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Capacity Building at the Grassroots:

Piloting Organisational Development of Community-Based Organisations in South Africa

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Introduction

This paper explores the use of organisational development (OD) for capacity building of community-based organisations (CBOs) in South Africa. The author works for Community Connections, a South African non-profit support organisation which predominantly provides support to CBOs and community workers[1]. In 2004, the organisation initiated an OD pilot programme, which has been accompanied by research for a doctoral thesis from this year. The aims of the pilot programme and the research are to examine in what ways OD facilitation can support the capacity building of CBOs, and hence contribute to community development and civil society strengthening. This paper presents initial reflections.

Community-Based Organisations in South Africa

In a South African society dominated by the apartheid regime, CBOs have historically played a crucial role in transforming power relations and addressing community needs[2]. There are nearly 99,000 non-profit organisations (NPOs) in South Africa, 53,929 of which are CBOs or Voluntary Associations[3]. Most NPOs have thus been established by the poor communities to address their needs[4]. This contradicts prevailing assumptions that development services are mainly provided by professionally run non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

CBOs[5] are small, informal organisations initiated by local residents and based within the communities they serve. They are often membership-based, operate on a voluntary basis, and tend to lack formal structure or strategy[6]. This makes it difficult for them to interface with other stakeholders in the development sector, such as donors or local government. Many CBOs run development programmes, sometimes through intermediary NGOs[7]. Although the institutional environment in South

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[1] Community Connections was initiated in February 2000 in response to the escalation of poverty in South Africa and isolation of community workers and community-based organisations (CBOs). From the onset, the motivation was to strengthen the capacity of grassroots organisations to facilitate social transformation and community-led development.

[2] Wilson & Ramphele 1989: 261.
[3] Swilling & Russell 2002: 21.
[4] Ibid: 85.
[5] CBOs can be defined as voluntary associations of community members who reflect the interests of a broader constituency (Kaplan et al. 1994).
[6] Connections 2002: 2.
[7] Eade 1997: 6.

Africa increasingly allows CBOs to influence the national agenda, CBOs continue to be marginalised. The pilot programme and research project therefore examine how OD can be adapted to capacity building of CBOs and thus become a vehicle for creating strong civil society organisations that can participate actively in the development of their communities and be acknowledged as valuable partners by other actors in the development sector.

Community Connections – an Approach to Organisational Development

Community Connections is a small CBO support organisation, based in Phillipi, Cape Town[8]. The organisation is committed to capacity building practice rooted in enablement, transformation, justice and collectivism. It helps CBOs develop the capacity to fulfil their mission and position themselves in the development sector as equal partners of NGOs, donors and local government.

Community Connections has provided training to CBOs since its inception in 2001. In 2004, it piloted an OD programme. The purpose of this programme is to enable the support organisation to engage in long-term OD processes with individual CBOs over a one-year period, providing services such as workshop facilitation, mentoring/ coaching and follow-up support. These processes usually involve:

- Establishing a relationship with the client organisation
- Undertaking a diagnosis
- Facilitating transformation
- Supporting implementation
- Adjusting, redefining or ending the relationship[9]

Initial contact with client

Community Connections primarily conducts consultancies upon request by CBOs that wish to receive OD support. However, funding agencies or NGOs may see a need for organisational development with the network of CBOs they support, and commission Community Connections to carry out the intervention. In such cases, the support organisation will make the agency/NGO aware of the implications of working with an organisation on behalf of a third party, and make it clear that they can only provide support to the respective CBOs, once these have confirmed that they are willing to participate in the process. To ensure that the support is relevant and meaningful to the CBOs in question, the **working agreement** must be formulated based on negotiations between Community Connections and its client organisations.

