

VOICES IN HARMONY



Stories of Community-Driven
Development in South Africa

Ninnette Eliasov & Brianne Peters

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Front cover photographs:

upper left — Katrina Stuurman, Klawer Advice and Development Centre

upper right — Notizi Vanda, Jansenville Development Forum

lower left — Graduation of the first computer course at the Kwenzekile Community Development Centre

lower right — Kids at the Ixabiso Lomntu Early Childhood Development Centre

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Foreword

I emphatically believe that people all over the world are good and generous. Knowing and believing that change is possible is often the beginning. . . . Feeling your own power to make change is next. Look at your own experience and background to find the heartfelt context for your work. Creating an effective organization, program or campaign requires connecting the head and the heart.

— Anne Firth Murray,

Paradigm found: Leading and managing for positive change

I have been asked to reflect on why we were so keen to embark on the journey of having communities' stories of success told and, more specifically, why now; and to be honest, I have struggled to put pen to paper as there is no single, simple answer. I chose to start with a quote from Anne Firth Murray who has been a huge source of inspiration to me as her words resonate with my own thinking. Her wisdom is a source of strength I will always hold dear to my heart—like the countless examples of inspiring leaders I see around me doing work similar to ours.

Over the many years we have been inspired by the evidence of how “poor” communities have sustained themselves, how they come together to address household, neighbourhood, and village issues, and how many community leaders unselfishly use whatever is available to them. We have been inspired by their passion and willingness to support a neighbour or friend in need—often at considerable cost to their own households and families, yet never complaining about that. “Why you do this?” we often ask, and their answer is always the same: Because this is what Ubuntu¹ is all about. Ninety percent of the community organizations we work with do not have administrative offices and paid staff. Nor do they have access to technology that we have become used to and feel that we cannot do without. Yet despite this, they provide invaluable services in their communities, services which formalized organizations and the state will not be prepared to offer without considerable financial compensation.

For many community-based organizations, the small grants received from Ikhala Trust and in-kind donations are often the only material compensation they receive, and despite this, they continue to work tirelessly to improve the quality of life of their neighbours. This unselfish giving is seldom appreciated and valued in the mainstream development sector which emphasizes tan-

¹ Ubuntu is an age-old African ethic focusing on caring, respect, and compassion for others. Its essence is captured in the Zulu proverb “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu,” which can be translated into English as “A person is only a person through interaction with others.”

gible and readily measurable results. Yet without the thousands of community-based organizations across South Africa that are working in this way, our country would not cope with the demands on its welfare, education, and health care systems, already overburdened by millions of people who depend on social grants for day-to-day survival.

Through many years of work with different communities, I have learned that each community has its own culture and, no less importantly, its own rhythm. In order to gain respect of its citizens, we need to listen carefully and with humility to what these daily rhythms are all about. This is what we have attempted to do when conducting the case studies that make up this publication: to enter communities with deep humility and listen from the heart. We hope that the result will encourage other development practitioners to do the same and find ways to support rather than undermine what is already manifesting on the ground.

I wish to acknowledge my friends at the Coady International Institute, particularly Brianne Peters who listened for hours to my rambling about the need to write up stories of communities driving their own development in South Africa. Her and her colleagues' wisdom, passion, and dedication to asset-based approaches to community development made this partnership possible. I also thank my dear friend and colleague Ninnette Eliasov who has worked with me for many years and is as passionate about this work as I am and who took upon herself the mammoth task of capturing and synthesizing the stories of the many, many people she listened to—and staying true to what they said rather than fitting their stories into what it was we wanted to hear. The work of Susan Wilkinson-Maposa, especially her groundbreaking research monograph, *The poor philanthropist: How and why the poor help each other* (coauthored with Alan Fowler, Ceri Oliver-Evans, and Chao F. N. Mulenga), inspired us to soldier on the work we were doing in communities.

This publication would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the South African office of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation through its Technical Support and Dialogue Platform under the leadership of Shaun Samuels and the Mott Foundation Director, Vuyiswa Sidzumo. Not only did they support the project financially, but they also wholeheartedly embraced its intention. Thank you to West Coast Community Foundation for partnering with us to document the story of the Klawer Advice and Development Centre and to Zanolele for their amazing contribution—filming and producing the DVD to accompany this publication.

My deepest gratitude goes to the many ordinary citizens we met and spoke with, who permitted us to “intrude” upon their space and time and to share their stories. It was indeed a humbling experience.

We now have a South African publication and documentary that may be used by many in the development sector locally and abroad to help shift the focus from deficits, challenges, and problems to that which is life-giving—assets, opportunities, and possibilities. It is my hope that this shift will lead to a new paradigm for development, whereby all people are valued, respected, and trusted as drivers of their own destiny.

Bernie Dolley
Director, Ikhala Trust

Introduction

When the idea of documenting cases of successful community-driven development was first put forward by Ikhala Trust and the Coady International Institute, it seemed a simple and straightforward task. Both institutions have worked extensively to support and popularize asset-based, community-driven development (often referred to by the acronym ABCD) in South Africa and worldwide, and have a shared interest in deepening the development sector's understanding of why some communities self-organize, while others passively wait for outside assistance.

ABCD is nothing new to South Africans who commonly relied on their talents, assets, and resources to compensate for gaps in state services before the end of apartheid in 1994. It was ordinary South Africans who built a mass movement that eventually brought apartheid to its knees and there are still community leaders claiming rights and driving development locally. Ikhala Trust felt that by documenting such examples, a portfolio could be created of case studies that will promote recognition and appreciation of this tradition of community-driven development that runs deep in South Africa's history.

So far, the development sector in South Africa (and elsewhere) has been dominated by the needs-based approach. This approach emphasizes “lacks” and “deficiencies” in communities and promotes a “poverty consciousness”—a mindset that is focused on what people cannot do and do not have, rather than a belief in human potential. The needs-based approach has also fostered the proliferation of “expert” service providers portraying themselves as best positioned to address community needs. By contrast, ABCD recognizes that development is already underway in communities and appreciates the many talents and assets that ordinary people contribute to improving the quality of life for themselves and their fellow community members.

A funding proposal was submitted to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation which responded positively not only as a funder, but also as a strategic partner with its own voice in the international development arena. A team was formed with two researchers (one from Ikhala Trust and one from the Coady Institute) and a DVD crew to document the research. Ikhala Trust selected three case studies from the Eastern Cape, drawing from the pool of its past and present grantees. The West Coast Community Foundation (WCCF) was approached to put forward a fourth case study in the Western Cape to broaden the scope. All four organizations—Klawer Advice and Development Centre, Jansenville Development Forum, Kwenzekile Community Development Centre, and Ixabiso Lomntu—were enthusiastic about participating in the project.

An initial concept paper outlined a methodology for data gathering, which included interviews, focus group discussions, and other activities intended to demonstrate the different types of com-

munity assets and how people organized themselves to achieve something together. However, development research can easily be extractive and methods can limit what people wish to say. The task of the research team seemed first and foremost to listen deeply and use appreciative inquiry to bring out the “generative” forces driving development. So it was that for each story, community leaders were invited to design the research process at each site and frame the itinerary.

As the process unfolded, it became clear that the case studies were not only about communities using what they had. The organizations we were studying were not isolated from the development landscape. They all had connections with donors, government, and NGOs, and these relationships brought benefits, challenges, and complexities which also needed to be explored.

The research team spent three days at each site, conducting interviews and group discussions, observing the organizations at work, and scanning relevant documentation such as project proposals and reports. About 70 hours of audio-visual data was collected in total. What has emerged is a rich tapestry of stories featuring grassroots pioneers who drive development with the assets at hand, and documenting some of the tensions, triumphs, and upheavals that occur as small organizations interact with other players. It is hoped that research of this kind will inspire communities to appreciate and build on the assets they already have, and use them as leverage to attract outside investment. It is also hoped that it will encourage outside actors to “tread lightly” when entering communities and to be responsive by supporting initiatives already underway.

We consider this project as “research for action.” While documenting the stories presented below was a meaningful and important task on its own, we wanted the reflections and recommendations arising out of these stories to instigate discussions among development actors working at different levels about how best to stimulate and support community-driven development initiatives, and to inspire action informed by these discussions.

Structure of the Publication

The publication consists of two sections. Section 1 narrates the stories of four South African community organizations, drawing on the fieldwork conducted in November 2011. In each case, we first trace the evolution of the organization from its beginnings and identify some of the driving forces behind its development. We then look more closely at the critical points when the organization began to grow and build its partnership networks, and explore some of its growth dynamics. Each case concludes with reflections on some of the key themes and salient points. All case studies that make up Section 1 have been written by Ninnette Eliasov, an associate of Ikhala Trust.

Section 2 highlights common themes gleaned from the case studies and interviews conducted with representatives of government agencies, donors, and NGOs in February 2011. It also discusses the critical issues that enabled (or disabled) community-driven development in the four cases presented in Section 1, and offers recommendations for donors, NGOs, government, and local leaders who wish to support an asset-based community-driven approach to development. This section has been coauthored by Brianne Peters, coordinator of the Coady Institute’s Program in Asset-Based and Citizen-Led Development, and Ninnette Eliasov.

Section One

CASE STUDIES

Klawer Advice and Development Centre

Klawer, Western Cape

Introduction

The hunger of the human spirit for freedom and justice is what drove people to come together and establish a forum for rights protection in the rural town of Klawer. The Klawer Community Forum—later renamed Klawer Advice Office and more recently the Klawer Advice and Development Centre—has been the hub of Klawer’s “coloured” community for almost 30 years.

The Forum arose in the mid-1980s in response to the forced removals of the Klawer’s coloured residents after their homesteads were declared a “white area” by the apartheid government, which uprooted what had been a well-established community deeply connected to the land. It has been a beacon for residents and workers from neighbouring farms ever since.

There are lessons in this story about how people have pooled their resources and created a community organization that remains a source of pride. We will see how the Klawer Advice Office attracted outside investment, which supported the growth of the organization but sometimes also brought disruption through the imposition of ideas and compliance frameworks that were not suited to its day-to-day reality. We will see how easy it is for complacency and dependency on donor to creep into a grassroots organization’s culture and how shifts in the donor environment can quickly shake such organization at its core and threaten its very survival.



A Town with a Troubled History

Klawer is a rural town on the west coast of South Africa, nestled between the Olifants River and Matzikama Mountains some 280 km north of Cape Town along the route leading to the beautiful flower-rich countryside of Namaqualand. The 2001 census estimated Klawer’s population at 4,477 residents, 78% of whom were “coloured.” The town’s name originates from the wild clover

that grows abundantly in the area. During the flowering season (July – October), the area is transformed into a floral paradise and droves of tourists bustle into Klawer to admire the breathtaking bloom.

Surrounded by a conservative farming community, Klawer was historically a typical rural town that embodied the racial divides and brutalities of apartheid. Reports of farmers assaulting, exploiting, and evicting farm workers were numerous along with stories of workers enticed into alcohol dependency through the notorious “dop” system² used extensively on Western Cape wine farms where labourers were paid a portion of wages with a daily measure of cheap wine. Although the practice was outlawed in the 1960s, it continued well into the 1990s, bringing social and economic devastation to many families.

Forced removals that took place in 1971 tore families away from well-established homesteads and cut off access to the river where their livestock had freely grazed before. The communal land base was decimated and the rhythm of life deeply disturbed—a devastation that has continued to haunt Klawer’s people ever since. The Klawer Advice and Development Centre’s board member Mathilda Bains explains:

What we struggle with is the mindset of our people. They couldn’t adapt [to a new reality] from the free community they were, where they had their own animals and own plots. Moving from there to here, they could not adjust, especially in the beginning. They had a mindset that “we had our own land, now we are removed.” Although some were given compensation, they never had that freedom again.

Coloured residents were relocated to a stretch of barren wasteland on the outskirts of the township. Denied access to their church and public library, they would walk back to *Oukamp* [old camp] on the weekends to socialize and dance in their old community hall, in defiance of the new regulations. Eventually the electricity in the erstwhile community hall was cut off and the dances were stopped, but the spirit of resistance among people only strengthened. Dennis Scholtz, chairperson of the Klawer Advice and Development Centre’s board, remembers: “We were determined. We would protest in every way we could and would just get arrested.”

