream about the ideal we are aspiring towards? It was difficult for our people to really understand what the NHI would look like, how it would work. And our own local team had similar questions.”

- HAPG



SOPHAKAMA

Sophakama Director, Michael Matanzima, heads the boys soccer team at Joe Slovo Secondary School.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM

PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

BY ANN HARPER

Oxfam has worked over the years to become a catalyst and agent for change within the South African development sector. At the same time, it has been a conduit for funding to civil society organisations (CSOs) with all the dynamics, perceptions and expectation which can accompany donor engagement or dependency within this sector. The way in which Oxfam worked to negotiate this dual identity and develop a dynamic participatory practice ensured that it came to occupy a respected and distinct place among a range of international development and funding agencies which sought to establish a presence in post-apartheid South Africa.

That Oxfam has been recognised for its participatory practice can be attributed to the ways of thinking and working which have characterised its approach to development and partner relationships at all stages of the project cycle.

“The office works with the belief that building relationships and trust takes time and that there are no quick-fix solutions to development issues.”²²

This ethos is associated with core principles and values which are well captured in an early partner initiative in Southern Africa.

“Development programs (need to be) guided by a human rights focus on respecting human dignity, achieving fairness in opportunities and equal treatment for all and strengthening the ability of local communities to access resources and services.”²³

To this end Oxfam chose to achieve its own organisational goals by supporting CSO partners who engaged directly with communities to ensure a greater sense of ownership over program outcomes. Building relationships of trust with partner organisations consequently became both a means and an end.

It has been said, in a conference paper produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), that participation processes often end up being a compromise between what the communities want, what CSOs have

22. Ryan, G. (2014). *Case Study 17: Redeveloping Disaster Risk Reduction*. Durban: Oxfam Australia, p. 34.

23. Roper, M. and Roper, K. (2007). *Community Engagement. Documenting Strategies of the Australian Partnerships with African Communities Partner Program*. Durban: Oxfam Australia, p. 5.



the capacity to deliver and what development and funding agencies can offer.²⁴ It is also worth noting, as stated in the same document, that “participation is not only a question of the *number* and *type* of stakeholders involved, but also of the *intent and extent* of their role in the process”. With this in mind, Oxfam worked consistently and strategically to find a mutually beneficial compromise with CSO partners who were given support and creative space to shape their own engagement with diverse communities and clients.

In the process, Oxfam ensured that participatory processes were prioritised and infused in a number of ways from the initial needs assessment and program design, through implementation. This included often creative approaches to program monitoring and qualitative evaluation which emphasised the importance of mutual learning. The starting point for all proposed initiatives was always an analysis of the dynamic and sometimes uncertain context in which South African CSOs have worked over the years. This recognised that CSOs and their communities, with their local knowledge, are often unacknowledged experts of their own lived reality and therefore best placed to identify appropriate program interventions, tactics and strategies which suit their particular circumstances. In this way Oxfam sought to learn from the partners and always gave full and documented credit to their achievements and those of the communities with which they worked in determining the impact of its programming in South Africa. The plethora of Oxfam Australia research studies, occasional papers and publications has enabled the voices of partners and the people they work with to be heard and their testimonies and stories told.

One of the most distinctive features of Oxfam’s participatory approach was the platforms which were created for partners to dialogue, network and build supportive alliances to share experiences, foster collective learning and build communities of practice. Partners soon took the initiative in setting up their own opportunities to network with one another. This demonstrates in itself the value and effectiveness of the Link and Learn events and the importance of a range of participatory learning processes which became the cornerstone of Oxfam’s own practice.

Oxfam was committed to transparent participatory engagement with its CSO partners; this engagement is often similar for partners with the communities they serve. The varied work of the partners and their approaches to community engagement has been researched and extensively documented over the years. A couple of overarching lessons can be highlighted from partners’ experiences of building and sustaining participatory community engagement and ownership across a number of Oxfam projects.