When the initial contact has been established with the CBO, a meeting is organised to discuss how Community Connections can help. During this meeting, the facilitators present their approach to OD and explain that the aim is to support organisations in their own development. This is crucial, but often challenging, as many CBOs are more familiar with the 'welfare' approach of other development agencies, and the relationship of dependency it implies. Based on a **profile-questionnaire** completed by the CBO, as well as complementary internal

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[8] Connections has five programmes:
1. OD and training for CBOs and community workers
2. Publications and educational materials for the CBO sector
3. Networking and advocacy work to promote CBO interests
4. Infrastructural support through a Computer Resource Centre
5. Internal capacity building of Connections through organisational development and staff development

[9] Adapted from CDRA (1998/9:10).

documents, Community Connections also assesses whether the organisation meets its criteria[10] for obtaining support at this stage. After the meeting, the CBO receives a proposal outlining the recommended intervention, with time frames, roles, responsibilities and a budget. Once the proposal has been accepted, it serves as a working agreement.

Undertaking a diagnosis

The deeper diagnosis looks at both visible and invisible aspects of the organisation to establish a holistic understanding of the situation. It takes time and patience to build a relationship of trust that enables the CBO members to provide Community Connections with the information required. The process encompasses a review of the organisational history, purpose and strategy, as well as the organisational structure and relationships. Collective learning is derived from the diagnosis in plenary, and complemented with interviews with management, staff/volunteers, and, if possible, members of the target group.

The facilitators analyse the information gathered and feed back their findings in a creative and reflective way which also allows space for clarification, discussion and adaptation. At this stage, it is crucial to handle conflicting information with care to ensure that nobody feels offended in the process. The outcomes may result in a new proposal. Further analysis can be conducted collectively by facilitators and participants, using methods such as:

- **Problem Analysis** (what might be the patterns, systems and mental models behind certain events?)

- **Life Cycle Analysis** (what characterises the CBO's stage of development?)

- **Sustainability Mind Map** (what is the CBO's definition of sustainability, and what path can be followed to reach it?)

Facilitating transformation

The next step is the actual intervention. The working agreement includes specified tasks and responsibilities for Community Connections' facilitators as well as the members of the organisation. The purpose of this process is to:

- Help organisations become aware of their culture, beliefs, and the role they play in the world.

- Take a second look at strategy and structure, while addressing the challenges that have been identified and building on the strengths.

Appreciative Inquiry may be used to focus the attention on the positive and life-giving aspects of the organisation instead of the gaps, to stimulate transformation.

Training, Mentoring or Coaching of CBO leaders and support for activities such as proposal writing or networking may also be incorporated in this intervention.

Supporting implementation

During the transformation process, the implementation of the planned change is supported through follow-up calls and visits. It is crucial for the facilitators to hand over the responsibility to the CBO, for example by arranging a follow-up meeting a few months later and agreeing on the tasks that need to be

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[10] The CBO needs to consist of at least 4 people, who pursue a developmental purpose, and are operational through programme activities. There also needs to be openness for engaging in an OD process.

implemented beforehand. Community Connections generally seeks to uphold a relationship with the organisation over a longer period of time, with different levels of intensity, to ensure that the responsibility for transformation remains with the organisation, while the facilitators guide the process.

Process evaluation

Community Connections tends to undertake evaluations with the client organisation at the end of each step in the process, while impact assessments are carried out later to determine whether the process has effected longer-term change in the organisation, or whether old patterns are reoccurring. The contract should outline when and how the intervention will be reviewed, to establish:

- Whether the commitments were upheld (from both sides)

- Whether the objectives were met (if not, why?)

- The way forward (renew or terminate contract)

Parallel to these activities, learning from experiences gained during the process is systematically reflected on through *Action-Learning Cycles*[11].

Organisational Development of Community-Based Organisations in Practice

The case studies below illustrate how Community Connections' approach has been applied in practice, and exemplify the issues that may emerge during organisational development processes at the grassroots.

Case 1: HIV/AIDS organisation

Community Connections was approached by an HIV/AIDS support organisation from Khayelitsha in Cape Town, for whom they had previously facilitated strategic planning workshops[12]. The organisation was going through a financial crisis, as it had relied primarily on one donor, who was now withdrawing support. It was felt that another strategic planning process might help the organisation overcome this crisis.