How the Organization Developed

It was during this tumultuous time that Father Jackson began setting up an Anglican ministry in Klawer’s township. He was a local pastor who had witnessed the humiliation and abuse of his parishioners first-hand, as well as a visionary and development activist who called people together advocating that only united action could break down the walls of oppression that were being built around them. It was through his vision that the Klawer Community Forum was created to fight for basic services. Father Jackson, having learned about advice offices during his earlier work in Cape Town, suggested that the Forum should embrace the same approach. The Advice Office became the voice of the people:

² “Dop” is an Afrikaans word meaning an alcoholic drink.

We fought for freedom and what we believed in and were seen as anti-government. . . . We did not have permission to meet but we started at someone's home to see what we could do in helping people make sense of the circumstances. Father Jackson played a pivotal role in strengthening the spirit of the people. . . . What made sense to him was to have an advice office at the centre of the community (Dennis Scholtz).

The community mobilized its own resources. Meetings happened at homes and the local church. The school provided administrative support and individuals contributed food, money, stationery, furniture, a typewriter, and their time. A neighbouring family offered use of their telephone. All operating costs were covered through local fundraising:

For fundraising, we had rugby and netball tournaments and gatherings for all farm workers like *braais* [barbecues] and social events. We started an annual event at the pre-school where people contributed money. Initially we made R3,000 but we worked hard and later raised R40,000. The event now raises R65,000. Later we were able to buy equipment and pay staff (Dennis Scholtz).

The Advice Office waged its first major battle to secure a community hall, and after pressure mounted, the authorities dismantled an old church structure and relocated it to the new township. Made of cement, it had small ceiling windows and resembled a prison cell. Insulted by such inadequate facilities, the community continued to demand decent amenities until 1994 when a multipurpose centre was built by the municipality.

As the Advice Office matured and its reputation spread, it became the first point of contact for local residents in cases of abuse and human rights violations. It also grew into a hub for information, advice, and referral. To this day, NGOs and government agencies continue to use the Klawer Advice and Development Centre as a communication point to advertise their programs in the region. Training and work opportunities are also sourced through the Centre. Over the years, hundreds of individuals and the community as a whole have benefitted from the many services it provides:

If the Advice Office was not here, we would not have pavements, street lights, facilities, amenities, or basic services. Our services are up to standard and there has been economic transformation as well. We try by all means to create opportunities for our children to study further or do an internship in companies for experience. Even farm workers get exposed to management so that they can get involved in Black Economic Empowerment. If the Office was not here, there would never have been so many changes (Dennis Scholtz).

We [still] have a lot of potholes: there are some people who cannot fill in forms and the Advice Office helps them do it properly. Our matriculants (Grade 12) never got proper jobs before. We now help them with certificates and send them to different institutions. We also have learnerships [internships] (Mathilda Bains).

The contributions of the Klawer Advice Office to community development have been numerous including the protection of human rights, improving labour relations, and supporting local enterprise.

Protecting Human Rights

There are many success stories, such as that of Klawer's famous law student who received a bursary with the assistance of the Advice Office and is now completing the final year of his law degree at the University of Western Cape. The Office's greatest achievement, however, appears to consist in transforming race relations in the region by demanding justice and protection for farm workers:

In spite of the community being amongst the poorest, we worked hard to ensure that workers know their rights. A man who has a problem on the farm knows exactly what to do. There are no more instances of evictions or underpay. The farm workers' ability to assert their rights is one of our greatest achievements (Dennis Scholtz).

Here is one example of the Office's intervention on behalf of a local farm worker:

We had a case when a female farm worker did not turn up for work so the farmer went out to her home to find out what was going on. When he got there, there was a confrontation and he beat her with a hose pipe. The doctors and medical staff said her injuries looked like train tracks, that is how deep they were. She had walked quite a distance from the farm to Vredendal and the ANC [African National Congress] Office called us. We went to fetch her, took pictures of her injuries, took her statement, and with medical report and X-rays went to the legal centre. We opened a case and the *Rapport* newspaper put it in the paper. Even before we got to court the farmer wanted to make an offer of R25,000 compensation but we declined. We waited for judgment. He received a suspended sentence. . . . We wanted to appeal the case but she didn't come back—she had moved away from the farm (Ruiter Julies, Coordinator, Klawer Advice and Development Centre).

Improving Labour Relations

Farmers now exercise greater caution and care in their labour relations. Although the relationships between the Centre and farming community were strained in the past, the Centre's staff are now regularly invited to farmer union events and constructive relationships with farmers are being forged as its work becomes more widely recognized.

A lot of farm workers come across problems at work and with farmers. The farmer may find fault with the worker and then react in the wrong manner and the workers will come here. I remember the first time I had to call a farmer, I was so nervous! But Ruiter [Julies] calmed me down and told me how to handle it. The farmer and I were able to communicate well over the phone and resolve the issue. It was about a husband jealous of his wife, which caused problems between them. An argument would break out every day and so the farmer said she should rather leave work. She explained to me that it was the only job she could do and I relayed this to the farmer. I asked if he would consider giving her the job back and he told her to come on the [next] Monday. The Advice Office has brought much relief . . . people really depend on it (Johan Wiese, volunteer).

Supporting Local Enterprise

In Klawer, there is an air of dignity rooted in the old traditions of the Namaqualanders who settled here generations before. Indigenous knowledge systems are still evident in their farming techniques and the use of herbs and traditional medicines. Yet, there are clear signs that the decades of oppression, disruption, and dispossession have taken their toll. It is mostly women in Klawer today who climb the farm trucks in the early hours of the morning to go to the vineyards for a day's work. Walking through Klawer's township today, it is commonplace to see small groups of young men on street corners without work or apparent purpose.

It seems that it is mostly women who are taking up opportunities in the "new" South Africa, and the Advice Centre has actively supported them and encouraged enterprise development in the area in general. One community member offers her observations:

I was born in Namaqualand, and have lived in Klawer for 21 years. I decided to start my own business and that's how I came into contact with Ruiter at the Advice Office where I come to send faxes and make telephone calls. I started with agriculture, planting vineyards, tending them, picking grapes, etc. I did whatever the farmers needed me to do. I also have a small-scale mining business shaping rocks into squares and selling them to people for building. I have 14 people working for me and I pay out approximately R10,000 in wages. Sometimes I receive faxes from the Advice Office or someone will phone me here. I usually just run in and out again but I do hear about other jobs coming through. The community also comes here. The service is great and they are friendly and helpful. It definitely serves a purpose and we would have a problem if it closed down. Where would we go? (Elsabe Harris).

The Klawer Advice and Development Centre is a lifeline to many people and its staff is always alert for opportunities. Take, for example, the Centre's coordinator, Ruiter Julies, who is an asset himself. He is a strategic thinker with an impressive vault of knowledge accumulated over years of his paralegal practice. Since he became coordinator in 1999, he has managed the Centre with dedication, humility, and patience as well as a sharp ability to connect the right people at the right time. A case in point is the Klawer Snail Project. One of its founding members has the following story to share:

In 2005, I was one of four women invited to a women's group in Grabouw that Ruiter had heard about. They pick snails and sell them to Elzyn, a company that exports them to European countries. We went to see what the women were doing. When we got there, they were busy picking snails. To me that was quite a squeamish idea and I thought I could never do it. But the women worked hard and showed us tons of snails they had picked over weeks. Their administration and bookkeeping were good, even though they were housewives. I was so impressed. I gave feedback at home and we felt we could do it. But we did not have a plan so we came to the Advice Office. Ruiter did not even think twice. He just took paper and made a rough sketch showing me how it could be done. In November we visited seven farms and they were very interested. We explained that they pay thousands of Rands for pesticides yet were not rid of their snails. For them snails were

pests, for us they were job creation. We were 13 women then. Now we are 37 and have 33 farms signed up. In 2006, we officially began harvesting. We hired a car for R600 per week, went out to the farms, and picked the snails, but had a big problem. We had no storage and only two fans. We saved every day and struggled like that for a while. This year the West Coast Community Foundation gifted us a wendy house and two fans. [Unfortunately] Elzyn has closed down but we are waiting for a company to open in its place. Meanwhile, The Advice Office has helped us hold meetings and brought people closer. Because of them that we managed to carry on all these years (Katie Muller).

Collaboration with Government Service Departments

The Klawer Advice and Development Centre is a key government partner as well, since it is embedded in the local community and there are no NGOs permanently based in the area. As part of its service-level agreement with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the Centre mediates about 10 consumer dispute cases per month involving defaulters of municipal, mobile phone, and clothing bills, as well as labour-related cases such as unfair dismissals. There are also partnerships with the Department of Social Development, Department of Water and Forestry, and Department of Agriculture, and a growing interest from other external actors as the Centre becomes known as an entry point to the community.

As a result of these relationships, the Centre's programming and project management work has mushroomed over the past few years. Besides providing paralegal and clerical assistance, it now also plays a particularly important role in managing projects for local women, youth, farm workers, and people with disabilities.

This expansion is not easy as every department has its own requirements and bureaucratic frameworks. The Centre's workload is immense and complex, and brokering relationships between multiple actors presents many challenges. The communal vegetable garden is one example of the challenges involved in such collaboration. Katrina Steenkamp, a project manager with the Centre, explains:

About two or three years back I started working with people who have disabilities. The Advice Office is the pillar. If I must fax something or phone, I come here. They are always willing to help, no matter who it is for. They mean a lot to me personally because of the veggie garden project with people who have disabilities. Ruiter helped us get the hall where we could have meetings without paying. The Advice Office explained to me the reasons why my project could not get off the ground. With Ruiter's help, IWRM [Integrated Water Resource Management Programme of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry] gave us R250,000 to carry on with the project and the municipality gave us 1.5 hectares of land. But we couldn't go on even though we had funds. The Department of Agriculture told us that we had to deal with the municipality and buy water from them. Unfortunately, we weren't aware that there was a deadline to use the funds so they withdrew what was left before the closing date. Though we bought most tools, we still wanted to buy a wendy house. Next week we're all getting together to plan the way forward.

Planning for the Centre's Future Sustainability

It is the quality of leadership and management in the Klawer Advice and Development Centre that seems to be its key asset. Community members describe its staff as friendly, helpful, efficient, professional, knowledgeable, and effective, always willing to help and go the extra mile.

The volunteers on the Board who have worked together over decades are also an inspiration to their neighbours:

I am happy to say that I have been with this Advice Office for 15 years. First we crawled, then we stood against the table, then we walked and then ran. . . . If I show [my son] to be self-reliant and help himself, I will feel freedom in my heart because I was busy until now teaching people not just to stand back and receive, but also to give (Mathilda Bains).

The old pioneers remain active in the organization, but they are also keen to nurture a new generation of community activists. The Centre has recently started learnerships and youth programs to support this intention. A former intern Johan Wiese shares his experience of being “groomed” by the Centre:

It was about two years ago that I took part in a learnership under the Department of Social Services. I was one of 15 who were chosen and placed in various organizations in our communities. Luckily I fell under the Advice Office for one year with another intern. Ruiter was our supervisor and showed us the basics. I helped clients with whatever the Office could offer: making copies, sending faxes, or making telephone calls. I eventually became skilled and worked my way up in the organization. . . . I was successful in getting the job [of project coordinator] and signed another year's contract. I organized programs for youth as well as for women and men in the neighbouring areas. We also worked with farms nearby. I was surprised with myself and what I achieved. I also went to a few workshops if Ruiter couldn't attend and would take a lot from that. I learned so much. My heart's desire was always to work in an [advice] office and then the Lord made it possible. I have bettered myself these past three years.

One of the advantages of an organization initiated and run by community members is that its leaders are “plugged” into the community from the very outset; they know its culture and rhythms intimately for they are part of it:

We can tell [other] people: do not have events in the fourth quarter between 12 p.m. and 4 p.m., because it is too hot—you will only get a crowd after 6 p.m. . . . If you tell everyone: “Today we have a school event,” then they are there; . . . or “Today we are going to paint or fix the windows,” they are there (Mathilda Bains).

