CHAPTER 4.   RESULTS

4.1   Introduction

The Results Chapter describes a series of evaluation processes conducted with CBOs in Gauteng and North West Provinces. These processes are termed "Case Studies" for the purposes of this exercise. The study is divided into two phases (Figure 9). The first phase includes six Case Studies where CBOs[16] engage in organisational self-evaluation using Stories and Metaphor (Table 4). The final Case Study is reported as the second research phase. It involves three local CBOs, several partner organisations and community members, in exploring the use of Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology (Davies & Dart, 2005) in a CBO context (Table 5).

These phases have distinct purposes. The Gauteng Stories and Metaphor process focused on organisation-centred, inward-looking, reflective processes involving staff members in deliberating on their contribution, strengths and growth areas. One of the conclusions of this phase is that organisations tend to concentrate more on internal issues, than on their impact in communities. The reaching of this conclusion and details around it are described in the results of this phase.

In an action research response to this limitation, a specifically outward-looking evaluation is conducted. The second phase evaluated Oxfam America / AIDS Consortium North West Gender, Culture and HIV Programme with participation by programme partners. The phase is captured here as Case Study 7.

In addition to having different purposes, the phases also have very different weights. Case Study 7 (North West MSC) is as large in terms of field hours as the other six together, and considerably larger in terms of preparation, training and manpower.

It will be clear from this variation in province and organisation participation that these Case Studies are not intended to be equivalent members of a sample of replicates. As an action research piece, each Case Study stands alone as a step in a learning process. Each new Case Study begins where the previous left off. It tests emerging theories while remaining open to the unique and new learning from each process and combination of setting, organisation and individuals (Figure 11).

---

[16] Most Case Studies involve individual organisations. One of the Case Studies involves two organisations.
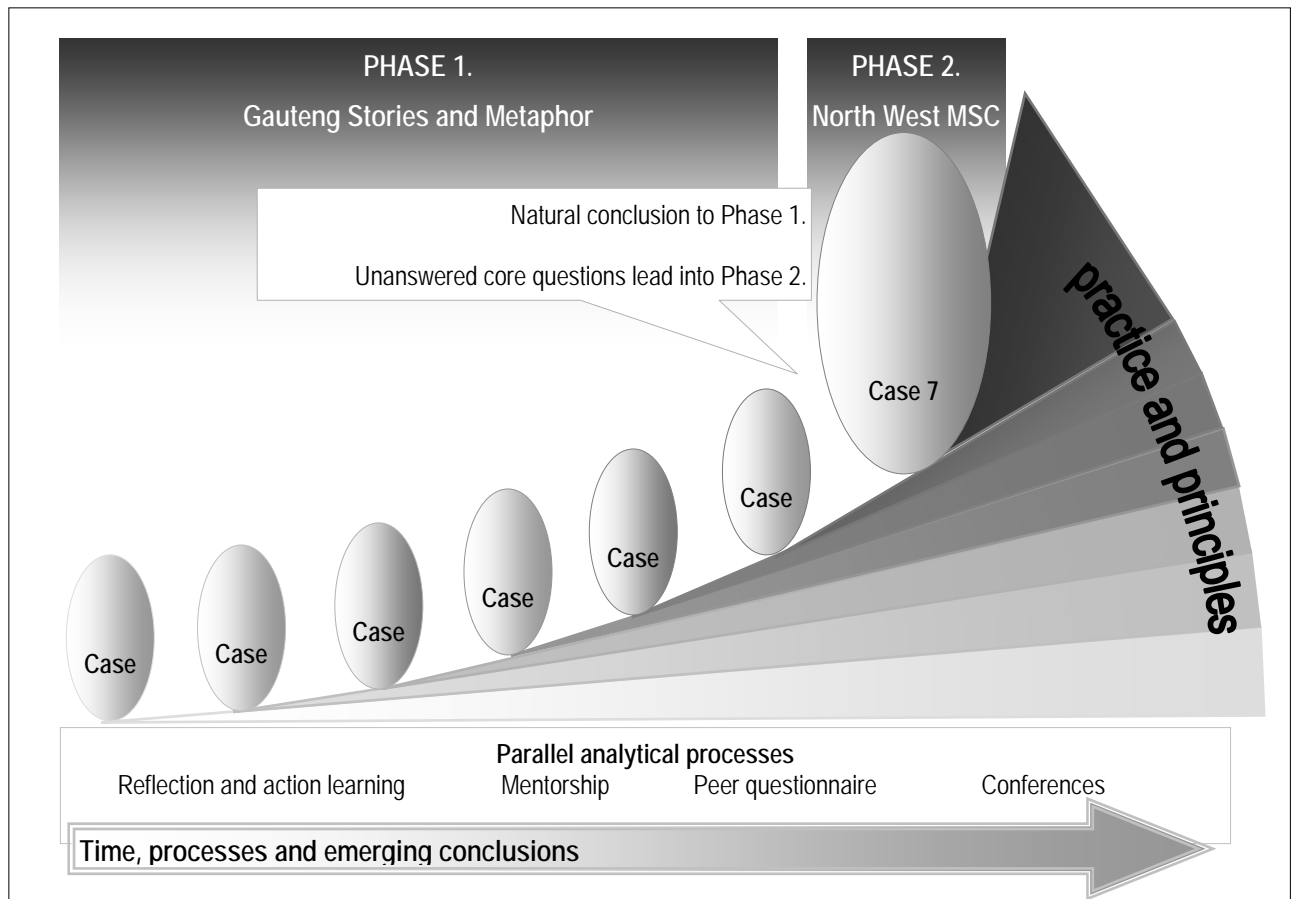
Figure 11   *Diagram of the unfolding crystallisation of principles and practice, through Case Studies building on successive reflection.*

The iterative results and analysis process, and emerging learning and questions are integral to the data themselves. The chapter asks the reader to engage in a journey with this unfolding research process, meeting each of the participating organisations towards the findings and conclusions that are elaborated in the Discussion and Conclusions Chapters that follow. This chapter is a narrative of action, observation, reflection, learning and mentorship, around the question of "What makes evaluation effective and developmental in a CBO setting?"

The aim of this chapter is to present the data. As described above (Table 2 and Figure 5), the nested layers of data need to be carefully distinguished in the chapter structure of a meta-methodology study.

4.2   Chapter structure

The Results Chapter needs to capture the non-empirical study of exploring alternative evaluation methods while demonstrating the link to the empirical content that defines each organisation.

4.2.1.   Within the cases

4.2.1.1.   Non-empirical study: Action research cycle from data to theory

A case study overview is provided as an opening titled "Diagram of Process". It shows the process elements that were experienced in the Case Study (Figure 12)

Indicative diagram of process

| e.g. Opening and introductions | Individual Stories of Impact | Group discussion: **What do the stories say** about the organisation? | Group analysis and feedback | Metaphor | Reflection and closure |

Figure 12   *A process diagram gives a summary overview of the elements of each Case Study, to be elaborated and analysed in the Case Study description.*

Both the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor processes and the North West MSC phase are presented and analysed using an action research process (Figure 6 and 0). This iterative action, observation, reflection, learning and action is demonstrated using icons as follows:

Action research cycle	Description of the entries against this icon
👁 **Action or description**: the process that is followed, observations on the events and interactions.	*Data: This refers to what transpired in the session. It is a factual description of what is said, seen and done.*
�击 **Reflection**: The implications and interpretation of the experience.	*Analysis: Integrated analysis into the unfolding story, as reflection lead to insights and conclusions.*

| Action research cycle	Description of the entries against this icon
❧ **Learning**: Where relevant, the new insights and conclusions that emerged from this particular interaction.	*Conclusions: Linking the results to the emerging theory, creating a thread between data or evidence, and conclusions.*
☞ **Planning** in two possible forms: i) decisions for action in the next iteration of the action learning cycle, i.e. in the next Case Study; and ii) emerging conclusions, recommendations and principles for developmental evaluation	*In some cases this refers to plans for further exploration in the action research cycle, taking learning into testing and experimentation in the next iteration.* *Where a firm conclusion is reached, however, this icon links to recommendations.*

The guiding questions and distinctions between these analytical processes are outlined in 0. The major outcomes of action research are conclusions, recommendations and further questions. They often arise in the more generalisable "Learning" (❧) and "Planning" (☞) outcomes of the study. These are the points that will be carried through to the discussion and conclusions. These major points are dignified with an exclamation mark.
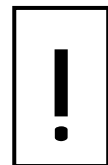
4.2.1.2. Empirical study: CBO evaluation from stories to learning

Evaluation method, or any meta-method, cannot learn in a vacuum. The content of the evaluation demonstrates the type of information that is elicited from organisations. These are the questions with which CBOs grapple. These data are referred to in the 'Action' (👁) descriptions of the non-empirical study. To enrich this description, they are provided more completely as Exhibits below each Case Study, and referred to in the non-empirical narrative.

In verbal and visual evaluation using stories, metaphor and participatory facilitation, content takes various forms. For this study content includes transcribed stories or notes, shared images, drawings by both participants and facilitator, transcribed voice recording, and photographs of wall charts and participant work. The major pieces are included as Exhibits. More original data are provided on the accompanying CD.

4.2.1.3. Content analysis using Theory of Change

One of the components of the research question relates to the use of linear, predictive models for planning and strategy. This study seeks to explore alternatives to these

models for evaluation. Capturing and analysing learning in a non-linear, systemic form is part of a response to the problems of linear, non-systemic thinking. Using Theory of Change (Rogers, 2009), provides this opportunity.