Organisational Profile

Focus	Children & Families affected by HIV/AIDS
Founded in	2001
Mission	Establish a foster care network that can offer support and care for children, families infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
Programmes	- Placement of children with foster parents - Support groups: foster parents, people living with AIDS, income generation skills group - Staff development/ organisational development
Area of operation	Khayelitsha, Phillipi, Nyanga, Crossroads
Structure	Management Committee: 4 people from Rotary Club as interim committee, Staff/volunteers: 5 people, low salaries, some volunteers when available
Funding/ Donations	Grants were obtained from Rotary Club and international funders for programme implementation and equipment
Office & resources	Office in Khayelitsha with computers, phone, fax, stationary, and email; project car
Access to capacity building	- Training in proposal writing, bookkeeping, NPO-setup, constitution (NACOSA), - OD support organisational skills and computer skills (Community Connections)
Formal registration	Registration as NPO / Voluntary Association
Other comments	Organisation started with the support from Rotary Club, which brought financial and material resources from the onset

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[11] See for example Kolb (1984).

[12] Two staff members from the HIV/AIDS support organisation had also attended Community Connections' organisational skills courses.

Diagnosis

Community Connections' facilitator suggested beginning with a process of diagnosis, and it was agreed that the objectives of the process should be to:

- Review the strategy and structure of the organisation

- Identify other challenges to be addressed

- Develop specific strategies aimed at financial sustainability

The core findings of the initial diagnosis were that:

- The organisation had committed and hardworking staff who strongly identified with the mission.

- The programmes were effectively implemented, relevant and needed in the community.

This was reinforced by the fact that the organisation had received funding from the outset to pay staff salaries and programme expenses. However, the organisation had not paid sufficient attention to its own internal needs:

- The financial crisis was not only threatening organisational survival, but had also surfaced personal conflicts around leadership style, transparency and democracy.

- Staff felt burnt out, and the management committee was perceived as dysfunctional.

- There was general consensus that the organisation should develop a higher degree of professionalism and maturity.

Feedback of Findings

A *creative story* was told collectively by various members of the organisation as a mechanism to start the process of reflection. A synthesis of the findings was then presented by the facilitator, based on an analysis of strengths and assets as well as weaknesses and challenges for each aspect of the diagnosis. The facilitator explained how *mental models*[13] may influence systems, patterns and events in an organisation, and even contradict its vision. The **Life Cycle Model** was applied in relation to the organisation's stage of development. Finally, a **Strategy Map** with organisational goals for programmes, internal processes and staff development was introduced. While the members of the organisation acknowledged the findings, they felt quite overwhelmed, but also relieved that things were in motion. It was agreed to prioritise aspects from the Strategy Map to be addressed subsequently.

Strategic Planning

The strategic planning workshops started in a stressful atmosphere, as some staff members were feeling extremely anxious about the financial crisis. Throughout the process, it remained difficult for the participants to stay focused. The group reflected on the nature of the organisational culture, and a decision was taken to move towards more collectivism. The vision, mission and programmes of the organisation were then revisited and refined, and an internal programme on staff development and organisational development was added. The organisational structure, roles and responsibilities were discussed, an *organigram* developed and policy needs identified. A system for financial transparency was discussed, and action plans developed for each programme. After the workshops, mentoring and editing support was given to the leaders for fundraising and annual report writing. Quarterly reviews were planned to evaluate progress.

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[13] See Praxis Paper 7, *Building Analytical and Adaptive Capacities for Organisational Effectiveness*, by Mia Sorgenfrei and Rebecca Wrigley (forthcoming 2006).

1st Review

A review was facilitated after three months. In the meantime, the CBO had been given a grant by their donor with the requirement that the organisation must develop its organisational structures, policies and systems to improve its fundraising capacity and become more sustainable. A management committee had been set up by the donor to support these activities.

The review had the following purposes:

- To review the objectives set and evaluate progress
- To revisit and adapt the organisational strategy and structure
- To develop an action plan

The facilitator asked the group to reconnect with the Strategy Map and share observations on shifts in the organisational culture, but there was resistance to speak openly. It was emphasised that the purpose of the exercise was not to control people's actions, but to reach a common understanding about what had shifted, and what still needed to be addressed. A programme review was facilitated and programmes adapted accordingly. The financial situation was discussed, the organigram with roles and responsibilities was adapted to include the new management committee, and an action plan was developed.