The Klawer Advice and Development Centre has grown steadily since those early days of meeting at the church hall or in residents' homes. It now occupies a building designated as a waiting room for people going to hospital in Cape Town. A bus comes to fetch them early in the morning, so the building is vacant during the day. Yet, this accommodation remains unstable and there are whispers that the Centre may need to move. This is not the only pressing concern.

External funding, which has become the Centre's mainstay, was drying up at the time of this research. The recent decision of the Western Cape Government to cut funding to community advice offices has had a devastating effect on the Centre. This unexpected decision has sent shockwaves through the paralegal sector and many other community advice offices are experiencing a similar financial crisis. Ruiter Julies has not received a salary for a number of months, and without remuneration, he may be forced to look for another job. The Centre might not survive this loss.

The funding crisis has prompted the Centre's Board to think deeply about the best way forward:

We have attended workshops, sent audited reports; they even told us to change our name and we changed it. They said we must add objectives, so we did; . . . to redo our organogram, and this was done. Then they sat with us and said there was no more money. So what are we to do now? Must we go back to where we were in the beginning? (Dennis Scholtz).

You feel as though you are carrying this burden on your own now that we don't have funding anymore. It seems as though we needed a crisis to bring us together. In the past we went nicely without funding and I miss those fundraising efforts (Ruiter Julies).

The Centre is at an important crossroads. There are expectations in the community that weigh heavily on the shoulders of its pioneers. At the same time, it finds itself becoming well-positioned as a strategic partner for NGOs and government. This emerging role may help to resolve the funding crisis.

Interface with Partners

The Klawer Advice and Development Centre has actively engaged different partners over the years. For example, its partnership with the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT) extended over 16 years during which SCAT contributed towards its running costs and a small stipend for its volunteers. The Centre has also established linkages with other rights-based NGOs (FEDUP, Lawyers for Human Rights, Centre for Rural and Legal Studies, Legal Education and Action Project, and the Surplus People's Project). The past few years have also seen the expansion of its partnerships with government through tenders, learnerships, and service contracts.

The Centre is firmly embedded in the social and economic fabric of Klawer and plays an important role in stimulating development in the district as a whole. Other actors see and value its capacity to facilitate linkages. The WCCF, for example, has enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership with the Centre since 2008, providing it with the training, material, and financial support while at the same time being assisted by the Centre in its efforts to extend its footing in the region. The Foundation also publicly recognized the Centre and its leadership by choosing Katrina Stuurman, a committed community worker who founded the local project for people with disabilities, for its Lifetime Achievement Award (R10,000) in 2011. WCCF's Executive Director Johanna Hendricks observes:

She is a stalwart of the West Coast. Any person, even the Department of Agriculture, will come to ask her where the indigenous plants are because they will want to access her indigenous knowledge—even the municipality uses that. You can ask “Aunty Katrina” anything and she will be able to answer you. She is a magnificent resource.

The Centre’s relationships with the Department of Social Development are also good. The Department has sponsored a learnership and allocated funding for the Centre’s operational costs and various projects it initiated. Another governmental agency, the Department of Land Affairs, has also entered into a service-level agreement with the Centre, which entails supporting its programs for farm workers and youth development. Funding from the National Lottery Distribution Fund (almost R500,000) has enabled the Centre to fully equip its office space and purchase a minivan.

There have been mutually rewarding relationships with the broader development sector, and, not infrequently, partners covered the Centre’s operational costs and strengthened its organizational capacity and networking potential. But in some cases, the Centre’s chairperson Dennis Scholtz notes, relationships with outside actors have been disruptive:

If I think back now over the years when development workers came in and went on—after a while I had a thing about people who worked for NGOs or government. We had 20 years of experience and someone walks in and pushes us around, telling us how things should be done. [I would be thinking,] “Don’t speak to me as if I work for you . . . as if I have no idea and you know better.”

Dennis Scholtz also raises an important issue about the role of the media in perpetuating negative stereotypes of the community that are degrading and misleading:

The [news]paper photos of our people are not good [for us]. Most of our people don’t stay in [dilapidated] structures or on dirt roads. I had a debate with one journalist saying you cannot just take pictures of the negative, why don’t you take a picture of me, or a teacher, or the church? You take pictures of drunken men to give people a [false] impression so that you can sell your newspaper.

Reflections

As we reflect on the story of the Klawer Advice and Development Centre and how a community mobilized local assets, we open a fascinating window into South Africa’s history and its shifting political and economic landscape. Our exploration has started on the West Coast of South Africa where we find an advice office rising up out of the forced removals of the 1970s that uprooted an established community. The Klawer Advice and Development Centre has become a beacon for residents and farm workers in reclaiming human dignity and protecting rights. It has also become a lifeline for entrepreneurs and community associations and, more recently, a gateway for NGOs, government agencies, and donors wishing to extend their reach into the area.

The Centre has built itself up through partnerships, donor funding, and local fund-raising, and its networks have also expanded because of a good reputation. Klawer gives the impression of a united and caring community with a buzz of entrepreneurship, particularly among women.

There are many lessons to be drawn from this case study of a community-initiated organization that remains a source of local pride after almost three decades. What, then, are the main forces that have driven the pioneers of the organization to stay together for almost 30 years? It seems that they include visionary leadership, a stable structure, and strong relationships among a group of pioneering friends and neighbours caring for one another.

Timeline

- 1980s Klawer residents are forcibly removed from Oukamp by the apartheid regime, relocated to an area with no amenities. Farm workers experience rampant abuse and evictions. The community is harassed and prevented from using former church and recreational hall. Father Jackson—a local priest who had contact with a community advice office in Macassar, Cape Town—calls residents together proposing that a similar structure be established for advocacy and rights protection in Klawer.
- 1990 SCAT provides a small grant along with technical assistance/capacity development and networking support (a relationship lasting until 2006).
- 1992 Dennis Scholtz is formally contracted. Ruiter Julies is appointed secretary and later treasurer of the Board.
- 1994 Ruiter Julies resigns from the Board; applies for, and obtains, the position of coordinator.
- 1997 Ruiter Julies is trained and formally qualifies as a paralegal.
- 1998 Ruiter Julies is sent to attend the International People's College in Denmark for 16 weeks.
- 1999 Dennis Scholtz retires.
- 2002-3 Government funding is sourced for HIV/AIDS program, youth development, and vegetable garden project.
- 2003 WCCF establishes formal relationships with the Klawer Advice Office. The Office helps WCCF extend its reach in the region.
- 2005-6 The Office is registered with South Africa's Department of Social Development and gains NPO status. Its name is changed to Klawer Advice and Development Centre. Contract is signed with the Department of Social Development, whereby the Centre is allotted R65,000 per annum to support personal development of women, youth, and people with disabilities. WCCF provides the Centre with a grant to help cover its running costs. Klawer Snail Project is initiated.

- 2008-9 Youth learnership (bursary) is set up through the Expanded Public Works Programme and placed at the Centre for a year. The South African Department of Water Affairs and Forestry through its Integrated Water Resource Management Programme supported by the Royal Danish Government grants R211,000 for the vegetable garden project. Land (1.5 ha) is sourced late from the municipality, delaying the project. R100,000 is left unspent and returned to the Department. Difficulties in accessing water also hamper the garden project implementation. Financial support is received from WCCF for seeds and tools. Funding (R224,000) is received from the National Lottery Distribution Fund (NLDF) to improve the Centre's infrastructure (including the purchase of a 15-seat van) and for the food security project for people with disabilities.
- 2010 Funding is received from the Western Cape Department of Agriculture for farm worker and youth programs (R125,000) and from the Department of Social Development. The Department of Economic Development and Tourism contracts the Centre to negotiate 7-10 consumer dispute cases per month. Land is sourced from the municipality for the food security project and funding is allocated for fencing, equipment, and production over a one-year grant period. Johan Wiese is appointed as coordinator of the youth and farm worker programs on a one-year contract. The balance of funding from NLDF is received to enable the Centre to fully equip its office.
- 2011 WCCF funds Klawer Snail Project and presents its Lifetime Achievement Award to Katrina Stuurman, a dedicated community worker and coordinator of the vegetable garden project with community members who have disabilities. Food security project is hampered by red tape limiting access to land and water. Government funding for advice offices drops sharply across the country. The Centre finds itself in dire financial straits while the demand for its services is growing and it is increasingly being sought as a partner by outside agencies.

Critical Questions

- What roles can community-based networks such as advice offices play in rural development?
- How can community advice offices be best engaged with NGOs and government to improve the work they are already doing?
- What checks and balances can be put in place to prevent community-based networks from becoming disrupted or dependent on external actors?
- What are the partnership criteria that community organizations should look for when they enter into relationships with multiple external actors?
- How can community groups get the balance right between “inward focus” (mobilizing their own assets) and “outward focus” (advocating for civil rights and providing services in their communities)?

Jansenville Development Forum

Jansenville, Eastern Cape

Introduction

Our journey continues as we move into the hinterland of the Eastern Cape—163 km northwest of Port Elizabeth to Jansenville in the Cacadu District. At first glance, Jansenville seems an ordinary town with one general store, but when you spend some time there, you begin to uncover its multiple layers—unique and quite unexpected.



Located on the Mohair route just north of the Klein Winterhoek Mountains, Jansenville is the fifth largest town in Ikhwezi Municipality, in the heart of the Noorsveld. Angora goats and sheep thrive in this dry area, and Jansenville has long been the centre of South Africa's mohair and wool industry. In 2009, it co-hosted the first International Mohair Summit.

Rainwater tanks dotting the land are quite typical for the Eastern Cape, but solar panels installed in every home by an eco-conscious municipality are not. A communal waterhouse

also speaks to the town's innovative spirit. Here residents can wash clothes using freely available recycled water without draining their scarce household supply. Jansenville is full of surprises.

Perhaps the most astonishing thing about this township with a population of slightly over 6,000 is the extent to which its inhabitants have transcended racial and cultural divisions and become one diverse "rainbow" family. You discover that most children here speak Xhosa and Afrikaans (two of South Africa's eleven official languages). Most local families are tightly interwoven through generations of intermarriage. Notizi Vanda, founder of the Jansenville Development Forum (JDF), observes:

What is unique about Jansenville is that we are all related to one another. That is our strength. If I go deep into her family, I will find mine—it is mixed. We are related to each other, we know each other. We meet every day as there is only one street, so we meet and talk—in the churches, everywhere . . .

It is within this melting pot that JDF was formed as an umbrella for the area's community-based organizations (s) in 2000. We will find interesting parallels with the Klawer Advice and Development Centre in this case study, for both organizations began as forums, then developed into advice offices, and eventually became project managers and service providers.

Yet JDF's origins do not go back to the state of emergency that defined South Africa during the 1980s, when the army and police patrolled the streets detaining people without trial and controlling their movements through an evening curfew. Its history dates back to the year 2000, almost seven years into the new democracy led by the ANC: a very different time, when a liberal constitution had been adopted, a plethora of progressive policies had been introduced, and government and civil society organizations were forging strategic partnerships. It is in this context that JDF emerged as a network of 10 local CBOs.

This case study project is not the first opportunity for Ikhala Trust and the Coady Institute to document JDF's story. Both partnered in 2006 with the University of Cape Town's Centre for Leadership and Public Values to conduct a study aimed to assess in-kind and cash contributions of JDF's membership. The study found that a total of R371,150 was contributed through 41,555 volunteer labour hours and R29,212 in cash over two years. This finding, reported in a publication documenting exemplary stories of innovative communities,³ boosted the morale of JDF's members and raised its profile both locally and abroad. Now, six years after that study, we find JDF dormant, rocked by a devastating "brain drain" it has not yet recovered from. Its fully equipped building that once bustled with activity and promise is now quiet—a "white elephant" in slumber.