As part of my reflection and interpretation of each Case Study, I have attempted to capture their stories and conversations into a possible organisational Theory of Change. Ideally, one would create these Theory of Change diagrams in a participatory process. This would be a lengthy and challenging exercise in itself, although potentially a powerful vehicle for organisations. It is deemed beyond the scope of this research approach.

Theory of Change is therefore limited in this study to an analysis of CBO thinking, as it is revealed in their conversations. Where relevant, reflection on Theory of Change is raised as it emerges from the conversations. The analysis is included in the exhibits for each Case Study. Discussion and conclusions on the use of Theory of Change are provided in the chapters that follow.

4.2.2. Between the cases

Each case concludes with the major intents, drawn from the "Planning" description above (☞). These link the Case Studies and summarise the exploratory learning process.

4.2.3. Closing the phases

The Gauteng Stories and Metaphor phase (Case Studies 1-6) and the North West MSC process (Case Study 7) each close with major findings for the phase. The process elements that should be kept, expanded, removed or included are outlined as an overview of this study's methodological conclusions.

4.3 Inward-looking evaluation: Gauteng Stories and Metaphor emergent process

The six Case Studies, involving seven organisations, guide us through the exploration of inward-looking, organisational reflection. They present the stories and metaphors of these organisations, and the reflection and analysis of processes and principles for evaluation using this approach in this context.
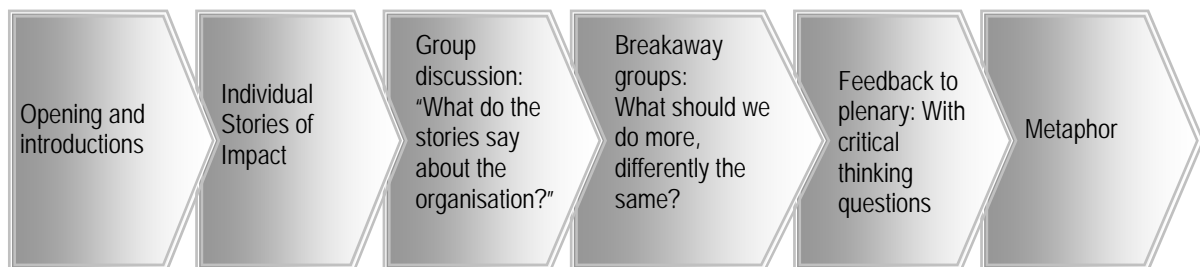
4.3.1. Case Study 1: TT

The first Case Study is a small, unfunded group of volunteers operating from a prefabricated room in the informal settlement of Orange Farm. The session involves 9 people. It is conducted in the rather confined space of their office. Participants are drawn from the managers and carers, who are staff and volunteers of the organisation.

Orange Farm lies some distance from the southern perimeter of Soweto. It is a severely disadvantaged community. Its inhabitants live long distances from facilities, have few social services and minimal public sector access.

An RDP housing project is active in the area, providing tapped water to each stand. There are some local employment opportunities as RDP builders. The RDP programme was in the process of providing a permanent structure as premises for the organisation.

4.3.1.1. Diagram of process

Opening and introductions → Individual Stories of Impact → Group discussion: "What do the stories say about the organisation?" → Breakaway groups: What should we do more, differently the same? → Feedback to plenary: With critical thinking questions → Metaphor

4.3.1.2. Description, reflection, learning and conclusions

Opening and introductions

◉ We are introduced to each other. The purpose of the day is discussed and agreed.

Individual reflection and sharing: Stories of Impact

◉ Participants are given time for individual reflection to recall an event, "Think about a time when you felt that the organisation had made a difference in

people's lives". Each participant relates his or her Story of Impact to the group. In rotation, another group member captures each story in writing. The facilitator captures the stories simultaneously for her own records. The design is based on the principle that effective learning and facilitation should move from an individual experience to collective sharing.

- 👁 Stories are powerful, clear and relevant (Exhibit TT1). "She is 19. She has a brother of 14. The sister is 8 years old. They have been living in the shack. There is no privacy. She is a girl and he is a boy. ... TT changed her life. She now has a house. When it is cold she won't be cold. And she has privacy."

  Participants are reluctant to capture the stories in writing and the effectiveness of their written communication is weak. None of those who wrote accounts give an accurate, complete or meaningful account of the story that was related

- 🔓 Verbal communication is powerful and effective in communicating evaluation messages. Participants are comfortable and confident, even where English is not their first language. Writing, however, diminishes confidence and does not communicate effectively. Exhibit TT2 shows the contrast between written and verbal accounts, dramatically demonstrating the inadequacy of written communication.

  ⎧ ! ⎫

- ☞ I intend to observe this closely in next session. We need to encourage spoken interaction and seek alternatives to written media as a core element of communication from community organisations.

- 👁 The top priority outcomes and activities of the organisation are identified. They include housing, facilitating access to treatment and child care. Relevant outcomes of these interventions include averted premature death and the return of ill children to school.

- 🔓 Some of the criteria that arise in the Stories of Impact would serve well as quantitative measures of output and criteria for effectiveness. A more intensive evaluation might probe for more detailed accounts. A more detailed account of achievement might include the actual inputs (e.g. "What was required for the child to return to school"), and more detail on actual outcomes (e.g. "What does returning to school mean for the child?")

Group discussion on Stories of Impact

- A group discussion is held around "What do these stories say about the organisation's strengths and challenges?"

- As the criteria for success emerge from the observations and experiences of the group, I begin to formulate the organisation's Theory of Change (Exhibit TT3).

- People speak in stories, richly describing systems, images, flows and consequences. Content analysis can capture this as Theory of Change. Ideally one would build the Theory of Change together with participants.

- I don't see explicit, participatory Theory of Change discussions as a key direction for this study. It is therefore used superficially here, demonstrating it as a means of systemic thinking and representation.

- The initial question posed is "What do these stories say about you?" This is too broad and abstract. It needs to be worded more accessibly.

  Once prompted, the group shows verbal and analytical skills in uncovering their purpose, criteria and processes that are sophisticated, subtle and thorough.

- I will introduce this with a more compelling question for the next Case Study. This is a key session to continue.

- Exhibit TT1 suggests that the internal factors necessary for success in this organisation included passion, determination, and the ability to work without financial resources, even salaries. Democratic, consultative leadership is identified as a valued strength. Accounts of the activities and outcomes of the organisation's work in its community are also shared. They include, for example, recovery from illness and children returning to school as a result of treatment and child care. Housing for child-headed families provides privacy and self-respect, and is greatly valued for these reasons as much as for reasons of shelter or hygiene.

- Grounded, emergent criteria for impact are being heard.
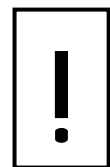
Breakaway groups and discussion: What should we do more, differently or the same?

- Two groups of four members address the questions, "What should we do more of?" "What should we do differently" and "What should we continue to do the same?"

  The groups report back to plenary on flipcharts.

One organisation member is asked to play 'devil's advocate'. He takes to the role with enthusiasm with interjections such as, "How will that help?", "Why don't you do that anyway?" and "Convince me!" The purpose of this role is to encourage critical thinking without criticism from an external person.

🔓 The results of the session are unconvincing and excessively general, such as, "We should do more good work". Nevertheless the session does enrich the Theory of Change picture by highlighting some of the more important interventions needed in the community. It also delves into an activity area that had not emerged during the stories which might not otherwise have been shared (adoption of orphans by organisation staff). It raised the unexpectedly important issue of nursing uniforms as being of importance to the group. The challenges of donor dependency and written communication are also discussed.

💥 Never use the term 'devil's advocate' with non-native English speakers. It causes a shocked furore and considerable offense.

☞ I need to test this exercise again. It is not yet convincing.

Metaphor

👁 The question is asked, "If you were a 'thing', what would you be?" The group comes to consensus immediately on 'a person'. I prepare the drawing (Exhibit TT4).

🔓 The group identifies strongly with the process and the metaphor. Metaphor and images provide a rapid, detailed and meaningful entry point to the nature of the organisation.

More detailed annotation of the metaphor drawing would capture the thinking better.

Simultaneous facilitation and data capture are a challenge. Since the primary role of the facilitator is to guide the group in its own reflection and conclusions, and not to extract information, a note-taker or voice recorder may be appropriate.

💥 Alongside verbal communication, visual communication is powerful and accessible. Metaphor offers a particularly engaging common language for the discussion, and enables focus and the sharing of input to a single framework.
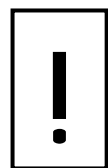
☞ This is a key session to be continued and expanded, and more detailed visual capture of metaphor analysis would be helpful. The issue of data capture needs to be resolved.

Session conclusion

👁 The group's response is "We did not ever know that we could do this. We didn't know what we knew."

💥 The session is experienced as powerful and affirming.