2nd Review

After four months, Community Connections returned to conduct another review. The organisation had received additional funding, and wished to plan the programmes and activities for the next year. The facilitator suggested addressing internal communication issues, as personal conflicts had remained an obstacle. While this was accepted, the organisation wanted to concentrate on programme implementation. The objectives of the review were to:

- Review the programmes and objectives set in 2004
- Plan programme implementation for 2005 in line with the funding received, including monitoring, evaluation and documentation
- Revisit and adapt the organisational structure, look at the needs for recruitment of new staff and management committee members
- Develop communication skills such as listening, inquiry and feedback, as well as effective advocacy

First, the **Strategy Map** was revisited. Some of the aspects which had not been prioritised the year before, such as policies and systems, were now seen as relevant. The programmes were then reviewed and adjustments planned for the coming year. Two new posts were created, and the **organigram** was adapted.

Throughout the sessions, conflicts arose between staff members, and the need for better communication was stressed. The second day was therefore dedicated to listening, advocacy and inquiry skills as well as conversation styles. The responsibility of each individual in contributing to conflict, or improving the situation by acting differently, was highlighted. During the evaluation of the workshop, it was decided that the facilitator ought to come back periodically to address communication issues and support the planning process. The organisation was determined to move forward.

Outcome

Despite personal conflicts and anxieties, the members of the organisation were strongly connected to its core purpose, and the organisation managed to pull through its crisis and continue its work in the communities. The 10 months' work in 2004/5 had resulted in tangible improvements in programme planning,

internal structuring, financial transparency, policy development and resource mobilisation. Substantial funds had been raised from different donors to secure the financial sustainability of the organisation. While it had been uncomfortable to recognise the need to address personal conflicts, merely facing the issue had unlocked a strong potential for resolving it. However, producing and measuring visible outcomes of work in this intangible area would be a long-term process.

Methods Used in Each Phase:

Phase	Method/Tool used
Diagnosis	Check-in – how do I feel? (each participant) A time line was drawn through story-telling by various members of the organisation, starting with founding members. SWOT analysis of programmes
	Review of structure & relationships: Bus activity: people imagine their organisation as a bus and place themselves as a part that corresponds with their role (e.g. driver, engine, wheel, etc.).
Interviews	Interviews with staff, management and members looking at the following: • Conceptual Framework • Culture/identity • Strategy • Structure • Leadership/governance • Staff/volunteers • Beneficiaries/members • Policies & systems • Resources • Networking/Partnerships • Documentation • Motivation • Beneficiaries' feedback
Feedback session	Check-in – how do I feel? (each participant) Story-telling and reflection, Feedback summarising strengths & weaknesses within the topics above Problem Analysis looking at mental models influencing organisational patterns Life Cycle of an organisation to examine stage of development Strategy Map for recommendations Plan for way forward.
Strategic Planning	Check-in – how do I feel? (each participant) Reflection of Organisational Culture and designing an image of a preferred culture. Revisiting and refining vision, mission and programmes of the organisation. Developing an organigram including organisational structure, roles and responsibilities. Financial systems for transparency.

	Action Planning for programmes.
Mentoring support	Proposal and annual report writing. Information on funders.
Review	Check-in – how do I feel? (each participant) Revisiting Strategy map Reflecting on Organisational Culture and Mental Models Action-Learning Cycle
	Programme review and planning: 1. What was planned? 2. What was achieved? 3. What went well in the process? 4. What were the obstacles? => Adaptation of programmes and closing of one until funding is available.
	Financial transparency discussion Adaptation of organigram, with roles & responsibilities, including new management committee Plan for way forward
2nd review	Check-in – how do I feel? (each participant) Action-Learning Cycle
	Programme Review: 1. What went well? 2. What did not go well? What did not happen? 3. Lessons learnt & recommendations for 2005? Programme Planning for 2005.
	Adaptation of Organigram
	Communication Skills: Listening skills, effective advocacy, inquiry and dialogue. Evaluations after each session