JDF's story, narrated here by its founder, Notizi Vanda (known locally as "Sis T"), is complex. A community-driven initiative that had started with the pooled resources of its members seemed to have taken a quantum leap once it acquired substantial donor funding. To complicate matters, JDF was put under pressure to spend money quickly. Like the story of Klawer Advice Office, the case of JDF shows us how a community used its own assets to drive development and form local associations. Yet it also reveals how quickly JDF's journey became riddled with so many twists and turns that it lost its way.

How the Organization Developed

Sis T is a teacher, activist, development facilitator, district councillor, former deputy mayor of Jansenville, and ANC veteran. She attributes her passion for community work to her parents, especially her father, a loyal member of the ANC whom she describes as a caring, generous, and grounded person, who was always curious about community issues and keen to get involved. He would tell his children to support community initiatives as well. Her mother was also active in the local church and savings groups.

³ Mathie, A., & Cunningham, G. (Eds.) *From clients to citizens: Communities changing the course of their own development*. Rugby, UK: Practical Action, 2008.

A people-person with a natural affinity for listening and understanding, Sis T became involved in community structures from a young age, first in the local church and later in the Jansenville Progressive Committee—an ANC underground unit. It was during her years as a teacher that she became active in community development, particularly the advancement of school sports.

In 1995, after 35 years of service as a teacher, Sis T opted to take a severance package and began working for a local NGO (Quality Schools Project), where teachers received training on how to use mathematics and science equipment and establish classroom libraries. Her office quickly became a base for members of other local organizations who needed to send a fax or use the phone, and sometimes requested her advice as well. Eventually she recruited a volunteer to help meet the growing demand for technical and administrative support. It is in this small office that we find the beginnings of JDF.

Sis T drew on old networks and long-standing connections and used personal funds as seed money to start her own project—a loosely defined support structure for local community leaders. With this project and her work with schools, she was quickly drawn into community work full-time:

We got a building, but it needed renovation, and the Cacadu District Office through the Jansenville Municipality gave us funds for this. We were about four [people] now and were occupying . . . this building but had no money. Fortunately I taught for 35 years and had my pension. My kids will ask me even now: “What did you do with your money?” But I knew what I was aiming for. Then people started coming to see us, all kinds of people. Ikhala sent this one and that one and we began to talk the language of development. The more I got involved, the more I told myself: This is what I want.

Based on her observations of the types of requests coming in from the various organizations, Sis T saw clearly that there was unnecessary duplication and competition for resources. South Africa was in its fifth year of democracy and bursting with opportunities for community organizations. It was time to call groups together:

People would come in and ask for assistance on social issues and there was a sort of competition and repetition. I invited everybody running programs and we had a big meeting. Then . . . we came together [as a Forum].

Sis T had met the Director of Ikhala Trust, Bernie Dolley, a few years earlier, and they developed a firm friendship over time. Bernie was invited to the meeting of local groups convened by Sis T to give guidance as to what type of organization should be formed, based on her experience as a community grantmaker. It was at this meeting that JDF was born as a networking body intended to support 10 community organizations.

The core group tasked with establishing the network did not have money for operating costs and advanced the organization by pooling their own resources:

When we began, we were without a cent [and] we were going to share whatever we had. This one had a computer, this one a printer. We said one of the objectives [must be] to share the limited resources we have.

JDF soon approached the Eastern Cape NGO Coalition for assistance and became an affiliated member. The support provided by the Coalition helped JDF develop its programs and organizational capacity. Then came the first grant from Ikhala Trust:

We started having systems in place, [appointed] board members, [and] joined the Eastern Cape NGO coalition. To them it was a unique model, so they organized a 15-day training for household assessments with people from Limpopo, Eastern Cape, and government departments. That is where we developed the program of JDF. Some groups were sent for exchange programs in Cape Town. There was always training. But we were frustrated. We didn't have money. Then in 2002, we got our first donation from Ikhala of R13,000. It was a lot to us.

Ikhala Trust supported many of JDF's member organizations by providing small grants, capacity building, and exposure visits to learn from other agencies. A year later, in 2003, the National Development Agency (NDA) awarded JDF a grant of R870,000 for administration, member activities, and a modest salary of R6000 (which would be shared among three people). With this money, the organization was able to provide training, mentoring, and networking opportunities, as well as technical support to member CBOs and assist them in implementing programs and report writing. The large grant catapulted JDF to a new level of complexity and had a number of unintended consequences:

Projects started to fight amongst themselves. We found that as much as people had been trained in report writing, they [still] could not write. From R13,000 to R870,000—imagine, we were supposed to spend that money in one year and we couldn't.

The public announcement of such a large grant also stirred big expectations among Jansenville residents. Management of the grant required complex bureaucratic procedures and multitasking, which was a big jump for any organization to make in such a short time. Furthermore, new community groups came forward, each making its own claims for funding, and more conflict erupted:

The turning point was when we got money from the NDA—everybody wanted to come in. There was a sports group that wanted money, an old-aged group . . . it was chaotic. It was money! Money! Nothing else. . . . Then started the stories. I remember my kids would say, "People are saying all sorts of stories about you. . . ." And I said, "Let them talk, let them carry on.

Rumours spread like wildfire and quickly turned into slander. It was a tough time for JDF leaders who had to deal with difficult group dynamics parallel with bearing the responsibility of program delivery in a pressing time frame. In spite of that, JDF's activities expanded and its reputation grew. It became a sought-after partner for other organizations including the Office of the Premier of the Eastern Cape, which commissioned JDF to train civil society organizations in neighbouring towns in matters of local economic development. JDF was also commissioned by the Eastern Cape Departments of Agriculture and Social Development to monitor government-supported projects in these fields in the region. JDF trained and organized volunteers from local civic groups to facilitate citizen participation in local planning. It also sourced financial support from a large bilateral donor to set up a telecentre, intended to offer computer training for youth in the area

and generate income for JDF. This project was sponsored through a partnership between the Department of Social Development and Smart Byte, an internet service provider based in Port Elizabeth.⁴

During that period, Sis T was repeatedly asked to serve the ANC full-time. She had been trying to balance her responsibilities as a community worker with that of a municipal councillor and later deputy mayor of Jansenville, but when the NDA-funded program had concluded, it seemed to be a natural time to move on. She finally accepted the nomination for Cacadu District councillor based in the city of Port Elizabeth, the position in which she currently serves full-time.

Despite the intense efforts of JDF pioneers to groom a second layer of leadership, it did not form. Once trained, people left JDF in search of job opportunities either within the municipality or outside Jansenville. Without any financial incentives, it was difficult to hold them back. JDF has wavered on the edge these past three years and its future remains unclear. What is certain, however, is that most of its founding members are still going strong—a testament to the importance of JDF's support in its earlier days. It is to them that we now turn our attention.

Masiphilisane

One of the Forum's founding members is a CBO called Masiphilisane (translated into English as "Let us heal one another"). Its manager Vanessa Langbooi has the following story to share:

Masiphilisane works with people affected by HIV/AIDS as well as orphans and vulnerable children. . . . I am "second generation" in the group. I came from Cape Town to Jansenville for my grandfather's funeral and I met Vanessa, the chairperson of the organization. She introduced me to Notizi Vanda and others from JDF. I was so shocked when Sis T said in our first meeting: "There is the right candidate to go on management training," referring to me. . . . And from that day on, I built my relationship with Masiphilisane. I am so proud to be in this group because you learn. The JDF slogan is: "We are moving." Who thought I could be on the management? Sis T held me back in Jansenville and gave me something for which I am grateful.

Sifundento Beadwork and Feedlot Project

Like Masiphilisane, this group is a founding member of JDF. With the assistance of the Department of Social Development, it has diversified and expanded its activities over time, as related by Nomvula Sambokwe:

We have two projects—beadwork and cattle farming. . . . We started because we were thinking—what can we as women do in the area? There was nothing that appealed more to us than developing our culture, and projects like that were scarce. . . . We met Mrs.

⁴ JDF's achievements during that period and the generous contributions of its member organizations towards local development have been well documented in *From clients to citizens* (see fn. 3 above for full citation).

Vanda [Sis T] and proposed we work with our hands. She scouted for training. We learned to put beads on bottles, shoes, and many other products, giving them a cultural flavour. We secured a venue and are part-time here as we have two projects. Before, we used to ask for assistance from JDF and Ikhala Trust who bought materials. We were also assisted by Catholic Welfare and Development. The only thing lacking was a market, which came later from Sweden. The project is now registered and working on its own. . . . It is beautiful and appealing to people and with [recycled] waste we can create something valuable. Our routine now is doing beadwork during the day and looking after the cattle in the afternoon.

Khayalesizwe Burial Society

This group, also a founding member of JDF, is a non-profit that runs like a business. It has continued to grow independently over the past 10 years and receives funding from the Department of Social Development. One of the Society's founders, Jongile Lucas, relates its story:

This organization was started in 1986 as it was difficult to bury people previously. People joined and initially contributed R5, then R10 [now R50]. We realized [that] to be independent we must have our own place, so we fundraised and built a house. . . . The project grew and we bought coffins. We were also members of JDF and after some time we received money through JDF to the amount of R15,000 for a fridge and paid the balance ourselves of R38,000 from collections. We also bought our own car. We currently have give or take 60 homes comprising of 8-10 members. I am proud of this organization—it is a shoulder to cry on in times of need.

Ikhwezi Crèche

This is one of the oldest CBOs in Jansenville. It has its own building named after Siphso Miggels—a community worker and activist who lobbied for it to have proper facilities. Ikhwezi Crèche is presently supported by the Department of Social Development. Here is its story as told by Jolene Kolobile:

This Centre started in 1987 with 40 kids and just two staff. We noticed children on the streets and thought: "Let's start something." We began in a church building. They wanted us to pay rent but we had no funds and were struggling to get the fees of R5 per month. But we kept on and the numbers grew to 87. We went for training . . . and did some fundraising with parents—concerts, competitions, asking for donations, and so we kept on. That time we did not even get a salary, but we managed. Sometimes we brought things from home so that the Centre could go on. Then we moved from the church to another hall. Siphso Miggels, who was a very strong community leader, said we are going to fight for a building for a crèche and we fought together. We had many meetings, invited people from outside, and at last got this building—built especially for the crèche. . . . JDF played a big role in the community, helping with information, workshops, and training. Almost everyone went there for photocopying and faxing. Even the Centre got a lot of things and funding because we are affiliated. Most people are worried that JDF is not active.

In light of these stories, a key question regarding JDF's fate seems to be this: Has it already achieved what it set out to do by building the capacity of its ten founding members to reach independence and form partnerships on their own? Or is there a continuing role to be played with new community organizations that need a central meeting point and an information and networking hub where people can easily connect with others?

A common response is: "Most people feel we need JDF. . . . With JDF, you heard about opportunities and got advice" (Jolene Kolobile). Everyone we interviewed also seemed to agree that there has been no "one-stop shop" since JDF became inactive. It provided a range of services for residents as well as a convenient entry point for NGOs and government agencies wishing to work with community groups in Jansenville. Like the Klawer Advice and Development Centre, JDF gave outside actors an easy access to local networks.

The mayor of Jansenville, Sizwe Mngwevu, and other officials in the Ikhwezi Municipality have a particularly keen interest in seeing JDF revived and its well-equipped multipurpose facilities properly utilized. As someone with a background in community work, the mayor understands the importance of having a coordinating body such as JDF:

JDF played a vital role making sure we have a clear vision and mission. A lot of different associations were established through it. JDF also played a role with youth, some of whom are proudly in universities because they got bursaries. For others, the skills they received allowed them to spread out. . . . I must say honestly that we do experience a vacuum now. . . . I think it is a collective responsibility to make sure that JDF's role is not buried. . . . we recognize that there is no way JDF can die in our hands.

Time will tell if the local officials and concerned citizens will take action towards its reopening.

Interface with Partners

"Connectors" like Notizi Vanda who network at different levels can play an exceptionally important role in communities for they build and strengthen links with the outside world. However, it can be challenging for those who are deeply involved in both politics and development to find a balance between the two, especially in a small town such as Jansenville where the expectations of many fall on the shoulders of the few.