4.3.1.3. Exhibits from TT

Exhibit TT1. *Emergent criteria for success are identified through the Stories of Impact session. These provide real and relevant situations in which impact is achieved, and provide an appropriate entry point for probing and more detailed understanding of impact.*

Stories of impact
"Her family has been living in a small one room shack. She is the eldest. She is 19. She has a younger brother of 14. The younger sister is 8 years old. They don't have a mother or father. Since their mother passed away they have been living in the shack. There is no privacy. She is a girl and he is a boy. When TT came into the picture we built them a house through our partnership with Habitat for Humanity. She was then able to find a bursary too, so she will further her studies and TT changed her life. She now has a house. When it is cold she won't be cold. And she has privacy."
"When I arrived here I was an OVC[17] carer. I used to identify the orphans. There was a Zulu family of two boys and one girl. There was no income. They used to live with whatever the neighbours gave them for food, like the leftovers from yesterday. Then seven organisations in the area formed a forum to help families like this. These children were among the first to receive food parcels in that year. But their shack was so small – a two-roomed shack – Thami was one of the two boys there. It was so small. He had a double base bed that filled the whole room. All this clothes and blankets filled up the bed. Someone came and said, you must build houses for the orphans, and we joined the project. We asked the orphans to write their stories. If you tried to read them, you couldn't finish, because they were such sad stories. So we started to build these houses. That is when this boy started to have his own bedroom. People donated two beds. I think TT made a great difference in that community. Without TT there would be no-one to do this."
"There is the story of a family. This family touches me. There is a young boy called Lorato, who is 8 years old now. He was sick since 2000. In and out of hospital, until last year when he received treatment. Mostly there is no money. Our Director takes from her pocket so that I, as caregiver, can take him to Baragwanath Hospital. Then something beautiful happened to him. Habitat and TT built them a house. They still have no income because they have no birth certificate, so they can't apply for a grant. They get food parcels each month. Human Development Project helps them with vegetables."
Some stories, such as the following one, tended towards generalisations and descriptions of the situation, rather than specific Stories of Impact by the organisation. These are interesting, but less useful for evaluation purposes. Facilitation needs to clearly guide participants towards specific events within their personal experience.
"I have met a lot of things here working with sickness and orphans that have touched my heart. Many people are very sick, and don't like to go to the clinic. They don't like others to know about their status. They just stay in their house. As caregivers we go to them and tell them which steps they must take. They should go to the clinic so that

---

[17] OVC – Orphans and Vulnerable Children. The term most commonly used for child welfare and support work.

Stories of impact
they get well. Those people with HIV and AIDS need help. They don't want to tell anybody. We encourage them and tell them which steps to take. They are very scared about their sickness. It is very sad to see someone who is sick and doesn't want to tell so that they can get help. There are those whose family is trying to run away from them. They are scared they will get sick too, and they see that the sick people really suffer. They don't know where to go. We have made a big thing. We have helped people in many ways like building houses, giving food parcels, some clothes to wear and helping orphans and people who are sick."   **INTERNAL IMPACTS**   *"We are passionate about our work.*   *"Rain or storm, 'dry season*[18]*' or not, we are here."*   *"Our leader is very democratic. We participate in decisions and she listens. She has a big mind."*   **COMMUNITY IMPACTS**   *"People have 4/5 roomed houses after living a one-roomed shack."*   *"There are people on treatment who have gone from level 5 and 4 to level 1*[19]*".*   *"Children who we thought would die in a few months are back at school"*

Exhibit TT2. *This comparison between a written account of a personal experience in the organisation, and the original words spoken, clearly demonstrates the ineffectiveness of writing as a means of communication with CBOs. It also demonstrates the clarity and coherence with which members of these organisations represent themselves verbally, even in their second language.*

What was said by the participant	Another participant's written account
"We started as a support group for HIV. I was working for OFAA, doing door-to-door and schools and peer education. I was the only woman who had disclosed her HIV status – and one day they told me "We are doing you a favour talking to you and employing you". I realised that people living with HIV are not supported. I organised a meeting with the youth, and explained my problem. A 16-year old suggested "Why not start a support group for HIV and AIDS where they can talk about it". I went all out and was very passionate. I communicated with the Ward Councillor. Another five youth joined me. We arranged training. We joined the AIDS Consortium in 1999. We got referrals for other forms of training. Now we are all trained counsellors and facilitators. I am passionate about what I am doing. I realise that we are making a big difference. If we call a Christmas party, the whole community will come. Through the support group, the vulnerable children's programme was born, and an aftercare programme. We organised different activities, such as dancing and drama. The carers attend the school meetings in the place of their parents – they are there to sign school reports and hear about educational problems. The children have someone to talk to, and hug them when they need to be hugged."	*When the organisation was started she was working with the A Club. She was the only one who disclose her status. She realise the people who are living with HIV are not in favour. She was young by that time. So the project started by two people living with AIDS and one affected. Then the organisation was born.*

---

[18] 'Dry season' refers to the periods during which government stipends are not paid. These may extend to several months, during which no stipend income is received by carers.

[19] World Health Organisation staging of HIV and AIDS from 1 (asymptomatic) to 5 (palliative)

Exhibit TT3. *Drawn largely from Stories of Impact, the theory of change provides the logic for the organisation's existence and contribution.*
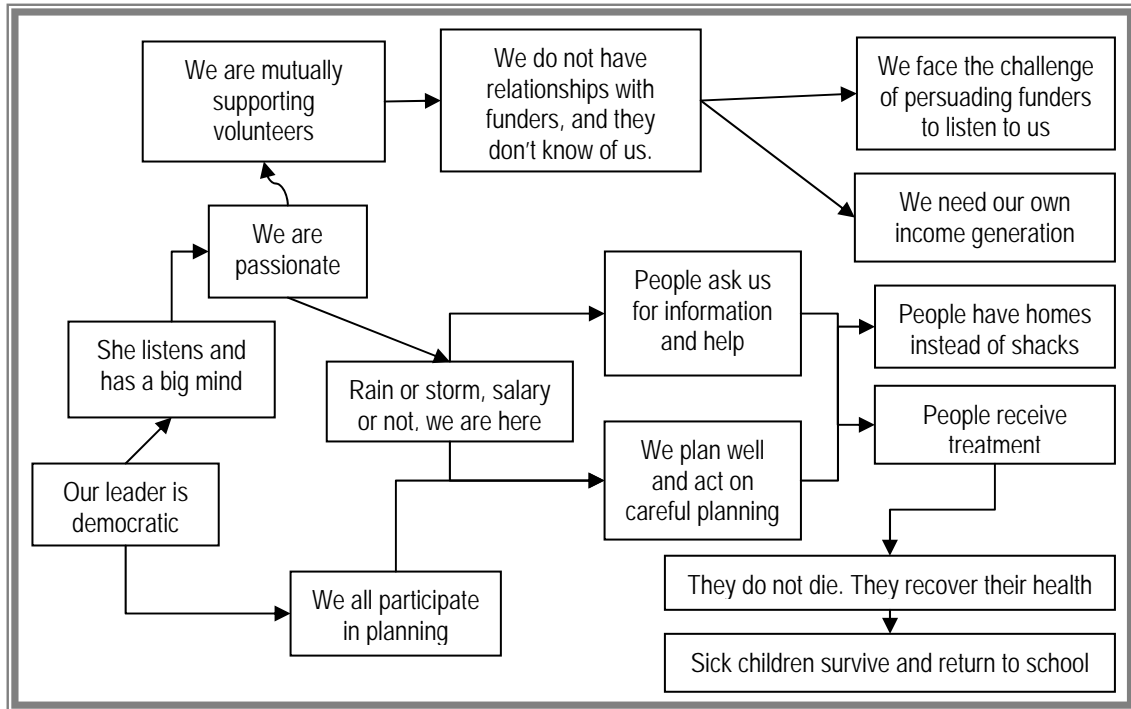
Exhibit TT4. *The first attempt at metaphor. The standard of my art work was a source of great mirth.*

This organisation is like a person with strong hands, connected to a large heart and a strong sense of goodness (the halo). Eyes open for the needs in the community. The mouth of a strong communicator. The person comes bearing fruits to share with the community.

4.3.1.4. Action and questions leading into Case Study 2

This session demonstrates how verbal communication is central to effective communication in these organisations. Written communication is virtually meaningless. Still more concerning, the experience of writing and the tensions associated with difficulties in expressing themselves in written English, lead to participants' feelings of inadequacy not conducive to mutually respectful relationships.

The Stories of Impact session is powerful as an opening process, and needs to be continued.

The use of metaphor is showing excellent potential, with possibilities for expansion as a learning and reflection tool. As a research tool, however, challenges have arisen around multi-tasking of note-taking and facilitation.

The Do More / Do Less session is questionable, and needs to be attempted again and observed closely.

4.3.2. Case Study 2: JJ & JD

Two organisations have arranged to attend a single session. This Case Study provides an opportunity to consider the advantages and disadvantages of joint processes, and potentially greater efficiency.

One of the organisations is large with approximately 15 staff and 1000 clients. It works in children's care. The other is smaller, with 4 staff members, working in home-based care for the chronically or terminally ill.

Both are funded. The larger organisation achieves over a million rands (€100,000) per year, which is as much as any community based organisation is likely to earn. It has a formally structured staff and market-related salaries are paid for key skills, such as financial management. These salaries are substantially more than the volunteer-based salaries of non technical staff.

The smaller organisation is also funded, and several of the staff receive salaries. Both organisations also use the services of volunteers on stipends.

The organisations have substantial infrastructures. Their buildings include offices, training rooms, reception areas and staff kitchens on premises donated by the local municipality.

4.3.2.1. Diagram of process

#### 4.3.2.2. Description, reflection, learning and conclusions

Opening, introductions and contracting

- The Directors of the two organisations have agreed to participation in the session and have instructed their staff to be present. Staff members, however, are not aware of the purpose or time demands of the session, and are resistant. The Director of JJ is absent from the opening session.

The session therefore begins with an explanation of the purpose of the day. This is met with open confrontation. Participants resent being instructed to attend without being consulted. They feel that their other work demands should take priority. In the light of this objection, I invite the group to cancel the session with no implications to themselves. Despite their objections they decide to continue with the session.

🔓 'Opening up a can of worms': The underlying issues and power dynamics within the organisations are obvious from the first interaction. I am aware of needing to be very cautious of allowing internal conflicts to escalate, without having the time or opportunity to guide the organisation through to a constructive conclusion to those conflicts.