Case 2: Youth organisation

Community Connections was approached by a youth organisation from Khayelitsha in Cape Town to facilitate a strategic review and planning process. During the first meeting, the facilitator was briefed by the CBO leaders: the organisation felt that it had not been able to move forward since the last strategic planning process. This process had also been facilitated by Commmunity Connections, but no follow-up had taken place since. The organisation had internally facilitated three reviews during the past year, with few concrete outcomes. Community Connections was asked to explore why the organisation was stuck. An initial contract was signed for a diagnosis and a strategic planning process. The broad objectives were to review the results of the previous strategic planning process:

- Review strategy, programmes, and the viability of structure

- Look at areas of 'stuckness' preventing the organisation from evolving

- Revisit the vision and core purpose of the organisation, and reshape programmes and organisational structure accordingly

- Support ongoing efforts at improving the organisation's professionalism, effectiveness, and sustainability

Organisational Profile

Focus	Children & Youth Organisation, engaging with environment, arts, human rights & life skills.
Founded in	1996
Mission	Facilitate the empowerment of young people through skills and knowledge to enable them to become better citizens.
Programmes	Arts: Drama, dance, painting & printing Environment: Gardening, Parks, water & waste Human Rights: story telling, children's' rights, awareness creation Life Skills: Education, career guidance, bursaries, craft making & exhibitions
Area of operation	Nyanga East & Khayelitsha
Structure	Management committee: 6 people, some are parents of members, 2 member representatives Staff/volunteers: 5 people, at times small stipends are available, at times work is voluntarily Membership: approx. 100 youth
Funding /donations	Small grants obtained from South African funders and partner NGO for programme implementation
Office & resources	Small office in Khayelitsha with computers, phone, fax, stationary and email access
Access to capacity building	Training in administration, project management and library management (Community Chest & Educo), organisational skills and computer skills (Community Connections) OD support (Community Connections and ACE)
Formal registration	None
Other comments	Strength in networking & building partnerships with resourceful NGOs

Diagnosis and Feedback

During a one-day workshop for staff/volunteers, with member and management committee representation, the organisation's programmes, its structure and relationships, as well as its resources and networking efforts were reviewed. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with all staff, several members of the organisation and one management committee member.

The following organisational strengths were identified:

- The core group of committed people, who had been involved in meaningful programmes with youth in two communities for many years

- The good relationships established with these communities, as well as NGOs and funders

- The organisational capacity to access project funding

The perceived challenges in order to solve the funding crisis were:

- The coordinator was too autocratic

- Staff were not sufficiently accountable (this was aggravated by the frequent delays in salaries)

- Finances were poorly managed

- The management committee was dysfunctional

The findings were discussed during the feedback session. The young people who were members of the organisation, as well as beneficiaries, complained about the lack of transparency and democracy, and the staff were concerned that the organisation might fall apart. After this, an organisational inquiry was facilitated to extract good organisational practices and aspects which ought to be improved.

Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process was facilitated with core staff and one member. It had been difficult to engage the relevant individuals in the process, and many were absent. The sessions looked at people's mental models, their visions and 'stuckness'. During the session, participants understood that the staff members' mental models led them to expect that they would need to make personal sacrifices when carrying out community work. Also, the deeply rooted affirmation of communities as poor had kept many individuals within these communities from becoming more prosperous. The only way out was seen to be jobs outside the community, for example in the corporate sector or in NGOs.

By focusing on the organisation, its vision, and its core purpose in the community, attention was relocated to how problems could be solved to prevent people from leaving the organisation/community. It was recognised that the organisation had great potential for becoming more democratic, accountable and professional as well as re-establishing funding access based on existing relationships with funders and partner organisations. A **leading image** was created for the organisation, out of which broad goals, values, principles and programmes emerged. A brainstorm took place to clarify what aspects might contribute to organisational sustainability, and what internal processes ought to be strengthened to effectively ensure this. Furthermore, an organigram was developed to clarify roles and responsibilities, which allowed for more staff democracy and member participation, and included more time for internal processes by reducing the work in the community to core programmes, until funding had been obtained for more staff and programme work.