ENSURING COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

What is consistent across initiatives is the belief that ownership of community-based development initiatives is strengthened by consultation, information sharing, dialogue, capacity enhancement and behaviour change strategies at the individual, interpersonal, organisational, community and society levels.

²⁴ The full document is available at: www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/capacity-development/drivers-of-change/accountability/multi-stakeholder-engagement-processes/Engagement-Processes-cp7.pdf



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

To this end, Oxfam deliberately supported the long-term and sustained engagement by partners in the provision of information, the delivery of services and more training in advocacy work, with the emphasis shifting at times during the life of various Oxfam Australia programs in South Africa. To achieve these outcomes, emphasis was placed on building and strengthening the internal capacity of partners to meet the needs of their communities. This included support for building the structures and capacity to plan and control their own development. The experience of HIV/AIDS Prevention Group (HAPG) in Bela Bela, for example, has revealed that the 'art of the possible' is very powerful and that a functioning and effective health care system can be created through collective agency.

The extent to which behaviour change was achieved through participatory processes varied across partner organisations and individual programs and was, at times, dependent on a number of enabling pre-conditions such as the credibility of existing partner-community relationships and their sensitivity to complex community dynamics.

To enhance service delivery, support was given to strengthen partner initiatives aimed at engagement with institutions such as local, provincial and national government departments. At a more local level, this included the development of enabling relationships with structures such as traditional, religious and community leadership. This support took a range of forms including seminars and training in advocacy, campaigning and policy engagement, and the provision of access to technical expertise and referrals.

Developing participatory models

A range of principles which enhance participatory engagement were identified by the 2015 Oxfam-Monash National Health Initiative. Interestingly however, various studies commissioned by Oxfam over time suggest that there is no one community development approach to participatory processes and community engagement which fits into a single theoretical framework. Key principles and ways of working underlie the work, but CSOs are best placed to find the right fit. Consultation done well from the start is crucial to positive outcomes.

Given the diversity of partners and the communities which they serve, and the fluid and unpredictable socio-economic and political context with which they engage, practice on the ground in South Africa has to be dynamic and flexible. Resilient partner organisations such as PACSA, HAPG, Woza Moya and the Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust, have been able to predict and be responsive to the changing needs, demands and challenges of the people they work with, community structures, government service delivery and complex civil society dynamics.

Not all relationships are partnerships and the mutuality of participatory processes is often difficult to achieve. Exploring, defining and reaching consensus about the nature and depth of engagement between international non-governmental funding agencies and their South African partners and beneficiaries has a particularly complex history. It is for this reason that the trust and reciprocity which has been developed and demonstrated in Oxfam's practice and engagement with partners is something to be emulated within the development sector and will be sorely missed.



WOZA MOYA

S'bonelo Ndlovu, Woza Moya's Paralegal Program Manager.
PHOTO © Angela Buckland | WOZA MOYA





HACT WOZA MOYA SHOP

Hlengiwe Kwela works at the Woza Moya shop at the Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM



ABOUT WOZA MOYA

Woza Moya is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2008.

Woza Moya is a community-based organisation located in the Ufafa Valley of rural KwaZulu-Natal.

The organisation uses a holistic approach to provide dynamic HIV and AIDS community care and support services in the areas of:

- home-based care
- child and youth care
- water, sanitation and hygiene
- early childhood development
- food security
- paralegal services
- youth and media

For more information, see: www.wozamoya.org.za

ABOUT HILLCREST AIDS CENTRE TRUST (HACT)

Hillcrest AIDS Centre Trust (HACT) is an Oxfam Australia partner organisation who joined the partnership in 2005.

HACT is a non-profit, faith-based organisation founded in 1990 as a ministry of the Hillcrest Methodist Church.

The organisation's mission is to serve all those impacted by HIV and AIDS by providing unconditional love and hope in a practical, sustainable way.