⚡ This experience clearly demonstrates the inseparability of organisation development from evaluation. Any process carries the potential to be used by internal factions to express conflict or tension. Evaluation facilitators must be prepared to hold this tension, while ensuring that organisational coherence is built. Unravelling might be inevitable. Evaluation, however, does not have the right to catalyse breakdown.

☞ As powerful elements in the current organisational situation, conflicts and tensions can and should be aired. The principle is that evaluation is integral to organisational development. Organisations entering evaluation cannot be assumed to be robust or intact. They may be vulnerable. A facilitator holds a position of power. This must be used responsibly.
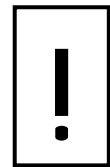
Stories of impact

👁 Each participant shares a personal story of having experienced impact by the organisation, some of which are very emotional. Stories are written down by other members of the same organisations in a format similar to that used for TT.

In this session the stories are generally not communicated particularly clearly, either in writing or verbally. Despite this, it is not difficult to draw on the accounts to ascertain the needs, situations and contributions of the programmes from the stories (Exhibit JD1).

One story relates of an elderly lady caring for her ill son, unaware that he has AIDS. The carers come to find that he has died, and have to break this news to his

mother. The story teller is tearful. The trauma of the experience remains vivid and her emotion returns in the telling of it.

The stories give a clear reflection of the situation and the needs in the community: "a 13 year old cannot run a household". The process explains why the practical services of education, basic household care and hygiene for child-headed households are required on mass.

The stories describe critical services in detail and provide indications of priority: most clients' first need is for basic hygiene and food. They show that needs in the community may be relatively simple to fulfill, but critical in effective access to rights and services: an elderly person is seldom able to obtain documentation from Home Affairs[20] alone, through lack of knowledge, confidence and mobility. This can result in financial and health crisis. Simply accompanying, helping and explaining the process has profound impact on their lives.

Stories also show the subtle qualities of these services that are essential to their impact: children's physical and emotional needs must be met, and self-respect is connected with cleanliness, clothing and appearance. Children need the chance to appear average and not visibly disadvantaged. The children's right 'to be kids' is denied to vulnerable children and child-headed households: "They had a chance to be children. These children don't have time for laughter and playing. They are looking after their siblings and themselves. For this day they could run around and be kids again." Restoring this to whatever extent possible is a core objective of an OVC CBO.
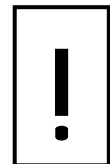
A single bath and set of clean clothes may not address a long-term problem. Equally, a personalised gift or a party might not change the situation in which a vulnerable child lives his or her everyday life. These gestures remind people of their humanity, value and dignity. The organisation saw this as having great impact.

Community organisations are essential in identifying and addressing the needs of those most vulnerable and dependent in society. They offer holistic, integrated responses which even a tight network of social workers is unlikely to replace.

---

[20] The Government Department of Home Affairs which issues birth, death and identity documents. In South Africa, all services (medical, social, financial, etc) require a valid identity document. Vulnerable children and elderly people may not have birth and death certificates required to support their applications, and a lengthy, bureaucratic process may deny them basic services until resolved. Support in these applications is one of the most common roles of CBOs.

Stories provide detailed descriptions of impact in complex social contexts. They show the systemic impact of simple interventions, and the abstract immeasurable value of dignity. These qualities cannot be captured meaningfully through non-narrative or quantitative methods. Stories demonstrate how impact is individual and not achievable at scale or with uniformity

🔓 Stories reflect organisations' values and challenges. Some examples include the importance of retaining human responsiveness to individuals, rather than treating clients as a production line. Values also embraced an ethic for remaining responsive to reality, rather than bureaucratising service into a tightly bounded set of written processes, systems and limits. These values serve as warnings. They reflect the stage of formality in the organisation. At some scale, however, the size and number of clients do require systems, formal organisational structures and processes. This growth tends to imply compromises to personal engagement, and its associated benefits of responsiveness.

🔓 Although stories give insight into the organisation's indicators for success, the process does not result in the organisation itself crystallising and consolidating these into criteria for self-evaluation.

Stories also do not tell us the scale or scope of the situation's need (how common are these problems?); the contribution of the organisation relative to that scale; or the full range of services being offered by the organisation. Neither do they tell us the limitations of CBOs services (where are they unable to help, and how sustainable is that help).

Since stories highlight that each case is unique and that every client has a different set of needs, it is artificial to attempt to formulate generalisations.

☞ Stories of Impact should be a key process element in evaluation. The session reinforces the value of stories in evaluation. There is potential in elaborating it to be of greater management and communication value.

!
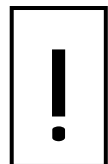
What struck you? What does this say about your organisation?

👁 Responses are rather obvious and superficial. They include "we are caring" and "this is difficult work". There are also complaints about local authorities, particularly government departments and uncooperative community members.

🔓 The session produces uninteresting results. An alternative question is required to help to draw out the criteria for success

☞ A design change is required to word the session such that it draws out the criteria for success as they are evoked by the stories.

🔓 The conversation reflects an external locus of control and weak holding of power. It is interesting to observe how the staff of this substantial organisation with formal structures, a large client base and funding that extended to millions of rands, place power outside of themselves.

⚡ This group is large and robust enough to see itself as victimised by the incompetence of others, without preventing it from acting in its community. The power of the organisation does not necessarily equate to power among its members. On the contrary, the case seems to demonstrate powerful, structured organisation fostering dependency and expectation rather than initiative and proactivity among individuals. The power of senior management and leadership necessary to build a large organisation seems to be inversely proportional to the power held by staff members in that hierarchy. The organisation's structure and formality itself might intimidate members who might have far more task-focused confidence in a smaller or informal organisation.

Metaphor

👁 The instruction is given, "Think of an image, an animal, person, or thing that your organisation reminds you of". The two organisations each give an image: a river and a tree. I draw and annotate the metaphors in a facilitated session (Exhibits JD2and JD3). Participants describe and discuss their capabilities, institutional environmental, threats and services through the metaphor conversation.

🔓 Metaphor is greatly enjoyed by the participants. It provides a succinct description of their role, and insight on their challenges and situation. The OVC CBO's river depicts a work flow which aims to embrace large numbers of children, where vulnerable children need to be captured into the stream in order to benefit and survive. The interactions around the home-based carers' tree describe the continuity between community and the importance of clients regaining independence from the organisation as a foundation stone to sustainability and impact.

👁 Participants are inhibited to draw themselves. When I draw, they really talk.

- Facilitation drawing and capture is not ideal participatory facilitation. Disproportionate power is held by the 'pen holder'. When I draw I am likely to misrepresent the emphasis in the images.

  Another concern is that although the session gives organisational insight and a useful shared focus, it gives little that contributes to evaluation *per sé*. We have a description of the organisations, but no critical self-analysis.

- The potential in metaphor lies in the enthusiasm of the group. The immediate connection by the group with the image emphasises its value as a common language. The question remains as how to best use this potential and energy.

- I shall continue to evolve the design of this session. It has not yet met the objectives of providing an evaluation process.

What will we do the same, More Of, Less Of?

- The response is, "we will do more of the same". More patients, more clients, more services, more fundraising. There is mild emphasis on certain areas of their work, which I can interpret into the Theory of Change (Exhibit JD4). For the most part, however, the conversation is reactive and difficult to translate into conclusive or clearly argued decisions.

- The session continues to have low data value and minimal success in stimulating reflection.

- The tension of the opening session erupts during this exercise. The staff of one organisation raise internal conflicts, especially around the authority of their Director, who has been absent for most of the day. The members of the other organisation, who happen to be board members of the first and supporters of the criticised Director, come hotly to his defense. The tensions, already familiar to all participants, are strongly aired on both sides. As facilitator, the conversation moves from evaluation, to organisation development, to conflict resolution very rapidly. I attempt to allow the expression of dissatisfaction to an extent, but to limit its escalation. This compromise resolves to a short session on role clarification and hearing each other's views.

- The More Of, Less Of process seems to be experienced as confrontational, even before the eruption of all out conflict. Body language and response suggest that the positive:negative implications of "What should we do less of?" produces

resistance and some defensiveness, especially in the presence of another organisation. This defensiveness reduces creativity, sincerity and originality.

Leadership challenges and dissent are invariably part of the lives of organisations. Communication processes tend to surface these. Short learning and evaluation interventions may not be the most constructive space in which to air conflict, but conflict cannot and should not be suppressed, denied or dismissed.

The facilitator needs to remain carefully neutral in the absence of sufficient facts and understanding. Respect for the integrity of the organisation and its leadership should be maintained. The facilitator must not seem to collude with any one party in the dissent. Tension needs to be held, contained and, to the extent achievable in a short time, used constructively for growth.

The conflict also highlights the risk of sharing a self-evaluation process between two organisations. There is a tendency towards contrast, competition and comparison which inevitably raise defenses and dilute honest introspection.

The experience illustrates the effects of power shift on the quality of information. Defensiveness can be incited when participants experience competition with another organisation. Underlying tensions can also raise defensiveness. The impact of defensiveness on evaluation is that data are superficial and less credible.

☞ The More Of, Less Of session is raising defensiveness and producing weak data. Reconsider its value.

We might imagine that joint evaluations are not only efficient but should also offer potential advantages in shared experience. This Case Study, however, highlights the risks more than the benefits. Open, self-critical, undefensive self-evaluation is far less likely to emerge where organisations are placed in a situation of comparing themselves with each other. Participants are tempted to vaunt over the shortcomings of others, thereby being less perceptive of their own shortcomings.

☞ Evaluation time should devote attention to a single organisation. Lessons sharing and networking may be valuable in other settings, but cannot replace the individual, uninhibited experience of self-evaluation.

Reflection and closure

👁 The reflection and feedback session is polite and generous. It gives a sense of dignified closure to an otherwise tense session. Participants have appreciated a better understanding between the two organisations, and they express intentions for stronger collaboration and more frequent communication.