An action plan was developed with the aim of helping the organisation professionalise and access funding to overcome the financial crisis. It was also seen as a strategy to access resources through partnerships with NGOs. People felt re-energised and motivated to address the identified gaps. It was agreed that a Community Connections' facilitator should support the implementation through mentoring and assistance in proposal writing and policy development.

Outcome

The personal pressures remained, and two months later the core staff (including the coordinator) had been absorbed in three other NGOs. The organisation still exists formally, but the strategy currently adopted in practice is to work in close partnerships with these three NGOs.

Methods Used in Each Phase:

Diagnosis	Check in – how do I feel? (each participant) Review of programmes, organisational structure/people and resources/networking through group work: - What was planned? (goals) - What was achieved? (actual implementation) - What worked well? (strengths) - What needs to be improved? (weaknesses)
	Review of structure & relationships Bus activity: people imagine their organisation as a bus and place themselves as a part that corresponds with their role (e.g. driver, engine, wheel, etc.).
Interviews	Interviews with staff, management and members looking at the following: • Conceptual Framework • Culture/identity • Strategy • Structure • Leadership/governance • Staff/volunteers • Beneficiaries/members • Policies & systems • Resources • Networking/Partnerships • Documentation ‣ Motivation ‣ Member feedback
Feedback session	Check in – how do I feel? (each participant) Feedback on strengths & weaknesses within the issues above.

	Appreciative Inquiry: 3 best practices & 3 main aspects to transform or improve
Strategic Planning	Check-in – how do I feel? (each participant) Story-telling and reflection (a man was searching in vain in the wrong place)
	Mental Models (theoretical input on mental models, the organisation's mental models and underlying patterns behind actions)
	Creative Visioning: looking at the creative tension between the current reality and the vision; guided meditation
	Organisational Inquiry: Leading image of the organisation that the members would like to build over the next 3 years. Internal vision (emerging from the leading image). Organisational goals (setting broad goals and how they will be achieved) Values and guiding principles in vision and purpose Organisational contribution to the community
	Sustainability – a brainstorm looking at what the term means for the organisation and what steps need to be taken
	Programme planning (the content of programmes was looked at, some were re-shaped, and responsibilities allocated),
	Organigram that would best serve the needs of the organisation
	Plan for way forward – internal tasks, besides programme implementation, needed to move towards sustainability. A review was planned to take place in February/March 05
	Evaluations after each session

Reflections

Facilitator reflection stimulated and structured through an **Action-Learning Cycle** helped reach initial insights about what could be learned from the experiences depicted above. These insights are presented below:

The Pioneer stage

When organisations approach Connections, they have often made the decision (consciously or unconsciously) to work towards becoming more professional and increase organisational stability. This is usually triggered by a crisis (e.g. a financial crisis as in case 1, or a crisis combined with a general feeling of 'stuckness' as in case 2). When presented with such requests, facilitators need to take into account that organisations naturally move through their stages of development, and will have their own timing for growth[14] which cannot be pushed by external actors (facilitators, funders or NGOs). The organisations in the two cases described above were clearly in their pioneer stage, dependent on strong, autocratic leaders, and this influenced the outcomes that could be achieved through Community Connections' OD interventions.

Vulnerability and the intangible

Most CBOs have difficulties accessing funding, as they frequently do not meet the donor requirements. In the two cases, both organisations had been able to access funding. However, they remained financially vulnerable and were unable to become truly sustainable. The first CBO managed to overcome the crisis, while the second was temporarily absorbed in other NGOs. In both cases, the financial crisis was seen as the core problem, while other issues were expected to be resolved as a result of secured funding. However, working with the 'intangible' (identity, mental models, organisational culture) appears at least as relevant when striving for sustainability as supporting the organisation in more 'tangible' ways, such as strategy, structure or fundraising[15]:

- In case 1, the receipt of funding did not relieve personal tensions, but after the crisis had been overcome, these conflicts were finally confronted.