Their objectives include:

- comprehensively assessing the health status and social situation of everyone who approaches them for help;
- providing holistic, individualised care for people living with HIV and AIDS;
- empowering people living with HIV to become financially self-sustaining through income-generation and poverty-alleviation initiatives; and
- providing education and training in HIV and AIDS to help prevent new infections and keep people living with HIV healthy as long as possible.

For more information, see: www.hillaims.org.za





UKUCABANGISISA

KUKUCINGISISA

HA RE SHEBA MORAHU

REFLECTIONS

FA RE LEBA MORAGO

MBONELAMURAHU

GE RE LEBELEA MORAGO

'STICK TO YOUR VALUES': LESSONS FROM OXFAM'S EXIT

A DISCUSSION WITH PUMLA MABIZELA

Discussing anything with Pumla Mabizela always has more than its fair share of insights and laughs; the difficult conversation reflecting on Oxfam Australia's exit from South Africa was no different. Sitting in the St Clement's coffee shop down the road from the Oxfam Australia Durban office on Wednesday, September 30, 2015, I could not help listening to the woman across the table from me with a deep sense of admiration for her strength, humility, and care which is wrapped up (of course) with her practical 'no-nonsense' attitude. With a warm beverage and the last scone of the day (lucky us!), we nestled in to our conversation while a storm brewed outside – it was remarkably appropriate for trying to tease out and understand the experiences of exiting well.

SO LET'S TALK ABOUT EXITING...

To me, there are two types of exit – the ones that have happened along the way and then this final closure. One of our practices at Oxfam at the beginning of every partnership was the orientation of partners to Oxfam's ways of working. This set the foundation for working in partnership, as well as the final breaking of the partnership. We have had many partnerships end within the country through our 'phase outs', but now we also have the current preparations to exit the country and close the program and the office. I think it is important to talk about both because they are both supported by our principles and values.

COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THESE 'EXITS ALONG THE WAY'?

Well, we learnt many lessons from our phase outs with partners. Probably the key things that have stuck out for me are that you always need a process no matter the reason for ending the partnership. We also were always open to learning through these processes and we always gave partners time to adapt – if you are a donor you can't just abruptly stop resources because there are communities on the ground who will be affected. You have to remember this. For the remaining period, we also continued to treat them as a partner and ensured that both parties stick to the contract as well as the values of the partnership.

These processes are always difficult and what I realised over the years is that you mustn't avoid conflict or difficult conversations; what you must do instead is provide space and support for them. If you allow tensions to surface and then deal with them, it makes it much easier to manage. It really helps to have difficult conversations in their space, and not in public or other settings.



It is also key to make sure that any decision on phase outs is a team decision – not just by the program coordinators and management, but including others like advisors and those who have a more neutral perspective. The purpose is to look at all the angles and avoid regretting your decisions.

WHAT WERE THE REASONS FOR PHASING OUT DIFFERENT PARTNERS?

There were many reasons for phase outs and each had their own challenges and their own processes. We exited from some beautiful partnerships – not all of them were due to mismanagement like people usually think. Remember, a partner had the liberty not to continue the relationship and we had organisations that left the partnership for various reasons. In this way, both parties were encouraged to (re)consider whether they should continue partnering with Oxfam or to stop the relationship.

For example, sometimes *organisations simply grew too big for the Oxfam partnership* and funding. This is a really positive step for the partner and as a donor you have to be aware of where the partner is at. We acknowledged when partners grew and were careful not to force them into the same role.

There were also times when we found a partnership was not working as our organisation and theirs were *just not the 'right fit'*. Usually these partners had great programs, but they were weaker in their systems like governance, finance and communications, which made them high risk for us. We also found it difficult to move forward strategically with partners that ran after funding and lost their focus, or simply where partner programs no longer fitted what we were trying to do. Another reason was when their director shifted focus, but did not give up control of the organisation. This was strongly tied up with the organisation's history and the personalities of those involved. The lack of succession processes for partners sometimes really harmed their organisations.