4.3.2.3.   Exhibits from JD

Exhibit JD1. *Emergent criteria for success are achieved through the Stories of Impact session.*

Stories of impact
COMMUNITY IMPACTS *"George, our driver, … asked "Who are those children, walking on their feet?" … we got them uniforms and underwear, and took them back to my home for a bath and to dress them properly. A week later an elderly Venda man came holding a pumpkin, and asked who George was. When he saw George he cried. Most people are afraid of George. He could not believe that such a tough looking young man could have reached out to his grandchildren. The children's parents had passed on, and he was taking care of the children…. We just felt that society can't allow a child to have no shoes."* *"Together with Oprah we did a 'Christmas Kindness' for 1000 kids. …. The venue was decorated with colours, and there were presents for all of them, with their name and age written on it. …. They had a chance to be children. These children don't have time for laughter and playing, They are looking after their siblings and themselves. For this day they could run around and be kids again. … Even today, they still remember this, and we still see them wearing the presents they got. For me that day had a great impact."* *"The eldest child was 13. She could not take care of her brothers and sisters. The house was full of washing, everything was dirty. So we spent the day cleaning, and cooked for them, we showed the 13 year old how to cook and how to do these tasks each day. We got them school uniforms. This is the work we do."* *"An old lady, … no ID, or grant, and her house was in a bad state. She was too old to clean. She couldn't get to the clinic without assistance. Nor could she go to Home Affairs or work out the grant system alone. We discovered that she did not have a birth certificate. We were able to take her to DHA, and introduce her to the clinic where they medicated her blood pressure and managed to get it back to normal."* *"A young girl of 15/16 had household problems that gave her problems concentrating at school. An accounting student volunteered to be her mentor and to help her with her studies. She really focused on her school work, and is now a scholarship student studying business management."* *"A young girl …. She was very sick, with TB and HIV. Her CD4 count was 19. She could not even walk. Most of us thought she would pass on. I visited her and spoke to her to take counselling. Today she is up. Because of this programme, people are getting up."*

Exhibit JD2. *Metaphor for JJ*

Sun=Hope

Clouds=Funders, **Rain**=Funding, **Sky**=Infinite resources

Young trees = volunteers

Trees = caregivers: drawing the insects (resources), which fall into the river to feed the fish. Trees also attract rain, or funder relationships.

River=The organisation

Fish = the children, eating the fruit and insects attracted by the trees.

An axe = challenges and 'brick walls' of external organisations not supporting.

Dead fish, not in the river = children not reached by care programmes.

The vivid image captures the importance of drawing clients into the river of care, and depicts a system that must work with volumes and flow-through in an organised, and scaleable system.

Exhibit JD3. Metaphor for JD.

Tree = the organisation

Sun = carers and the spirit of the organisation

Lightening = threats, listed as crime, jealousy or suspicious NGOs and relationships with government departments

Fruit = reputation and funding sources

Care, strength, hope and love flow down from the tree.

The carers are kangaroos with hearts in their pouches, and they eat from the tree of the organisation

The metaphor speaks of an organisation that sees itself as integral to the community, its membership being in and of the people it serves. The importance of clients gaining independence and separating from the organisation is a key outcome for them. Although the metaphor verges on the ridiculous, it highlights the key impacts of rehabilitation and ultimate independence of clients. The organisation's issues with relationships were also noted, in the interesting choice of threats.

Recovered patients become kangaroos again, and leave the organisation.

Patients are tortoises (transformed from kangaroos). The strong line from tortoise back to kangaroo is emphasised.

Kangaroos are community members. Some are tortoises, heavy and inert, in need of help. Some become carers.

144

Exhibit JD4. *Drawn largely from Stories of Impact, the theory of change provides the logic for the organisation's existence and contribution.*
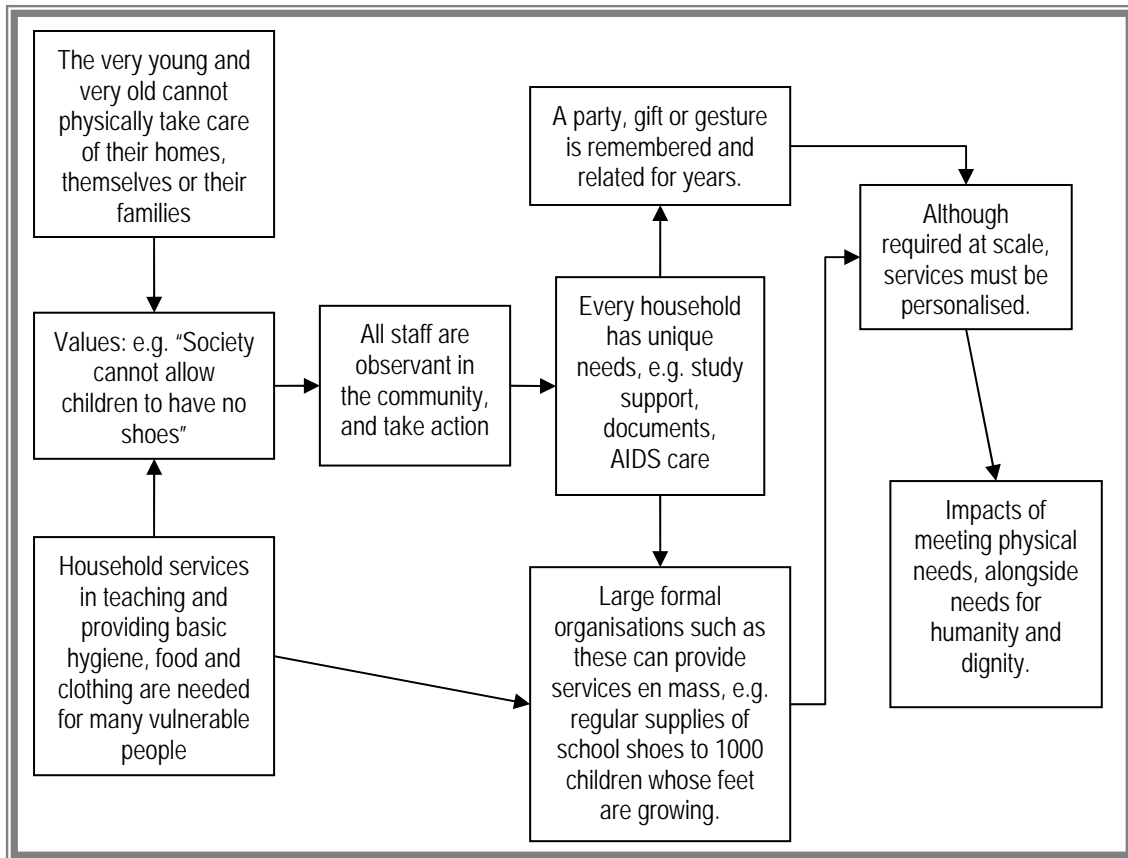
4.3.2.4. Reflections with mentor

At this juncture a meeting is held with an experienced OD professional as a critical element of action research practice. Progress in terms of the research question is described to the mentor, and the following questions are posed:

- How does this resolve to an evaluation process?

- How can characterisation (i.e. metaphor) be used in evaluation?

- How best do participation and facilitation meet in this process?

The following recommendations emerged from the meeting:

☞ In order to crystallise stories into evaluation criteria, a session is needed that captures criteria for success. Stories should be followed by the question, "Success Means …?"

☞   A participant should be invited to do the drawing of the metaphor to increase ownership and participation.

The following questions emerge for the next Case Study

☠   What process, stemming from Stories of Impact, might help to draw out the criteria for success?

☠   What process would strengthen the use of the metaphor picture as a tool for evaluation?

☠   How can the process assess the organisation's limitations?

☠   What evaluation statement emerges on the issue of power?

4.3.2.5.   Action and questions into Case Study 3

This has been a challenging session in terms of managing organisational dynamics. It has provided an important and valuable lesson on the inseparability of evaluation from organisation development and institutional capacity building. Evaluators, whether they might wish it or not, are placed in a path of organisational tensions and learning. Responsible, ethical evaluation needs to acknowledge this, and ensure effective process. Closure must be constructive and optimistic for the organisation, including commitment to engage in difficult processes ahead.

The observations on defensiveness in this Case Study suggest key emerging conclusions. Defensiveness has a direct negative impact on data quality, both in terms of depth and trustworthiness. Where defensiveness is raised, data are questionable. This has profound implications for donor driven or any externally driven, critical evaluation. However urgently an external agency might feel its critical questions to be, 'systems effects' inevitably distort answers and relationships. More concerning still, defensiveness closes down learning and self-belief, and thereby undermines development. Critical evaluators using external criteria create a no-win situation.

The Case Study also demonstrates that self-evaluation with more than one organisation poses certain risks. Participants are more likely to feel defensive, especially if the other organisation's members take any form of high ground. They tend to focus on the challenges and successes of others, and are less intent on their own learning and growth. While there is value in peer exchange in other contexts, inward-looking organisational reflection is best conducted with single organisations. Of all the sessions that raise defensiveness, More Of / Less Of is the most intensely conflictual.

As with the previous Case Study Stories of Impact is powerful and effective in rapidly launching the process and quickly reaching into the issues that are relevant to the organisation. "What struck you in the stories' is used to elaborate and draw criteria for change from the stories. This part of the process is important, but the wording and style do not elicit particularly meaningful criteria. This session needs to be developed.