Sis T started out as a community activist who later entered mainstream politics once South Africa was democratized. This has presented an opportunity for her to use her political influence to advance the local development agenda. Yet, when one is engaged in community development, one's mandate is from the community which one serves and is accountable to; whereas in politics one is often bound by the directives and decisions of their political party. Straddling politics and development can be fraught with tensions.

In the case of JDF, we have seen the supportive role that Ikhala Trust played in its formative years, not just as a funder, but also as a mentor and guide. Ikhala's seed support helped JDF

establish its first office and opened up communication channels with other development agencies. The Eastern Cape NGO Coalition was also instrumental in strengthening JDF's organizational capacity and footing in the development sector. However, we have seen as well how networking can also raise the profile of an organization and accelerate its growth beyond what its members can manage.

JDF has not recovered from the leadership vacuum that emerged when Sis T left, and still lies dormant. Yet amazingly, its founding members have kept moving and some are even thriving. Without JDF, they have had to meet donor requirements regarding the monitoring of, and reporting on, their activities by themselves. Some of these CBOs, including Masiphilisane, have maintained consistently high standards and are gaining recognition for good management practices. Vanessa Langbooi observes:

It was a challenge at first because we were not boffins [professionals] and had to pull up our socks. We were dealing with larger funds and had to do things according to the [funders'] ways and deadlines. There were times when we did not know how we were going to manage, but the social worker was patient with us and we have grown with his support.

For many of JDF's members, the Department of Social Development appears to have taken over where the JDF left off, and now acts as a funder, mentor, coach, and anchor.

Reflections

JDF arose out of a need to improve coordination between various community groups in Jansenville and the technical and infrastructural support available to them. Ten interested groups joined the Forum, pooling their scarce resources to assist one another. Through cooperation, they created a social service organization that benefitted its member groups and the broader public alike.

The story of JDF tells us much about community pioneers and the influences that shape them. We have learned about leadership which seems to come naturally to some and accidentally to others who may or may not be ready for it, and about the compromises that leaders may have to make when they have to choose between serving their own community and pursuing aspirations they may have outside.

The tensions that erupted within JDF when sizeable funding came into the picture are not unusual and many CBOs face similar challenges. What is interesting here is that the NDA, while being only the second donor to come on board, provided JDF with the funding that was 80 times more than the amount it had managed in the past. There are lessons to be learned from this case about appropriate timing and pace in community grantmaking and about how donors can support small organizations more responsively.

Timeline

- 1989 Jansenville Progressive Committee is established as an offshoot of the banned ANC.
- 1995-7 Sis T coordinates Quality in Schools Project and her office is increasingly used as an administrative base for community organizations in Jansenville. It evolves into an informal community advice office.
- 1998-9 Funding is sourced from the Department of Trade and Industry for an advice office. Contact with community organizations shows high levels of duplication and competition for resources.
- 2000 On Sis T's initiative, a meeting is convened with local CBOs to establish JDF. Ten organizations commit themselves and a Board is set up. JDF affiliates with the Eastern Cape NGO Coalition.
- 2001 Extensive training and networking are provided through Eastern Cape NGO Coalition. JDF lobbies for space and is given a house by the local municipality for its office space.
- 2002 Ikhala Trust provides JDF with seed funding of R13,000 towards running costs. Individual member organizations also receive financial and technical support.
- 2003-4 NDA grants R870,000 to JDF to be spent within one year. District and provincial governments also allocate funding for the renovation of JDF's office facilities. Member organizations receive funds for programs. New groups come forward seeking a share of the funding after a public handover of the NDA grant. Member organizations register with the Department of Social Development and most attain NPO status.
- 2005 Sis T becomes acting mayor of Ikhwezi.
- 2006 Sis T is appointed as councillor for Ikhwezi and representative of the Ikhwezi Municipality on the Cacadu District Council.
- 2007 JDF is commissioned by the Eastern Cape NGO Coalition to train local civil society organizations. The Eastern Cape Departments of Agriculture and Social Development also commission JDF to assist with monitoring government-supported projects in the region. Department of Social Development and Smart Bytes provide JDF with funding for a telecentre and computer training for youth. JDF's library is set up.
- 2008 JDF's story is documented in *From clients to citizens: Communities changing the course of their own development*.
- 2009 Rumours of financial mismanagement spread; "brain drain" and leadership crisis destabilize JDF.
- 2010 Sis T accepts nomination as councillor for the Cacadu District.
- 2011 Discussions get going about the future of JDF and the local municipality pledges its support.

Critical Questions

- What is the best way to develop leadership in community organizations?
- How can local government most effectively support grassroots development work?
- What role can funders play in supporting the organic growth of community organizations?

Kwenzekile Community Development Centre

Tsolo, Eastern Cape

Introduction

There is a South African saying that women are the rock of the nation. This cannot be more true when describing the late Sheila Ndakisa, the matriarch of the Ndakisa family and inspiration behind the Kwenzekile Community Development Centre (KCDC) near Tsolo in the Eastern Cape.



KCDC, which provides computer training and technical support to local citizens, is located on the Ndakisa family property in Sidwadweni village, 25 km north of Mthatha on the N2 route leading to Durban, South Africa's third largest city. The area's rich history can be traced back to the 13th century when the Makhalima, a clan of the Xhosa people, settled here. Its leader, Chief Mkuseli, told us stories about Sidwadweni, a valley once filled with the scent of flowers, and a native tree known as Sdwadwa that once arched over the royal homestead.

The story of KCDC is different in many ways from what we have learned so far. We again see the theme of leadership and the spirit of service shown by pioneers, but what is special in this case is that it is a family story.

Bongiwe Ndakisa would not have resolved to start this organization if it were not for her mother's inspiration. She also would not have succeeded without her siblings—the project's cofounders, and a network of friends, neighbours, and relatives that extends far beyond the Eastern Cape.

How the Organization Developed

Sheila Ndakisa is remembered as a woman of vision, a community worker who was always keen to help. She was well known in Sidwadweni village for her generosity, caring spirit, and strong faith. She was the backbone of her family, her daughter Bongiwe tells us:

In June 1979, I was born and two months later my father died. My mother had five kids to raise on her own. She wasn't strict in a bad way but she was a disciplinarian. We knew what to do and what was expected. She loved us and was both a mother and father. She never worked yet we never went to bed hungry—I can't tell you how she did it. When I look back now, I thank God for a mother like that because where would I be now if it wasn't for her?

Reverend Ian Wylie, who came to Mthatha in 1990, was part of a generation of Scottish priests who lived and worked in the former Bantustans. He asked Sheila if she would interpret in their church. Over time, Ian and his wife Maryanne developed a close relationship with Sheila, and the Ndakisa and Wylie families became deeply connected. (To this very day, Bongi and her siblings consider the Wylies as their “second set” of parents, and they remain in regular contact.) Although Sheila was not paid a salary for translation services, the Wylies contributed financially to the well-being of the Ndakisa family, helping Sheila establish a home and educate her children. When her daughter Bongi was in her final year of high school, the Wylies encouraged her to use the year productively and take computer and administration courses. Following their advice had far-reaching consequences for Bongi:

I think I was one of the first young people in the village to take a computer course in 1999 and I just fell in love with the computer. When the Wylies left the Eastern Cape in 2000, they gave me one as a present. But I couldn't use it because I had no electricity at home. When my mother saw me with a computer, that was the first time she mentioned how she wished such facilities could come to rural areas. . . . She kept saying this for years and I thought, okay, we should see what we can do. But I never thought I would be the one doing it [starting an organization].

It was a decade later, and five years after Sheila's passing, that her vision was realized on the family property. In 2001, Bongi and her sister were employed (through the Wylies' referral) by READ Educational Trust, an NGO that supports initiatives to improve literacy and access to education. The sisters moved to Johannesburg where they became familiar with the NGO environment. Bongi worked as an administrator and was sometimes asked to help improve her colleagues' computer skills. She also designed educational and promotional materials and learned desktop publishing. It was during her work at READ that she discovered her aptitude for teaching.

When READ's Director Cynthia Hugo mentioned that her daughter in the UK was seeking a child-minder, Bongi's sister, always hungry for adventure, took up the opportunity and Bongi followed her to England a few months later. During their time abroad, Bongi's desire to start an IT centre took shape and her sister urged her to act. They worked hard and sent money home to complete the eight-corner *rondavel* [hut] that had been their mother's dream. They agreed that it would best honour her memory if it was used for Bongi's project. In 2010, Bongi returned from the UK with a laptop she had bought out of her own funds and a printer purchased by her sister. With this basic equipment and her family's support, she was ready to start:

I'm lucky to have family, my sisters, and my brother who have stood by me. I am grateful for what my mother instilled in us—to love each other no matter what. KCDC is a real family initiative and I wouldn't have even tried if it wasn't for their support.

Bongi's personal networks that cut across race and class divisions are no less important in this story. It is through these networks that further resources were mobilized:

When I told Cynthia [Hugo] about my plans, she was very supportive and assured me she would help wherever she could. So in November 2010, when I came back home with the printer and laptop, Cynthia also gave me a desktop computer. Her friend Charles gave us two desktop computers and we were ready to roll.

KCDC is also held together by a special group of friends, five women and one man who are challenging stereotypes about rural women and information technology. Some of them had even been pursuing opportunities away from home when they heeded their friend's call to be part of KCDC's volunteer staff. Bongiwe remembers:

As soon as I came back I started negotiating with people, informing them about what I wanted to do. My cousin Nokulunga was one of the first people I spoke to and she was very excited. I spoke to the others—Pinkie, Xolani, and Hazel who was still in Cape Town and decided to come home. We got started with a charter and business plan and I had a friend, Songezo, who really helped. That was in August of 2010. We also wanted to come up with a name that would have my mother's memory but every time we tried to register it would be rejected. So I called my elder sister at home and asked her for suggestions. She was there with one of her pastors and Pastor Sithole who came up with the suggestion of Kwenzekile ["it has happened"]. Immediately everyone was in agreement.

KCDC started by offering photocopying and faxing services and advertised its first computer course. People came forward to register and the Centre's volunteers felt they should bless this cornerstone. Bongiwe explains:

We weren't sure what would happen and we needed God to guide us. So on 12 January 2011, we had a service we called a dedication. It turned out to be bigger than we thought. We invited a few people but the house was full. It was beautiful.

The class was fully booked with ten students and training began the following week. At the time of this writing, almost a year after that first training, KCDC seems to be well on its way and there is enough demand for their services to keep them open seven days a week. Bongiwe's observations on the Centre's progress make this clear:

The vision is to bridge the digital divide between rural and urban by bringing much needed [IT] services to the community. This is why we have an internet cafe. You would usually have to go into town to do faxing, emailing, and so on. We've brought it here to the village. We even have a lawyer who certifies documents. We do a lot of research for school kids who are slowly starting to learn how to use the computer. We also do a lot of photocopying and printing of CVs . . . lamination and typing as well.

Offering these services has not only brought tangible benefits to the residents of Sidwadweni village, but it has also strengthened relationships within the community. As Bongiwe points out, KCDC has become a hub for friends to gather together:

You learn to know people better. You sit with them and are touched by their stories. . . . Sometimes they come to share hopes and dreams—often just sitting and listening goes a long way. That’s why I think [KCDC] is not just a centre for computer skills but a centre for people who come here to just be.

KCDC is also building relationships with other organizations that are interested in working in the area. The partnership with READ Educational Trust has been formalized and the two organizations have jointly set up a public library in the local primary school. Cynthia Hugo continues to assist KCDC privately with fundraising and by providing mentorship on organization development. READ staff also linked Bongiwe with Derek Potgieter, the driving force for a vegetable garden project with the local school, who has become a KCDC board member. He also supports the library initiative. It was Derek who introduced KCDC to Ikhala Trust which has become the Centre’s first funder.