And, of course, we did experience the **mismanagement of funds** with certain organisations and had to end those relationships. You do have to be a detective in this sector at times; the one time our Director even gave us badges saying 'Investigator' when dealing with one of the cases. We laughed about the badges, but they showed us he had confidence in us tackling a serious matter like this. Humour always goes a long way.

THESE SCENARIOS VARY QUITE A LOT. DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS ON HOW TO APPROACH THEM?

Yes, there is so much I could say about this. Where organisations 'out-grew' us, we tried to get them to become a more strategic or technical partner. This worked well.

Our approach is to build capacity in organisations. When we identified weaknesses, we first tried to propose solutions and encourage partners to use our grant to improve their governance or financial processes etc. Some organisations refused as they found this too prescriptive. If they didn't take up the solutions, we still gave them a final phase grant and a six month to one year phase out period. With these partners we tried to keep the 'door open', hoping that if they improved their systems later on they could contact us again. Since leaving us, we know that some of these partners closed down, but others are still going strong. For me, it is always important to have a good awareness of risks so that you can mitigate and minimise them.

Of course, where we came across the mismanagement of funds it was a very different process. It was really important for us to protect the whistleblowers in these cases and we made this a top priority. We would first have a direct conversation with the organisation making them aware of the allegation and immediately stop the use of our funds. Obviously, there are strict rules and procedures for when funds are not used properly in our contracts and overall policies, but there are a few practical things we discovered too. For example, when hearing of any allegations it helps to know and discuss it with other donors supporting the particular organisation to allow for transparency and collective solutions.

In all these experiences, we found that when an organisation challenges you based on your decision, it is important to remain consistent and clear while also allowing them to go through the processes they need to. It is not a one-way street and they must be given a space to respond.

AND THAT BRINGS US TO OXFAM AUSTRALIA'S CLOSURE IN SOUTH AFRICA, YOU TALK ABOUT THIS PROCESS AS A RESPONSIBLE EXIT: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?

It means many things but mainly it is about sticking to our core values. In the very beginning we created certainty by making the hard decision for Oxfam Australia to leave in 2016. I really learnt how important it is to be certain in these situations. We treat organisations and people as people. We are always asking ourselves how we would want to be treated in this situation, and then we put those actions in place as much as we can. It is based on relationships and building trust. I really feel that this is how we have always worked with partners so it should be no different now in our closing year. Link and Learn events have also always been part of our work and so we held the Re-Vision events to stimulate this learning and networking in this final phase.

It cannot be said enough that giving organisations time to adapt is absolutely essential. For us, giving over a year's notice and securing grants for these last few months has been key. Other activities that are very important to us are documenting the lessons and having consistent communications. Documenting has always been central to our work and now it is more important than ever because we want to bring all the lessons together for partners. We will not be here next year but the lessons will be, and the partners too. Messages may change during the process, especially if decision-making is housed elsewhere, but it is important to be as clear and transparent as possible to manage these risks. It has not been perfect but it counts that we are making every effort to do our best!

Exiting well is also about our own staff. Ensuring that they are supported in this change has been important for us. At various moments in the process, there has been an unhealthy tension with staff disengaging despite support, and others feeling 'over-managed'. The long notice given to staff has been tricky. On the one hand it has been good to allow us to plan, but it has also been very draining emotionally.

ON THAT NOTE, WHAT HAS THE CLOSURE BEEN LIKE FOR YOU?

[Laughing] I think it is too soon to tell! But really, so far it has been tough. I always say that after this exit I will need to spend a few months just lying on the beach somewhere relaxing.

I have mixed emotions. The one emotion I will talk about which was difficult was our January road show. The fact that we told partners face-to-face during our road show in January was really important. We wanted it to be personal and not clinical and cold, and this was successful. Most partners said that they really appreciated that we as an organisation set aside time and prioritised the importance of open dialogue and delivering bad news in person.