Metaphor is again powerful and engaging, but poses two challenges. One is that I am doing the drawing, while participants are talking. This does not meet basic participatory methods standards. Power over the product and the direction of the conversation resides in the pen. The drawing process is therefore not contributing to ownership, and a more participatory metaphor session needs to be developed. A second challenge is that metaphor may be interesting and enjoyable, and it describes the structures of the organisations, but so far it has been limited in evaluating the standards of those structures or the impact of the organisations' services in its community.

4.3.3.   Case Study 3: QN

The third Case Study is with a faith-based organisation. It is a home-based care organisation with several carers, virtually all of whom seem to receive government stipends. The management staff is organised into an organisational structure to provide for operations, financial, administration and leadership functions. Its hosting church donates office space and administrative support.

4.3.3.1.   Diagram of process

Arrival and contracting → Individual stories of impact → Group discussion: What is important in this organisation? Success means …? → Metaphor → Breakaway groups: What should we do more, less, the same? → Feedback to plenary: With critical thinking questions → Reflection and closure
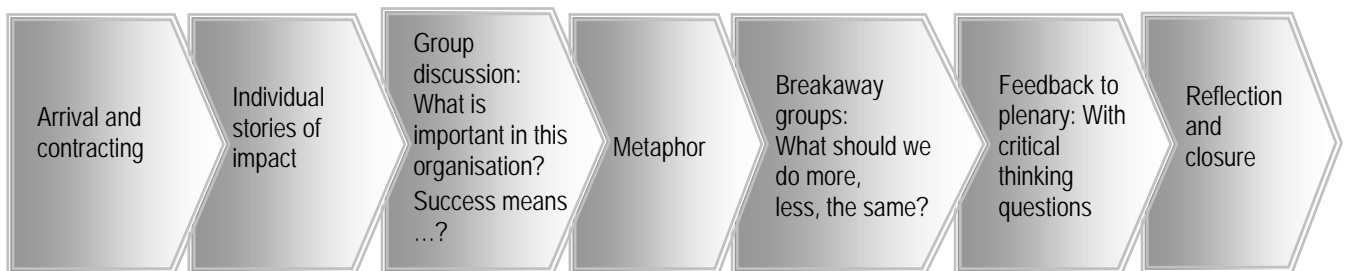
4.3.3.2.   Description, reflection, learning and conclusions

Opening, introductions and contracting

👁 The meeting starts two hours late, due to the unexpected arrival of Department of Health administrators with cheque books and stipend payments. I wait outside in the shade. I am concerned that leaving might be seen as impatience or criticism, perhaps curtailing the momentum gained by agreeing to hold the session that day. My presence there is a form of demand in itself. Waiting patiently without complaining, chasing or demanding seems to build a calm relationship.

🔓 Would the power dynamics be different if I were a donor and an evaluator, instead of a volunteer and a student? How should a programme evaluator behave in these circumstances? I would suggest that a programme evaluator would have been even more sincerely interested in the organisation than I am. I am primarily interested in conducting this process. A real evaluator would have asked an uninvolved staff member to take him/her to visit clients, or have conducted individual interviews with anyone who might have been passing.

💥 Plans can and do derail beyond the control of the host organisation. An evaluator who does not wish to place his or her power and position at the centre of the

engagement, should stand back and allow the visit to unfold, even if this feels irritating. There are a great many different ways to use site visit time beyond those originally planned.

☞ Evaluators (and students) need to support power with attitudes of acceptance and a trusting assumption that the various needs of the organisation are being fulfilled in order of priority. Insisting on donor interests being prioritised when appointments go unavoidably awry is a statement of power imbalance.

Stories of Impact

👁 Stories once again are powerful, convincing and vivid (Exhibit QN1). Outcomes emerging from the stories relate to changes in the varied circumstances of each client.

🔓 In a responsive organisation such as this one stories may be the only clear indication of impact

A key impact criterion is again identified as restored dignity and recovered humanity. To die "a person" and to "be a child" are indicators of impact which informed the goals of the organisation. This contribution to society is not measurable or quantifiable, but remains the essential service that organisations such as this one provide.

💥 This method continues to provide highest quality insight to impact and theories of change.

☞ Stories of impact are recommended as an essential component of any evaluation. They can be analysed in terms of Theory of Change (Exhibit QN2), but equally stand alone as valuable descriptions of impact and meaning.

```
!
```

What is important in this organisation?

👁 The phrasing of the questions that follow Stories of Impact continues to evolve in each Case Study. The previous Case Study asked "What struck you?" For this organisation, the first question is, "Having heard stories of when we have made a difference to people's lives, what do you think is really important to this organisation?" This question produces responses that are superficial in the extreme, such as "Making a difference in someone's life makes it better."

I then ask "What does success mean in this organisation?" This produces the far more profound responses captured in Exhibit QN3.

🔓 The "Success means …" question produces indicators of success that could be clearly described. They are all qualitative. They would be difficult and meaningless to attempt to quantify. For example, "We have made a positive difference in someone's life" can be described in detail, but cannot be quantified. The same applies to the indicator of success, "A client does things on her own, and no longer relies on us".

💥 The outcomes and impacts of work by this organisation are meaningfully described. Theory of change (Exhibit QN2) can also be clearly elicited through these methods.

Quantitative data are necessary and appropriate for inputs and outputs, such as budgets, number of client visits, number and nature of referrals. These data remain largely for audit purposes, with value for planning, logistics, resource allocation, organisation development and accountability.

☞ The critical importance of using qualitative research to understand impact is highlighted. Qualitative information, shared verbally through personal contact, gives the most meaningful substance of impact evaluation.

!
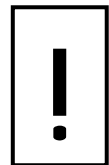
Metaphor

👁 I am concerned about facilitator domination. The metaphor in this session is therefore drawn by one of the organisation members. I open with the question, "Does anyone here enjoy drawing?" A very self-conscious 'volunteer' is put forward. He finds it difficult to capture the conversation into the image, and I am unable to explain or encourage the use of an annotated image to describe the organisation (Exhibit QN4).

Although not apparent from the drawing, the conversation is rich. The metaphor of an eagle produces original and insightful reflection.

🔓 The role of a drawing and annotating facilitator is neither intuitive nor enjoyable for participants. Neither is the experience of being 'put on the spot'. More inclusive, group oriented creations would be needed for participation of this nature to be effective.

Verbal communication is preferred. The main negative impact of not having an active drawer and annotator is that the group is left without a record of their very powerful conversation.

On the other hand, less visual prompting might have encouraged even greater conversation flow. Might the visual metaphor be restricting the flow of ideas, rather than stimulate it?

✸ The experience demonstrates that an annotated, fully participatory metaphor is challenging to produce in so short a time period. A process of several stages would be required. Collage or magazine cuttings would be more accessible than drawing. My experience of such processes, however, has shown that they are excessively emergent, tending to side-track the group, and seldom answering the question at hand.

☞ Should there be a drawn metaphor at all? While people respond warmly to it, it requires a compromise between facilitator domination over the depiction, and participants' reluctance to draw or write.

More Of, Less Of, The Same

👁 Participants then divide into 3 groups. They each discuss the three questions, "What should we do more of?"; "What should we do less of?" and "What should we continue to do the same?" They then present their deliberations back in plenary. Most answer words to the effect of, "We should do more of the same and less of the opposite". The question seems to be of little value in prompting thinking.

☞ Some potential action points are raised, which could have yielded clear plans with probing and prioritisation. In term of evaluation value, however, the content remains too abstract, general and arbitrary to be useful.

👁 A participant is asked to take the role of asking probing questions, but does not engage with the task. Instead, I take this role. I ask questions such as, "What are the reasons for not having done more or less of this before now?" This probing is intended to unravel the obstacles and potentials in the organisation.

☞ The questioning creates immediate defensiveness. It is ineffectiveness in achieving thought, learning and honest reflection. Worse, it lends a negative nuance to the session. Body language and atmosphere clearly suggested a relinquishing of power and the bolstering of defense. Subtle self-deception and disingenuousness begin to characterise the meeting.

⚡ This session only works if debate is internal. Any external questioning, from the facilitator, raises defenses and results in loss of power.

☞ This experience clearly demonstrates the importance of appreciative inquiry as necessary to evaluation.

Interactions that resemble interrogation remove power. This is a crucial principle for any form of evaluation. Power loss leads to defensiveness. Defensiveness limits open thinking, replacing it is narrow self-deception. An evaluator who is seen as critical or skeptical will not be privy to the whole or the accurate truth of an organisation. More damaging, the interaction risks encouraging powerlessness, deception and limits to learning.

!
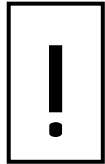
Overall process reflection

While some legitimate and useful communication is achieved through these processes, the Case Study still falls short of either self-evaluation or external evaluation. There is still little sense of the scale and scope of what is being achieved, or of where the organisation might have enhanced its performance. A process which deepens the reflection and prompts participants towards the next steps is required.