Ikhala Trust has provided ongoing mentoring, support, and small financial contributions. It has also helped KCDC forge links with Smart Byte for accreditation purposes, which has added credibility to KCDC’s training program. Through its relationship with Ikhala Trust KCDC has gained strength:

When we started this project, we wanted to build it up ourselves because you take care of something you’ve invested in. Now I think we are at a point where we can approach people because we have built a foundation. Ikhala provides us with training and supplies in the form of tables, four laptops and R9,000 cash. . . . They also take us out for a break and we are grateful.

While KCDC has been providing services to the community as a whole, it has taken a particular interest in young people. A youth-driven and youth-focused organization, it is creating linkages between those who have left the village and their friends and relatives who have remained there. Bongiwe explains:

Having grown up in the area, we know how much we need to develop skills. That is why we decided the Centre should be here. Youth are so discouraged. They mostly feel, “So I’ve passed matriculation [Grade 12], what now? There are no opportunities.” So we try to encourage them. . . . We work closely with WITS [University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg], which gives career guidance and information about bursaries and loans. It is students studying at WITS who felt there aren’t enough students from Eastern Cape, so they come [home] to give back.

The youth in Sidwadweni are motivated by KCDC’s young leaders and entrepreneurs who are showing by example that the city does not necessarily promise a better life. For Bongiwe, home is truly where the heart is:

I don’t think I can go anywhere now. I have been quite a reserved person, but [KCDC] has really helped me grow. I have never grown as fast as in this past year in truly understanding people. When I worked, I just engaged [with] others on a professional level. Here it is much more than that. The relationships are tighter. . . . It is a family.

Let's hear other voices as well. What chorus are they singing?

I was recruited because I am from here—born and bred. The work that we are doing is important as sometimes staying in the rural area inhibits development. Of importance is that youth are being helped by others from here rather than people from the outside (Ndoyisile “Doc” Siphika, KCDC Chairperson).

I am a resident in the area and got involved with KCDC through Bongiwe's recruitment. She told me about her ideas and good intentions. We feel proud to have a project of this nature in our area (Nocolile Siphika, KCDC Board Member).

I was the first “old lady” to go through the course and now more women have followed. The certificate I received improves my chances of employment and I am so excited and grateful (Nokhanyisile Kholeka, KCDC student).

The very idea of KCDC is appreciated because one would not expect to find an initiative of this nature in the village. In an area like this, people really want facilities and skills but don't know where to go. Once [the facilities and skills are] brought here, there is a lot of enthusiasm and interest . . . it is encouraging to see one of our own initiating something like this (R. M. Raxoti, teacher at Mchathu Junior School).

We met because of Bongi. When she was in Johannesburg, she would come home and talk to us about development in the rural areas. . . . She asked us to facilitate that process, making sure that we equip rural youth with knowledge. Although I am studying, I make time to help as this has been brought by a member of this community (Nosipho Grove, KCDC volunteer).

KCDC has attracted many young people previously trapped in activities that were not developing them. It also gave us an opportunity to influence others (Nokuthula Yekela, KCDC volunteer).

We have seen the strengths that come to an organization when it is embedded in the community and plugged into local networks. The work of KCDC is being recognized not only by the local residents, but also by traditional leaders. Chief Mkuseli Makhalima is actively supporting KCDC, and it has been offered a prime site on the busy N2 highway for an expanded Information Technology Centre. Bongiwe reveals the exciting plan that is starting to take shape:

We proposed to the Chief to have two hectares to build 4-5 classrooms, a parking area, offices, sports ground, and music/dance studio. I think we will have a sewing hall and a self-catering bed and breakfast . . . we hope that investors will be interested. The community will also be asked to contribute.

It seems that exciting times are ahead for KCDC. This small enterprise run by family and friends is now ready to expand and seems to have all the support required to bring its operations to scale. One hopes that KCDC is able to keep the pace of change that is right for it.

Reflections

Similar to the Klawer case, the story of KCDC has given us another window into the transformative role that churches and church leaders play in South Africa. What is it about the servants of faith that is so important in these stories? Is it that people tend to trust them on account of accepting that their intentions are honourable? Or perhaps it is the pivotal role that churches and other faith-based organizations played in South Africa's struggle for freedom.

The crucial role that Father Jackson had in the case of the Klawer Advice and Development Centre and the equally important role that the Wylie family played in the case of KCDC also challenge stereotypes regarding so-called "insiders" and "outsiders" in community development. These leaders were tied only temporarily to the geographic communities in question, but their contributions were integral to the success of these communities.

We also see the many positive contributions that individuals (and organizations) "from the outside" have made, which sheds light on the question of how to best stimulate and support community-driven development. In particular, colleagues from READ Educational Trust have played an important role in supporting Bongiwe's vision and helping shape KCDC. Such relationships with people at the grassroots can create effective ways for NGOs and other development actors to enter a rural area, building on networks that are already in place.

By contrast, in the first two cases we have seen the flip side of some partnerships. In Klawer, we saw how the Advice and Development Centre diversified and expanded its activities through its partnerships with outside actors; but we also saw how these partnerships stirred confusion and conflict among community leaders. The story of JDF also showed us how opportunities can accelerate the growth of a small organization, whereby unrealistic expectations are placed on the shoulders of pioneers.

The theme of leadership runs through all these stories. They invite us to reflect on how some naturally fulfill this role while others (as in Bongiwe's case) are "groomed" by way of encouragement and confidence that other people instill in them. Perhaps the greatest gem in the case of KCDC is the energy that young people awaken in others when they follow their hearts and pursue something they truly believe in.

Timeline

- 1990 Ian Wylie's ministry starts in Sidwadweni. Sheila Ndakisa is approached as a translator and becomes the Wylies' family friend.
- 1998 The Wylies pay for Bongiwe Ndakisa to do a computer course during her final year in school. Bongi's mother sees her strong passion and talent for computers and encourages her to share them with others.
- 2000 The Wylies present Bongi with a computer.

- 2001 Through the Wylies' connections, Bongi and her sister accept jobs at READ Educational Trust in Johannesburg.
- 2008-9 Bongi goes to the UK to join her sister who is working there. Bongi's siblings encourage her to initiate an IT project inspired by their late mother's vision.
- 2010 Bongi returns to South Africa with a laptop and a printer. KCDC is launched and registered. Additional equipment is sourced. Basic services (faxing, photocopying, typing, printing) are offered at the Centre.
- 2011 KCDC offers the first computer course for 10 students. Contact is made with Ikhala Trust. Board is set up. Through Ikhala, KCDC partners with Smart Byte to provide accreditation and certification of its courses. Ikhala donates R9,000 in two stages towards KCDC's operational costs. Joint projects with READ are underway at the local primary school (library) and with a sewing group.

Critical Questions

- How can technology be used to bridge the rural–urban divide?
- What support and incentives can be made available to mobilize youth within community-driven initiatives?
- How can NGOs support staff and volunteers of community organizations and deliver programs in the places they are based?
- What roles can traditional authorities play in supporting community-driven development?
- What roles can churches and other faith-based organizations play in supporting community-driven development?
- Is there a greater role for diasporas in supporting activities in their home communities?

Ixabiso Lomntu

Flagstaff, Eastern Cape

Introduction

Ixabiso Lomntu is a community health care centre based in Ndakeni village in the north-eastern corner of the Eastern Cape Province, about 12 km north of Flagstaff. Its name (which can be translated into English as “the worth of a person”) not only captures the essence of this organization, but it also underlies everything we have learned so far. It is thus appropriate that we end our exploration with this case study.

Although Ixabiso Lomntu has improved the lives of many local citizens, its story was not an easy journey. In this case, we will touch on challenges such as paternalism, corruption, and destructive community dynamics, and we will learn more about the struggles that CBO leaders face when they have to manage the expectations and agendas of outside actors.



The Mineworkers' Struggle

Ndakeni village lies close to the national road that runs along the misty mountains bordering Kwa-Zulu Natal. During the apartheid era, Flagstaff was a popular feeder for De Beers and Anglo Gold mining companies and generations of men were recruited to work underground. The migrant labour system, designed to supply white South Africa with an endless stream of cheap labour, is considered one of apartheid's most brutal legacies.

Migration (particularly of the village men) was devastating for the economy of Ndakeni, and over time, it disrupted the rhythms of family and community life. Mineworkers began protesting against abhorrent working conditions as far back as 1882, but it was only a full century later that the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was formally established to protect them.

A few years later, after the mineworkers' strike of 1987 (the largest and most expensive strike in South African history) and wave of layoffs that followed, the NUM launched the Mineworkers Development Agency (MDA) as its development arm. Its goal was to stimulate village economy, particularly in areas where NUM members came from. The men of Ndakeni village are deeply affected by this history, and some of them are founding members of both MDA and Ixabiso Lomntu. With this backdrop in mind, we begin our exploration.

How the Organization Developed

In 2004, a group of neighbours gathered together to discuss the worsening state of health among the people of Ndakeni. They were particularly concerned about poor access to health services, especially for people with HIV/AIDS, and about orphaned children and elders who suffered from abuse and neglect. The group consulted the school governing body, and as they shared ideas, a common vision began to take shape.

They agreed that a community-based primary health care centre was needed. The village headman was appointed director to lead the project with the support of a management committee. The project took off, first called a hospice and later renamed Ixabiso Lomntu. The organization's former chairperson, Sonwabo Msezeli, explains:

The reason why we chose that name was because of the demand we discovered from our community. The value of our people was not being addressed. They were sick and not being attended to. Unemployed and not being attended to. So we took that name because we wanted to raise up the value of our people again.

The initiatives started small with door-to-door visits and provision of home-based care. Later, a few orphans were taken into neighbours' homes and several chronic patients were admitted into a makeshift hospice. Volunteers came forward to serve on the board or as unpaid staff, and neighbours contributed what they could. Vera Macakatsha, Ixabiso Lomntu's volunteer nurse, remembers:

We first admitted very young children who were abandoned and children with HIV. We worked hard with few beds and asked people to donate blankets and sponges. We also contributed from our own pockets to transport patients. We did this because we have a passion for people.

A former volunteer Nophelo Mthi provides further glimpses of the organization's first steps:

People really helped in the organization as we started with nothing. Initially they contributed R100 though it was difficult. We also received donations from churches, shops, and community members of toys, sheets, food, money, meat, groceries, old clothes, and furniture. Boxer Stores [local retailer] gave R500 [food] voucher every month.

The dedication of a few pioneers was inspiring compassion in others, and eventually many local citizens as well as organizations came forward to offer assistance or material support.

In 2007, Ikhala Trust, impressed by the passion, resourcefulness, and good leadership demonstrated by the pioneering group, provided Ixabiso Lomntu with its first-ever outside funding—a grant of R9,000. The activities of Ixabiso Lomntu rapidly escalated when the NDA became its partner a few months later, providing a grant of R1.3 million. Similar to the JDF case, the funds had to be spent quickly on program activities and construction of a “one-stop” health centre. Ixabiso Lomntu’s Board secured a piece of land and contractors were hired to build the facilities, but in the final moments, the agreement fell through. It was then that the Msezeli family was approached to consider donating its land.

Sonwabo Msezeli, like most other men in the village, had worked for Anglo Gold Mines for many years, but was retrenched in 1988 because of his union activism with NUM. It was in that year that he decided to pursue community work full-time with the MDA. He explains:

I was a volunteer for five years without any stipend and sometimes my sister and wife would fight with me asking where I go to everyday coming back without a cent. I would say to them, “I am building a house and one day you will see the fruits.”

In view of his deep commitment to community causes, Mr. Msezeli was appointed chair of Ixabiso Lomntu’s Board in 2005. When asked to donate land for a local health care facility, his family unanimously agreed that a portion of their land should be granted to the project as long as it was used for community benefit. As Mr. Msezeli told us, it was a natural way for them to act:

We were brought up by parents who taught us to unite. Our mother, when she slaughtered a chicken, would share it with many households; and in times of drought, people used to come to our home for food. Our father was the kind of person who would ask his workplace for a job for others.