The other was our Re-Vision Link and Learn. This for me has been to say to partners 'look, we have been listening; there are issues you still need to deal with' which is why the themes were picked. We don't want partners to lose what they have achieved so far.

All of this has had happy moments and sad moments. It really is a mixture of emotions. We also still have the final monitoring visits – the final, final goodbye. I don't know how this will be.

WHAT HAS KEPT YOU GOING DURING THIS PROCESS?

I realised that there will be negativity from staff and partners during processes like these, but we have to keep doing the right thing regardless by sticking to our values and beliefs. I truly believe that partnership is the way forward for South African civil society and so I have continued to work towards it especially in this exit phase. If we want to truly make a change in this country, we have to do it together.

A portrait of Pumla Mabizela, a woman with dark hair pulled back, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark patterned top and a red sleeve is visible. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The photo is partially obscured by a decorative white scrollwork graphic at the bottom of the page.

PUMLA MABIZELA

Pumla Mabizela, Programs Manager at the Oxfam Durban office in Clark Road.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM

A SOUTH AFRICA RETROSPECTIVE

BY DUNCAN GREEN²⁵

I visited Oxfam in South Africa in March 2013 for what I described as “an intensive rolling seminar, as debates with brilliant Oxfam staff, partners and academics spilled over from conferences and meetings into cars and bars”. I was inspired by partners such as Women on Farms Project and the recent farm workers’ strike, listened in on heated debates on whether the South African style of state provision encourages passivity and dependence among its citizens and debated the disparate records of Brazil and South Africa in combating inequality.

It was an intense and memorable visit, and the memories came flooding back as I read this account of the Oxfam story in South Africa. That story encapsulates the organisation’s recent evolution: from a multiplicity of organisations to ‘one Oxfam’ in each country, and a shift from the traditional centres of power in the Global North, to emerging independent Oxfams in Mexico, Brazil, South Africa and beyond. This publication plays a valuable role in capturing that evolution, and should benefit both those that follow in South Africa, and many others around the world who are interested in what cutting edge development work looks like.

“This publication plays a valuable role in capturing that evolution, and should benefit both those that follow in South Africa, and many others around the world who are interested in what cutting edge development work looks like.”

Aid and development are dogged by institutional amnesia – amid high staff turnover and offices that open and shut, we make too little collective effort to capture the hard-earned wisdom of one generation to help those that follow. This publication is a wonderful exception to that. Future researchers will find this a goldmine, but so should aid workers, if they take the time to read it (not a given, since taking time out to read is not always a feature of activists’ busy schedules!).

It is also useful to reflect on a seventeen-year program experience, charting the evolution of its thinking and practice. The discussion on our work on HIV and AIDS (from prevention to treatment to systems thinking and back to prevention!) was particularly interesting. I also appreciated that the voices captured in the paper come from the boiler room (business services, finance) as well as the more visible parts of the organisation (program, advocacy).

25. Duncan Green has been working in international development for over 30 years. He is a Senior Strategic Adviser for Oxfam Great Britain and the author of several books including *From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World*.



In terms of wider lessons, what most caught my attention was the deep understanding of systems and change – I have a book coming out on ‘how change happens’ and much of what it recommends has long been standard practice in the South Africa team. With the benefit of hindsight, I could have saved myself a lot of time by spending a few months there while researching the book! The South Africa team stressed the importance of attention to context, reflection and curiosity allowed the program to evolve, taking on new issues such as disability or climate change, culminating in a broad No Longer Vulnerable program. They did their best not to let themselves be shackled by ‘the Plan’ with its pre-established indicators and timelines. I was delighted to see how such an approach led in practice to greater adaptability and lateral thinking, for example, in adding a livelihoods component to our women’s leadership program, once it became clear that low incomes were preventing women from getting involved.