4.3.3.3. Exhibits from QN

Exhibit QN1. *Emergent criteria for success are achieved through the Stories of Impact session.*

Excerpts from Stories of Impact
COMMUNITY IMPACTS *"We found a mentally ill elderly person in a locked bedroom. We made her family release her, removed the garbage and dirt from her room, repainted the house, installed electrical fittings, bathed the person and prayed together. We also counselled the family on caring for her. Social work commenced including grants and referral to a social worker".* *"We met an ex-SADF General who offered to buy wheelchairs for community members. The organisation coordinated this, providing the names and distributing the chairs."* *A "mentally mentally ill ill ill" person, also locked in a dirty room… "living like an animal, making noises and hiding under a blanket full of faeces". The community had called the organisation to help. She was released, treated, given food and placed back on her psychiatric medication. She began conversing, cooking, coming to church. She subsequently died. "She died being a person."* *"There is a 10-year old child we found caring for all the physical needs of a 2-year old and an elderly person. The organisation provided weekly food parcels, clothing and school fees. "She now looks like every other child at school."*

Exhibit QN2. *The Theory of Change provides an interpretation of the organisation's logic*
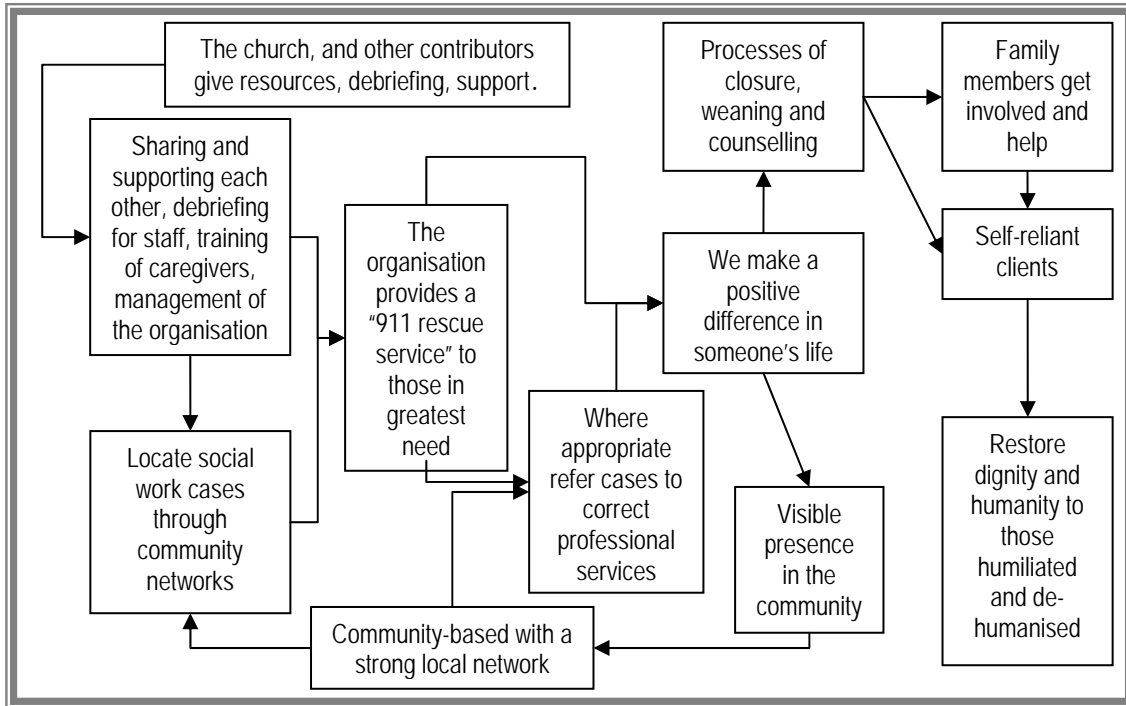
Exhibit QN3. *Comparing the responses to two different reflection questions*

Responses to, "What struck you in the Stories of Impact?"	*Responses to, "What does success mean for this organisation?"*
"We have to share what we have - our experience". *"We need each other. The smallest that you can do for someone makes a difference. We don't have to have everything."* *"People just need care and small help. The community can do this."* *Making a difference in someone's life means making it better."*	*"Success means …* *… every time we make a positive difference in someone's life"* *… a client does things on their own, not relying on us"* *… family members get involved and support the person who needs help"* *… the church gives us something, like debriefing, support, communion or prayers"*
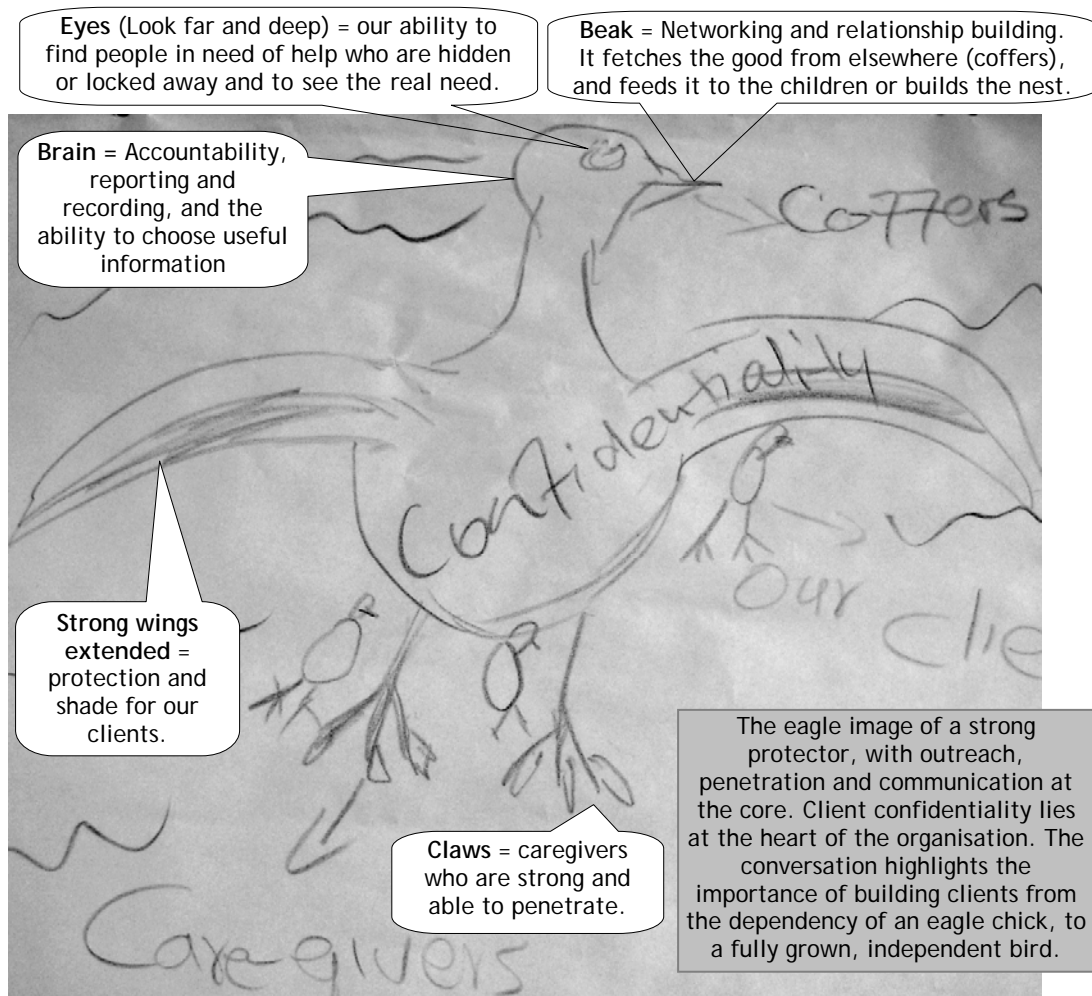
4.3.3.4. Reflections with mentor

A meeting is held with another experienced OD practitioner.

The question remains:

🔓 How do I create an evaluation process from this foundation?

Observations and recommendations are as follows:

☞ *Stories of Impact*: Offer a structure to guide stories so that specific examples are shared, rather than generalised statements.

☞ *Success Means*: Follow the list of criteria given in Success Means with a scoring process using votes for the extent to which each criterion of success is already being achieved by the organisation.

☞ *Metaphor*: Extend the Metaphor exercise to include a Health Check. Say, "The eagle is going for an annual health check. What complaints will she present to the vet? Analyse the health of all parts of the metaphor?"

☞ If *More Of / Less Of* is to be used, it needs to be deepened. Probes such as: i) What are the risks or challenges in achieving each of these 'more ofs'? 2) Elaborate, clarify, explain the reasons for each one of these statements. It is critical that participants themselves should do this prompting and not the facilitator. Give each person a question card prompting them to ask, "What risks do we face in doing this?" "What are the reasons for this being important?"

✑ Even with these ideas, how does this resolve to an evaluation process? To what extent does this process define the effectiveness, efficiency or relevance of the organisation in its community?

4.3.3.5.   Action and questions leading into Case Study 4

What rights do evaluators have when asking for an organisation's time and attention? This question emerges strongly from this Case Study. As a gentle mutual favour and an opportunity for learning, my rights to intrude on this organisation resolve only to conventions around manners. Unexpected demands on their time and attention from the all powerful authority of the Department of Health's finance team certainly outrank me. I am required to be patient and humble.

How does an external evaluator conduct herself if equal power is implicit in the relationship? Or is there an expectation that all other priorities are superseded by the evaluator's visit, if they too represent a cheque book? Evaluators need to be observant of how they are treated, but without the ego-laden gratification of being honoured guests. The observation should seek insight into whether the relationship is honest and whether its power balance is truly conducive to partnership and local leadership.

Stories of Impact are again useful.

I don't think that time would be optimally spent on creating the organisation's Theory of Change diagram in a participatory session. My intuition also tells me that this abstract concept may not be optimal in a group learning experience. I therefore decide to use Theory of Change in the content analysis for each session, and consider its value as a non-linear, analytical tool, contrasting with the less systemic, linear logic models.

The question "What does success mean to this organisation?" brings the story analysis alive. This direct, simple question asking criteria for success is the recommendation for story analysis.

I am struck again by the richness and ease with which participants engage in verbal communication, and increasingly convinced that the accepted norms of written communication are inappropriate. The implications of this observation on logistics and professional cultures are vast, and pose a key area for reflection and discussion.