With this generous land donation, planning for the construction of the community health care centre began in 2008, but something seemed amiss. During the planning process, the Board became suspicious of mismanagement on the part of the director. Accounts did not balance and large portions of grant funding could not be accounted for. Ikhala’s R9,000 donation had simply vanished and there were discrepancies between the director’s financial reports and the bank statements. The large NDA grant introduced further complications, and the pressure to spend this grant within a tight time frame added to the chaos. Mr. Msezeli explains:

The director of the organization did not want to brief us [the Board] about what was happening in the organization. . . . The only thing he said was that we received funding from NDA in July 2007 for activities amounting to R1.3 million and that R332,000 needed to be spent within three months. The Board refused because we felt we needed to come up with a work plan and decide how cash flow was to be done. We told him to spend according to the allocated budget and to give financial reports. That was the end of him. We discovered there was no management—he was “Jack of all trades” and everyone was doing what they were told without understanding.

The Board members undertook an internal audit and, in an unorthodox move, they informed both Ikhala Trust and the NDA when they had enough evidence to confirm that money had been

stolen. The NDA immediately sent a delegation to investigate the issue and Ixabiso Lomntu's director was publicly exposed. He was summoned to a meeting where he was confronted by the organization's volunteers and expelled. In 2009, he was charged in the High Court with corruption. He was found guilty and ordered to pay back the stolen funds plus all legal fees.

Good leadership is about acting ethically and decisively. Impressed by the honesty and good governance that Ixabiso Lomntu's Board had displayed, both Ikhala Trust and NDA decided (in an equally unorthodox move) to continue supporting the organization as it restructured.

With the removal of the corrupt director, Ixabiso Lomntu found itself without a manager and the Board needed to appoint a new director quickly. Mr. Msezeli agreed to act as an advisor to the new director during the transition period, but after a few difficult months, he was asked to take up the position of director himself. The MDA agreed to reassign him and finance this position, thus cementing the partnership between the two organizations.

Mr. Msezeli's immediate priority was to tighten up the "loose systems" that had allowed corruption to occur in the first place. Ikhala Trust sponsored a strategic planning workshop and an organogram was designed to introduce a management structure. While formalization of the organizational structure did help Ixabiso Lomntu function more effectively, the changes were not well received by all staff. Internal tensions erupted. Mr. Msezeli remembers:

There were some conflicts between myself and management and finally in January 2011 it burst out. There was no teamwork amongst the group and perhaps with me as well. The staff thought I was misleading them. . . . I told them we are moving out of a culture of being a project to becoming an NPO.

Over time, the staff adapted to the formalized structure and internal issues were resolved. Ixabiso Lomntu now stands as an impressive compound on the Msezeli family land and the vision that was once a dream is being realized. Ixabiso Lomntu's facilities include administration office, nutrition centre, vegetable garden, senior home, hospice, voluntary counselling and testing centre, and a well-equipped preschool.⁵ In addition to providing basic health care services, Ixabiso Lomntu offers a range of youth development programs including homework support and sports activities. The organization is in the process of building its own bakery and guest accommodation sponsored by Ikhala Trust.

Ixabiso Lomntu's staff and volunteers are showing what it means to value another person as they provide care to children, people with disabilities, and seniors who have suffered from abuse and neglect. Through their example, they are teaching that a true community is a place of belonging and compassion for one another.

Nophelo Mthi, a former manager of Ixabiso Lomntu's home-based care program, offers one story:

Nosindiso Wetshe came to us when we were still working from somebody's home. She was very sick [and] couldn't walk but could talk. She was very talkative and I loved her so much. We were struggling at the time so would cook whatever we had. She used to be very

⁵ The preschool is a partnership project with Friends of Ireland—an international development agency.

fussy and say: “I’m not going to eat this,” and I would beg her to eat so that she could take her medication. She told me that she was HIV positive and I was glad to hear someone who was not ashamed to talk about her status. She motivated many people including us as workers.

Nosindiso Wetshe has her own impressions to share:

Those were difficult times. If her [Mrs. Mthi’s] husband was any other man, he would have divorced her as she used to take food that he bought for home and bring it here for me. She was my mother and Zukiswa [Ixabiso Lomntu’s carer] was my sister as I had no one else. . . . Her husband even knows me because his wife loved me and talked about us. He realizes the contribution they were making to my life. I am very proud of her. . . . The volunteers brought soap and did our washing in the river. We did not have enough beds then and did not even have toilets but we survived. We never slept with dirty blankets—they made sure we were clean. I was never helped by the Department of Health though I was in a wheelchair and was unable to wash myself. These people here washed me—they are caring here and they are dedicated to what they do. I was here for nine years and am now living a good life because of them.

Zukiswa Mkhizwana, a carer with Ixabiso Lomntu, gives a matter-of-fact account of one case, which speaks volumes about Ixabiso Lomntu culture:

I saw him [Thembinkosi Nbaligontsi] after he was involved in a car accident where he suffered head injuries. I noticed him limping whilst on my way to work so I visited him. His aunt welcomed me with both hands and said she needed help so I offered. I promised to bring the testing kit with Ixabiso Lomntu resources. I first asked if I could do a diabetes test. He was already being treated for epilepsy. I asked him to go to the clinic and test for HIV and the results came back positive. I did counselling and encouraged him to attend a support group so that he could understand the side effects of antiretroviral treatment. I visited weekly to check if everything is going well and he now feels much better.

Thembinkosi Nbaligontsi’s aunt Mathombela speaks of this case with deep emotion:

Zukiswa came as a good Samaritan. I was confused and she offered help. She took my nephew to the Holy Cross Clinic. . . . I learned [from her] how he should take his pills and how to assist him. . . . He is now helpful and does manual work at times. I really appreciate Zukiswa’s contribution and am very thankful to Ixabiso Lomntu—he has escaped death.

Some of the people staying at the care facility have shared equally heartfelt experiences:

We are happy and better now. We were very ill when we arrived but receive regular visits from [Ixabiso Lomntu’s] volunteers. They wake us up with warm water in the morning and give us good care (Levilah Msithweni).

This feels like home. I eat what I like. When I want tea, I receive it. When it is very cold, they bring heaters. I am free and do as I please. When I want to go out, they put me in a wheelchair and push me to where I want to go. Even if I want to visit home, they take me

there and bring me back. I was sick and very thin but now I have gained weight and am healthy (Elizabeth Khandlathi).

It is so nice to be here and people are good to us. . . . They have motivated and encouraged me. Now I feel much better. I used to be confused but I feel safe here. They do everything for me (Thandasile Magidigidi).

These testimonies describe the difference that Ixabiso Lomntu has made in the lives of many individuals and families. The Centre has also helped local government and NGOs run their programs more effectively in the area.

Interface with Partners

Over time, Ixabiso Lomntu has grown and solidified its networks. For example, it has developed excellent relationships with Chief Gcinilizwe Sigcawu of Ntlenzi Traditional Council (based in Flagstaff), who endorses its work: “We are very proud of the relationship between Ixabiso Lomntu and the Royal House. It is where we see charity being given to others and they have our blessing.”

Ixabiso Lomntu also works closely with the Ward Council—a civic engagement unit under the local municipality. It maintains excellent relationships with councillor Monwabisi Mfingwana, who had the following to say about its importance:

This project has been here for some time and the management and staff call us to work with them. Many people have nobody to care for them. There are vulnerable children who have lost their parents. But they now have a place to start. I am very pleased with this organization and people respect it.

Ikhala Trust continues to fund Ixabiso Lomntu and also provides training and mentoring support. The relationship between the two organizations has deepened over time and is currently evolving into a strategic partnership. Ikhala recently took a bold decision to fund the building of a guest house at the Ixabiso Lomntu Care Centre, allocating its largest ever grant to this project. Ikhala also recognized Ixabiso Lomntu’s achievements by nominating it the “best grantee” at its annual grantee conference in 2011.

Relationships with NDA continue as well, and presently it assists Ixabiso Lomntu in establishing its own vegetable garden by sponsoring the training of its staff in permaculture and by supplying seeds and compost as part of NDA’s food security program. Various trainings have also been provided by a number of other organizations including OR Tambo District Municipality, Veli Trust, Bambisanani, and MDA.

In 2007, Ixabiso Lomntu also entered into a partnership with Friends of Ireland, initiated by the local Roman Catholic Church. Its preschool and nutrition programs are based on the Friends of Ireland model which standardizes the menu, daily schedule, and architectural design for preschool facilities. However, building effective working relationships with this organization has proved challenging. Mr. Msezeli explains:

Our culture is different, environment is different, experiences are different. What we are expecting to happen is to sit down together, put those aspects together, and then take our partnership forward. We are not going to accept things that are being imposed. . . . Sit down with us, clarify roles and way of assessing and monitoring. You monitor us and we also monitor you.

The initial attempts to engage with the Eastern Cape Department of Health were challenging as well: Ixabiso Lomntu was shunned because it did not conform to the Department's protocols. Nophelo Mthi observes:

I remember the first day we went to the Department of Health and were told that we should not have started the organization without consulting them. We told them that we saw a need as there are many people seeking help. Until this day they have never assisted us.

Fortunately, Ixabiso Lomntu has established close working relationships with a nearby clinic where its services are appreciated. One of the clinic's nurses has indicated this clearly:

They refer clients to us, come and take treatment for those who are not able to come to the clinic, at times organizing cars to fetch the treatment from here. I can say they are special because they keep people who do not have relatives to take care of them.

As these examples indicate, the experiences Ixabiso Lomntu has had with partners over the past eight years have been mixed. In some cases, partners have provided training and much needed resources for infrastructure and personnel. At other times, their actions (or inaction) have undermined local ownership and put the valuable services provided by Ixabiso Lomntu into question.

Reflections

This case study has shown us how ordinary people took initiative to make health care services accessible in a remote rural area. Local citizens came together with a common vision and contributed their own resources to start a hospice, a program for orphans and vulnerable children, and a care facility for seniors and other people with special needs. With the gifting of land, a sizeable grant from the NDA, and partnerships with MDA, Ikhala Trust, and Friends of Ireland, Ixabiso Lomntu has grown. Yet it is instructive to see how external funding took the organization to a higher level of complexity and how quickly corruption crept in. Corruption is like a cancer that spreads and erodes the precious resources meant for community development. It also destroys the trust and confidence that people have invested in their leadership. The good governance displayed by the Ixabiso Lomntu Board was key to saving this organization.

The pioneering group of Ixabiso Lomntu has faced litigation, internal conflict, and public hostility, but it did establish a firm foundation. As we traced the evolution of Ixabiso Lomntu, we saw how community assets were gifted and how these acts of generosity have instilled a sense of ownership and pride in the organization. The daily contributions of knowledge, skills, time, and

material resources—contributions that are often overlooked or disregarded by outsiders—have been and continue to be part and parcel of this CBO. They provide clear evidence that there are many people in South Africa who are driving community development, starting with what they have. It is hoped that others will be inspired to do the same.

Timeline

- 2004 Concerned residents of Ndakeni village organize a meeting to discuss the alarming increase in HIV/AIDS incidence and the growing number of child-headed households as well as poor access to health care. A committee is established to design and run a community program for holistic care. The local headman is appointed as director.
- 2004-7 The organization starts as a hospice run from a vacant house. A senior care facility is also established and a facility to accommodate orphaned children in a neighbour's home. Carers provide home-based care. The organization is sustained through volunteer contributions and food, clothing, and money donated by residents, the local church, and retail store.
- 2007 Sonwabo Msezeli is appointed chair of the Board. Ikhala Trust provides seed funding of R9,000. NDA awards a grant of R1.3 million to be spent in one year. Director controls the grant and spends over R300,000 in the first quarter. A partnership is launched with Friends of Ireland. Staff are appointed and volunteers receive stipends.
- 2008 The Msezeli family agrees to donate land for a primary health care centre. Construction of the Centre begins. Internal investigation confirms that money has been stolen by the headman/director.
- 2009 Corrupt director is expelled and Ikhala Trust and NDA are informed of financial mismanagement within the organization. New director is appointed. Construction of the health care centre is completed.
- 2010 Case of fraud is taken up by Mthatha High Court and won by Ixabiso Lomntu. Former director is ordered to pay back all monies stolen from the organization plus legal fees. Mr. Msezeli is appointed director and resigns from the Board. MDA agrees to finance the position and seconds him. Ikhala Trust sponsors a strategic planning workshop and the organization is restructured and formalized with the introduction of a management layer and separation of offices according to line function.
- 2011 The new formalized structure creates confusion among volunteers and conflict erupts. The Board intervenes. The situation is resolved internally. Ikhala Trust awards another grant of R71,000 (the highest in its history) to Ixabiso Lomntu, part of which is to go towards building guest accommodation. Ixabiso Lomntu receives the “best grantee” award at Ikhala’s annual conference.