- In case 2, mental models reaffirming identities as 'poor' had actually prevented people from raising core funding for their organisations to ensure sustainability.

Power relationships
In case 1, the funder provided an interim Management Committee which

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[14] See also Glasl (1997).
[15] See also Kaplan (2002).

became involved in internal decision-making processes. This may have helped the organisation substantially in its efforts at becoming more professional, but its autonomy decreased. In case 2 the partnership programme belonged to the NGO, into which the CBO-coordinator was co-opted. For the CBO, this may have resulted in identity loss. The power issue hence surfaced at two levels:

- Externally, through the nature of the relationships between CBOs and funders
- Internally, through an autocratic leadership style or a feeling of limited democracy and transparency[16].

Funders tend to be more inclined to dictate the activities of CBOs than those of NGOs which they support. Differences in remuneration or funding allocation may also exacerbate the power imbalance[17].

Formalisation of community-based organisations

The legal framework for non-profit structures in South Africa was developed for larger, more established NGOs to reinforce their accountability. However, the combination of voluntary management committees or boards who oversee implementation and finances, and paid staff who implement programmes and manage finances, does not correspond to the reality at the grassroots. CBOs usually emerge as groups of people (frequently unemployed) who work on the ground. Some CBOs have formal committees, others are groups of volunteers, and many have membership. However,

when funding comes into play, there is usually discontent among committee members due to the lack of remuneration.

- The CBOs in both cases had difficulties establishing viable management committees with members from the communities they serve.
- For most CBOs in South Africa, it is also a challenge to attract people with the skills required for financial management as well as report- and proposal-writing.

The lack of fundraising and financial management skills in CBOs contributes to increasing the divide between CBOs and NGOs. The organisational crisis in case 2 was caused by weak financial management, as is the case for the majority of Community Connections' client organisations. The organisation in case 1 was successful in fundraising, primarily because it had a coordinator who came from an advantaged background and had the necessary financial and writing skills to promote the organisation to funders. However, this coordinator was not a resident of the community.

Lack of organisational development culture

While OD is well known by more advantaged organisations, it is new to CBOs in the poor communities. The CBOs in the two cases were familiar with strategic planning processes, as Community Connections had facilitated such processes before. However, most other CBOs, who receive training support from NGOs, expect the facilitator to take full responsibility for the OD process and ensure that relevant content and services are provided.

In many communities, the feeling of disempowerment and victimisation

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[16] The origins of such behaviour in organisations may be traced back to autocratic family structures and historical oppression in South Africa.

[17] For example, there seems to be a general assumption that community workers (from CBOs) will accept working as volunteers or for minimal pay.

prevails, reinforced by the realities of poverty, crime and HIV/AIDS. There is still a long way to go in encouraging organisations to learn from their own experience, and acknowledge that they should not seek to **be empowered by others** (given power by a seemingly more powerful person or organisation), but can in fact **empower themselves** and become more resourceful (with or without the support from an external facilitator).

The role of the organisational development facilitator

For OD facilitators, there is a strong need to uphold principles like participation, democracy and respect for the clients, as well as to strengthen the belief that transformation can happen. **Exercises that encourage reflection, learning and personal growth may help gradually to shift the organisational culture**, for example by introducing the Action-Learning Cycle, as in case 1.

It is important to nurture long-term relationships between facilitators and client organisations, as development is a slow process. At times, it is difficult for facilitators to let go of the responsibility for areas of which the client organisation ought to take ownership. It is crucial for facilitators to be conscious of this and step back in respect for each organisation's own path of development. However, an organisation might need to have certain features in place, such as a constitution, policies and systems, or the capacity to write proposals. These requirements are mainly driven by external stakeholders, such as funding agencies, and facilitators are expected to provide relevant information in response. It helps to clarify the goals and formulate a working agreement in advance, with explicit expectations from both sides about the approach and the process.