The adoption of the Rao and Kelleher framework and an explicit commitment to power analysis also strikes me as cutting edge and something other international NGO teams should study closely. This is particularly welcome because much of the current discussion on systems thinking and ‘adaptive management’ in donor circles is dominated by top down approaches, and neglects a role for civil society, empowerment and bottom up processes.

“The adoption of the Rao and Kelleher framework and an explicit commitment to power analysis also strikes me as cutting edge and something other international NGO teams should study closely.”

Another striking discussion is that on partnership, where a genuine attempt was made to overcome the intrinsic inequalities of power in a funding relationship and engage with partners on an equal footing of reciprocal learning. Did they achieve this? Yes, according to the Oxfam staff, but I would have liked to see far more from partners themselves on what this felt like in their experience.

IS SOUTH AFRICA SPECIAL?

What can those outside South Africa take from this study of a country program’s thinking and evolution? I think some care is warranted. I wonder whether the kind of agility and systems thinking that is possible in a team of twenty-plus people would be possible in one with ten times that number. How important was unrestricted funding (in increasingly short supply) in making it easier for the team to adapt to changing contexts and conditions?

“I wonder whether the kind of agility and systems thinking that is possible in a team of twenty-plus people would be possible in one with ten times that number.”

And then there’s the politics, uniquely shaped by the struggle against apartheid and the ensuing *de facto* one party state of the African National Congress (ANC). One aspect of that unique history’s legacy is a political ‘biculture’ – the ANC-dominated state, and a vibrant civil society that over time has fallen out of love with the erstwhile liberators.





It seems like that has been reflected in Oxfam’s program, not necessarily in a good way. In many other countries, we have increasingly found that one of the greatest contributions of international NGOs is acting as ‘convenor and broker’, bringing together domestic institutions that might otherwise find it hard to sit together in the same room, let alone work together: the private sector, faith organisations, traditional leaders. ‘Multi-stakeholder initiatives’ involving these and more are an increasing part of our work. But not in South Africa, at least according to this history – three mentions of the private sector in 120 pages? Few mentions of faith or religion in a country where the poor are profoundly religious? Instead the ‘partnerships framework’ has three tiers – CBOs, NGOs and national and regional advocacy and campaigns aimed at the state.

“In many other countries, we have increasingly found that one of the greatest contributions of international NGOs is acting as ‘convenor and broker’...”

It may be that the strengths and weaknesses of this work are two sides of the same coin – to build the respectful and deep relationships with civil society organisations requires an exclusive focus that leaves other institutions out in the cold. But I am not convinced by that argument – one essential aspect of encouraging the much richer ecosystem of change, as Allan Moolman brilliantly advocates, is to foment networks and conversations with ‘unusual suspects’. A good ecosystem gardener wants diversity, not monoculture.

There is huge institutional and personal wisdom in every section of this paper (read the piece by Nobhongo Gxolo on working with government if you don’t believe me). My hope is that enough people read it and save themselves the pain and waste of learning it all from scratch. Aid organisations are often prone to institutional amnesia, but this paper is a genuine effort to capture the lessons and insights of an extraordinary seventeen years of Oxfam programming in South Africa, for which many thanks are extended to all involved in pulling this publication together.

WOMEN ON FARMS

Margaret Plaaitjies outside her home in Hammad’s Square township outside Rawsonville, Western Cape.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM





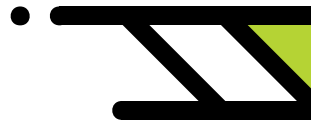
UFAFA VALLEY

General views of the community and landscape in the Ufafa district.
PHOTO © Matthew Willman | OXFAM





THE POWER IS IN PEOPLE



REFLECTIONS FROM OUR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA





STAFF CHANGE LEARNING
DEVELOPMENT

KWAZULU-NATAL GROWTH

THE LIFE PARTNERSHIPS
FOOD SECURITY HIV & AIDS

POWER WORK JUSTICE
CARE STRENGTH

IS IN DURBAN

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