Critical Questions

- How can community health care be promoted using an asset-based approach?
- How can staff be retained in community organizations, what incentives can be generated?
- How can community organizations protect themselves from corruption?
- How can governance bodies of community organizations actively exercise their oversight role?
- When should outside agencies invest in community-driven activities—and in what ways?
- What type of leadership is needed in community organizations and how can community leaders effectively engage traditional and political structures?

Section Two

COMMON THREADS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The preceding section presented the voices of four CBOs. These organizations emerged organically and relied on their own resources to move forward at the early stages of their evolution. As they gained momentum, they attracted the attention of outside agencies that began to support their work or to use them as entry points for delivering their own programs and services. However, the driving forces of change still lie within the community and its members continue to determine with whom and how they enter into partnerships and take responsibility for the consequences of these partnerships.

The experiences of these organizations reveal some common threads that provide lessons for those who want to stimulate and support community-driven development—lessons about appropriate entry points for supporting community activities, the various factors that motivate people to act, and the principles of building effective partnerships. In the following pages, we will discuss these common threads and offer a number of recommendations for community leaders and outside agencies on the basis of this discussion.

Common Threads

Community organizations often started with a group of friends or family members

In all of the above cases, it was never the entire community that took part in development activities. Rather, it was a group of close friends, family members, or neighbours with a common vision and shared moral principles. These groups were not created by an outside agency; rather, their founders came together naturally because they all wanted to do something about an issue that concerned them deeply, not because there was outside funding available for this cause.

Outside actors that proved most supportive were able to recognize and value the work that was already being carried out by these community groups, and directed their contributions of time, money, and other resources towards supporting this work. Often, it was not a formal organization that provided this vital assistance, but individuals who had come to intimately understand the community in question, such as a down-to-earth clergyman or members of the diaspora.

My brother is a volunteer—our public relations officer—and very involved. My sister in England is a risk taker so it's easy for her to just jump into something and do it. KCDC is a real family initiative.

— Bongiwe Ndakisa

Positive role models served as sources of inspiration

Community members in these stories were motivated to act for a variety of reasons. One common thread was the inspiration drawn from positive role models. The founders and leaders of all four organizations were fortunate to have mentors (in the form of family members, friends, trusted neighbours, or priests) who held high expectations for their potential and helped them cultivate the virtue of giving to the community.

Like their mentors, the key figures in these stories were able to motivate others by example. Community members were not always receptive, however, and all leaders in these cases had to “rise above” harsh attacks from skeptics who did not believe they would succeed. Over time, these critics sometimes joined the group or were “neutralized” by the group’s momentum and the support it gained from other community members and external partners.

It's not that I want recognition but I want to know where I can improve. I want to be excellent.

— Ruiter Julies

Some leaders employed a more deliberate strategy of bringing new members into the fold. Endowed with ability to recognize the gifts in other people, they simply went door-to-door or

called their fellow community members on the phone asking them to contribute their skills and talents for the community benefit. For some people, the mere acknowledgment of their abilities was already sufficient to gain their support—indeed, in some cases it brought people back from the city to their home communities. Other people needed more time to be convinced. As Bongiwe Ndakisa explains, “some people have to see that it is happening.”

In some cases, providing the space for others to participate helped build a sense of ownership for the project within the wider community and fostered a culture of leadership distributed among a number of people. However, a broad leadership base did not develop spontaneously in all cases: pioneers in Klawer, Jansenville, and Tsolo had to make deliberate attempts to groom young people into future leadership roles.

Ixabiso Lomntu provides an example of the positive effects of a distributed leadership. Without a board determined to act with integrity and a committed team of volunteers, this organization would not have been able either to expel a director found guilty of corruption or to continue operating without the top executive for several months thereafter.

Community organizations often emerged to compensate for gaps in government services

During the apartheid era, people at the grassroots self-mobilized to provide critical services for their fellow community members, as demonstrated by the Klawer Advice Office, which was established to advocate for the rights of coloured people. Despite the post-apartheid government's

The value of our people was not being addressed. They were sick and not being attended to. . . . Government cannot be all over, so we have decided to establish services on our own.

— Sonwabo Msezeli

declared commitment to making basic services accessible to all citizens, some community organizations continued to deliver certain public services on their own or on behalf of NGOs and government offices, as they had become attractive entry points for the programs of these agencies.

This trend has had mixed results. When external support was in line with ongoing community-led activities, it provided much-needed financial relief to CBOs and enabled them to serve greater numbers of people. In such cases, external support helped maintain locally sensitive service delivery mechanisms that were embedded in community structures.

On the other hand, some groups also reported that the manner in which external support was provided made them feel that it was a means whereby NGOs or government agencies offloaded their work onto community organizations which often didn't have enough resources to do this work effectively. This type of support placed demands on CBOs that were beyond their mandate and capacity, which unintentionally undermined their responsiveness to community priorities. For some organizations, the extra responsibilities offloaded onto them resulted in mission drift.

Whether the support of external agencies helps create more effective decentralized service delivery mechanisms or translates into offloading service delivery responsibilities onto CBOs is an issue that leads to further questions. Should the State support CBOs in the role of public service providers? Or should it take over the service delivery function, thereby allowing community

groups to mobilize their capacity (and local assets) fully for meeting the unique aspirations of their own community? In the cases considered, the government's stance regarding this dilemma was not always clear.

Community organizations started small relying only upon their members' resources, and later developed partnerships that both furthered and hindered their progress

In all four cases considered, the financial and in-kind contributions of organization members were essential ingredients of their success, particularly at the initial stage. Indeed, all people who played key roles in these cases pointed to modest personal savings, proceeds from local fund-raising events, and even pocket money donations as the starting points for their organizations.

Besides these, there were other tangible contributions that helped put things in motion: a printer, a house for meetings, food, clothes, blankets, furniture, and land.

While these kinds of resources were important, it was often the intangible contributions that kept community organizations going. These institutions often survived without any money for considerable periods of time, relying instead on the mutual moral support among their members and the wider community.

These contributions have often gone unnoticed by outside agencies and some CBO members expressed frustration with the overemphasis on funding as the sole form of support. By contrast, partnerships with the WCCF and Ikhala Trust were highly appreciated because of the importance these NGOs placed on mentoring, networking, and confidence-building, in addition to providing small amounts of money that allowed community organizations to develop on their own terms and at their own pace.

This type of support was often eclipsed by large funding that disrupted the organic growth of community-led activities. Several groups that used to rely on member contributions were quickly overwhelmed by large grants from government agencies.

While these funding initiatives were driven by genuinely good intentions, small CBOs simply could not spend the grants as fast as the donors wanted. Nor could they fulfill the associated reporting requirements, at least initially.

In some instances, such "financial leaps" also appeared to demotivate local citizens from contributing to the community organizations as they had willingly done before. As a result, some CBOs had either chosen to continue to run with full-time volunteer staff or lost steam and had to close shop for a while. Most organizations have shown resilience and eventually rebounded with renewed support of their communities.

Sometimes a donor comes in and says: "I've got money for this and that." You want to switch off from your program and go to that side. Yet, if they can't fund what you are doing, then you must let them go.

— Notizi Vanda

Recommendations

The following recommendations represent the “collective voice” of all organizations and individuals featured in this publication. As such, this part of the publication can be viewed as a round-table discussion among CBO members and their supporters.

For community leaders

Building a community organization takes time. Start small with the resources you have at hand and focus on attaining the “low-hanging fruits” (tasks you can accomplish without relying on outside assets). Find people who are in solidarity with the cause you are passionate about, both within your community and beyond (including former local residents now living elsewhere), and ask them to contribute their time, talents, and other resources to this cause. Value and cultivate this grassroots giving for it is key to your organization’s sustainability.

When you are ready to reach out to external supporters and donors, make sure that you understand the terms of your engagement. Know your strengths and understand your capacity. Take account of the pace of change in your organization and decline, or suspend use of, outside support if it poses a risk of undermining your sense of ownership over the work you are doing.

When you find prospective partners, use what you have already accomplished as leverage to gain their support. Take a proactive approach in your relationships with NGOs and government agencies: get them to know your ideas and appreciate the contributions you have already made to your work, in addition to responding to the terms set out in their proposals and tenders.

For outside agencies

Supporting community-driven development requires taking the time to locate the agents of change in the communities where you work. This means focusing your attention on people who are already organized and have carried out some activities for the benefit of their community using their own resources. These agents may not be found in formal structures. Be patient and allow community groups to emerge organically and demonstrate commitment to their stated causes before investing in their activities.

To ensure effective investment in community activities, it is advisable to ask community groups that request your support to indicate in their application initiatives that are already under way and the local resources (in-kind and cash) they have mobilized to conduct these initiatives, rather than enter communities with ready-made programs designed by your organization.

When the time is right for investment, consider the expectations you are placing on community organizations by engaging with them. Make sure that communities understand the conditions of your support (timelines, reporting requirements, communication expectations, etc.). Obtain information on the grants that were previously provided by others to the organizations you are considering to support and make sure that the amount of funding requested is in line with their management capacity.

Evaluate your own funding strategies. If you are investing in a community group to achieve your own program objectives, then compensation for the group members' time may be necessary. On the other hand, if you are investing in community organizations to help them achieve their own goals, then a different model (e.g., providing matching grants or revolving loans) may be more appropriate.

Partnership models may also be different. It may happen that your engagement will expand beyond only providing financial support to creating opportunities for local citizens to develop more effective management and other skills and assume greater responsibilities within their organization in order to ensure its leadership sustainability over time. You may even want to offer mentorship as part of your involvement.

Mentorship does not have to be very time-consuming and could be provided through more detailed feedback on the community organization's project reports as well as participation in its milestone events so that its members can use them to learn.

Conclusion

By documenting the stories of four South African CBOs, we have uncovered valuable lessons for community organizations and outside agencies that want to support their work. For community organizations, we have highlighted the importance of starting small, relying on the locally available resources in the first place, choosing like-minded partners carefully, and growing at one's own pace. We have also indicated the importance of positive role models as well as developing "leadership grooming" strategies to ensure the organization's ability to carry forward when its founders move on to other things or retire from active duty.

For outside actors, these stories make a case for redesigning partnership strategies to ensure that funders give priority to identifying and supporting community groups already engaged in development work, rather than creating new groups that would fit with their own spending and reporting requirements (which may not take into account the pace of change in community life). For some agencies, making this shift may require spending more time in the communities where they are offering support, in order to understand their dynamics and engage in the local development process as genuine partners and mentors. Other external actors may find our recommendations to be essentially the same as what they themselves have been promoting for years.

A Final Word: The Importance of Appreciation

When asked to comment on the experience of having their stories documented by an outside organization, community members observed that they were unaccustomed to people coming into their communities to appreciate their efforts. Ruiter Julies has summed up this novel experience as follows: "Instead of just focusing on the negative, we celebrated our people and took pride in our accomplishments."

Bongiwe Ndakisa expressed similar sentiments: "We used to talk about [our work] and then stopped thinking about it. This [case study project] helped us to not take things for granted." It also reaffirmed their organization's relevance in community life and gave it a further incentive to continue into the future: "Reliving the experience helped us to think about ways to make it happen again." Appreciation of the lived experiences of local citizens was the primary purpose of this project. Their testimonies point to the importance of enabling and encouraging people at the grassroots to "shine the light" on initiatives that are conducive to community-driven development, whether these be found within communities, NGOs, government offices, or among funding partners. We hope that our publication will inspire further action towards this goal.



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