Ownership and commitment

It is crucial that the organisation takes ownership of its change process. In case 1, the volume and nature of the feedback from the facilitator felt overwhelming to the CBO. It might have been more helpful to **reflect back the essential points, and work with the group's perception of these** (as in case 2). The group could then have prioritised the most relevant issues at that stage. In case 2, the level of commitment was low, the process was poorly attended, and ownership of the outcomes by those who were not present was unlikely. However, a decision needed to be taken whether to continue the process, and in this case, it was continued with a core group. To avoid 'token participants', it is best to **agree beforehand who will participate in the process**. Another way of increasing ownership is to **give participants tasks between sessions.** This may encourage the organisation to engage with the process outside the facilitated workshop.

The facilitator needs to remain faithful to his/her own principles and ways of working, while preserving a positive relationship with the client organisation, even if the CBO does not wish to take ownership of the OD process. This issue is particularly challenging in subsidised interventions, where participants may attribute little importance to the process, because it requires no significant financial investment from their organisation.

As CBOs work in a chaotic environment, where little can be predicted or planned, **the facilitator needs to remain open and flexible** throughout the OD process. Development takes time, and **an issue cannot be tackled in depth, until the organisation is ready for it**. In case 1, ten months passed before personal conflicts could be addressed. The

organisation in case 2 is currently dormant, and it remains doubtful whether, and how, the process will continue.

Building relationships

Developing positive relationships and giving support at an emotional level is as essential as carrying out the more technical interventions: in both of the cases, personal conflicts or anxieties had a significant impact on the OD processes. Therefore, the quality of the relationships within the organisation, as well as with the facilitator, was crucial to enable continuous transformation.

While Connections' experience shows that *personal dynamics and mental models can be much more inhibiting than the lack of skills*, there seems to be a tendency in the development sector to address capacity gaps through training and responses to material needs when working at the grassroots level. However, skills development and other forms of organisational capacity building may have limited impact, if the staff members in an organisation remain stuck in negative perceptions and feelings. In such cases, it is important for staff to understand the value of their own involvement and take responsibility. In case 1, each staff member was asked to reflect on what they could personally contribute to improve the situation.

Furthermore, if a conflict emerges, it is critical to confront it immediately instead of postponing it. In case 1, the review and planning process was slowed down, because personal differences stifled the interaction. It helped to use exercises to reflect on the situation first, instead of addressing it directly.

Questions Arising

The first reflections on Community Connections' work demonstrate the potential that lies in the engagement with CBOs through OD work. Over time, a unique approach must be developed, which responds to CBO needs in the South African context.

It remains to be seen how far OD interventions will prove to increase organisational capacity at community level in the long term. Several evaluations and an initial impact assessment[18] of the pilot programme have shown positive feedback from the CBOs. However, questions continuously arise which suggest that if these interventions are to be meaningful, organisational development approaches should not be applied in the same way to CBOs as they are to more established NGOs:

1. **How can OD be promoted to become more widely known to CBOs?**

2. **How can the OD approach be applied in simple ways, accessible to CBOs, without losing its value in dealing with complex systems and situations?**

3. **If organisations seek support to overcome a specific crisis (e.g. financial), how can awareness be raised about deeper capacity issues?**

4. **What aspects of organisational capacity should be targeted in order to respond to CBO needs?**

5. **How can facilitators work developmentally, if the CBO-**

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[18] Conducted by an external facilitator.

6. **clients are used to 'receiving' without taking ownership?**

7. **How should OD organisations engage with their partners (NGOs, local government, funders), many of which do not encourage developmental approaches?**

8. **Should CBOs be guided towards formalisation to be recognised by the legal system like NGOs, or should alternative ways of organising be encouraged – which might inhibit their access to funding and support?**

One critical issue affecting Community Connections' capacity building work with CBOs is that the context in which CBOs operate is not conducive to their development: the 'glass ceiling' in the development sector can seldom be transgressed by CBOs. This forces them to remain at the lowest level in the aid chain. To address this inequality, Community Connections has started an advocacy programme in order to challenge the current lack of acknowledgement of CBOs by other stakeholders and the strict requirements to access resources. In this way, the support organisation hopes to help promote CBO interests as well as their long-term sustainability.

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