The Metaphor session is narrowed to choice of an animal, and not plants, inanimate objects, humans or geographic features. This gives the characterisations a useful set of complex dimensions. In an attempt to transfer process ownership, one of the organisation members is invited to draw the metaphor. While the conversation remains rich and detailed, the drawing of the metaphor makes no contribution to the process. The process remains purely verbal, with very limited visual help. Furthermore, the participant invited to do the drawing is self-conscious and uncertain, and lends an element of strain to the gathering. This format does not work.

For the purposes of using visual imagery to support facilitated conversation I have decided to return to doing the drawing myself, viewing it as a facilitation and capture tool. This is not ideal, and I encourage participatory methodologists to explore alternatives. For the purposes of this research question, however, I have decided to live with the compromise.

More Of / Less Of is a failure, and as such it is an especially useful component in terms of research and learning. Although mildly managed, the line of questioning created defensiveness. Defensiveness led to a certain style of response which is neither deep nor credible. This suggests that any form of questioning or interview that might elicit defensiveness, or be construed as a criticism is inadvisable. Non-appreciative enquiry from an outsider, whether legitimate or not, probably produces responses that are not thorough, reflective or perhaps even honest.

4.3.4. Case Study 4: DG

The fourth Case Study is also a faith-based organisation. It offers step-down facility care to clients with extreme physical and sometimes mental impairment. Patients are referred to the facility by hospitals. Many of the approximately 30 client residents are long-term patients, and many are bed ridden or wheelchair bound. The organisation also offers an outreach community based care service for clients.

Another less obvious service seems to be offered. Many of the voluntary staff, and others whose relationship with the organisation is not clear, lived in dormitories. Residents of the centre are not all ill, and healthy people have access to sleeping and catering facilities. The possible reason for this arrangement, although it is not explicitly described as such, seems to stem from many of the centre's members having entered from difficult life circumstances including illness, unplanned pregnancies and drug abuse.

The organisation struck me as being a shelter cum hospice. It offers patient care alongside an opportunity for rehabilitation through voluntary contribution for people in challenging circumstances.

4.3.4.1. Diagram of process

Arrival and opening → Individual stories of impact → Group discussion: Success means ...? → Metaphor → Health Check → Health prescription and planning → Closure
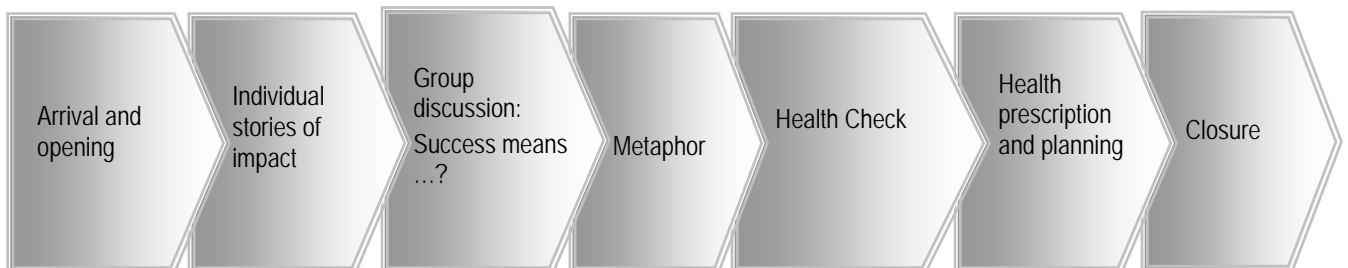
4.3.4.2. Description, reflection, learning and conclusions

Opening and contracting

- 👁 The Director opens with a prayer which becomes extremely emotional, tearful, loud and passionate.

- 🔓 Several of the participating CBOs have been faith-based organisations and several have used prayer as their choice of opening ritual. None of the others, however, used this ritual to create a charge of emotional energy to this extent. The culture and style of this organisation is clearly intense and emotionally charged from the outset.

    The Director seems to cultivate an extreme spiritual and emotional culture.

As a non-religious facilitator, this type of activity makes an impression on me that might be disproportionate with its importance to the group. For the participants this might be common ritual, a normal and expected expression of commitment, and a sign of suitable reverence.

It is important for evaluators to remain aware of their own perspective when interpreting events. We need to acknowledge that extremes are only extreme relative to our own expectations and norms.
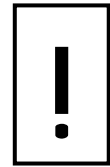
☞ Do not make too much of behaviour that is outside of your frame of reference. Allow the words of participants to speak for themselves.

Stories of impact

👁 Members of the organisation believe that the most powerful resource used in all of their work is "the spirit", "the power of God", "mercy of God", "voice of God", etc. (Exhibit DG1).

A second key observation is that participants experience their work primarily from their own perspective, and only then from the viewpoints of their clients. Their stories are largely about their own physical, emotional and spiritual salvation, e.g. "I have learned to love in this hospice.", "God can give us power", "We can't move because of personal issues", "I was addicted to drugs, I am changed" "I came here, my child was saved, so I serve God".

The stories also reflect a world view which, compared with a scientific viewpoint, is steeped in superstition, "I came here and I was 10 months pregnant", "She came here 11 months pregnant", "I was HIV-positive and now I am HIV-negative".

🔒 This particular case vividly illustrates a caveat around use of Theory of Change (Exhibit DG2). In this organisation's Theory of Change, divine intervention is a key determinant of outcome. This might deviate dramatically from the world view of a donor agency partner. This is a case where testing the rationale of the Theory of Change would derail communication, mutual credibility and relationship. This case demonstrates the importance of respecting difference, while remaining focused on the outcomes.

The temptation of being drawn into content, while being responsible for holding process, is one of facilitation's greatest challenges. This experience highlights the importance of the facilitator maintaining the relationship between content versus process. The attraction of content is usually positive, vested in enthusiasm and

sympathy. This Case is particularly useful, in that the draw of content is more negative, revolving around incomprehension and skepticism. Whether content elicits agreement or rejection, the facilitator's role in separating her own system of beliefs from the outcome is illustrated vividly and elegantly by this organisation.

☞ Although demonstrated most starkly in this extreme case any collection of organisations or individuals are likely to have different beliefs. To assume shared values and world views is to ignore or disrespect the differences. Respect for difference is inherent to positive diversity. Assuming sameness amounts to closing the doors on genuine communication.

🔓 The most striking insight from these stories is that the first clients of this organisation are not patients of the hospice, but the staff and volunteers. This case dramatically demonstrates the value of community organisations in providing a service to those who serve within them.

💥 The first clients of an organisation working in vulnerable and disadvantaged communities are often the members of that organisation themselves. They too are likely to be vulnerable and disadvantaged. In the great majority, they are drawn from situations of poverty and hopelessness, to serve and find meaning and progress in a CBO. The extent to which the organisation transforms their lives is an immediate and describable impact. Their own growth is no less legitimate than that of the organisation's official beneficiaries.

☞ Evaluation generally neglects noting the personal development of staff as part of organisational impact. This is an oversight. Evaluation of front-line organisations should constructively consider the impact of the organisation on its membership, describing their changing circumstances, personal growth and quality of life as among the most achievable and notable impacts of the organisation.

👁 Participants wrote down these stories, but the accounts do not produce a comprehensive, accurate or useful record.

Success Means …?

👁 The group brainstorms success criteria and I list them. Nine internal or process-related criteria for success are identified, such as hard work, accountability and

team work (Exhibit DG3). Only one external outcome-based criterion for success is raised, that of healed patients and improved client situation.

🔒 Utilisation-based evaluation should lead to constructive organisational learning. In evaluation, this requires a balance of process against purpose. As organisation development and community development practitioners, facilitators must support organisational growth within the opportunity afforded by evaluation. In the role of evaluator, however, the facilitator who stands in judgement of the organisation's effectiveness has a role in direct conflict with organisational learning.

This is not because criticism as such is negative. The conflict lies in externally generated judgement against external criteria, which are shown by these data to diminish power, communication and internal self-awareness.

👁 The group then places stars onto the criteria that they feel are already being best achieved by the organisation (Exhibit DG3). Each participant receives 3 stars or votes, and distributes them according to his or her opinion of organisational achievement against each of the criteria. In appreciating the strongest points, those criteria for success that receive *least stars* are conceded by participants themselves as potential areas for growth. This voting process enables the group to hone rapidly in and prioritise the growth areas for the organisation.

The session raises vehement arguments in the group, e.g., "We can't lie. People here are not actually accountable and responsible." The internal dynamics in the organisation become clear. The Director uses the voting session to prevail her views. She complains at and about the staff and accuses the participants of their inadequacies. She refuses to be drawn into a discussion on her own responsibility or contribution to the challenges she is experiencing.

🔒 Again we observe how every facilitated engagement carries a strong probability of unleashing the organisation's issues and undercurrents.

⚡ Evaluators need to be organisation development practitioners. We are responsible for leaving the organisation at least as intact as we found it, and preferably a little stronger.

Metaphor

👁 Each individual is asked to spend time thinking, and then to share with the group his/her choice of animal and a rationale for this choice. Metaphors are limited to animals to ensure that there is enough substance for analysis. Metaphors such as

stars, diamonds or light do not have enough dimensions for a useful analysis of an organisation.

Each member of the group shares a suggestion and the associated characteristics of the organisation as he/she sees it (Exhibit DG4). There is shocked laughter when one of the participants (the recovered drug addict) offers, "We are like the snake. Snake skin designed clothing is very good and beautiful. We are like people who are rejected and outcast, and find beauty when we come here."

The group then chooses one of the metaphors by voting. There is no limit to the number of times each person could vote – they raise their hands for all the different animals with which they can resonate. This is preferable to single votes. Firstly, people tend to vote for themselves or their friend. Secondly, unlimited voting softens the atmosphere of a sense of rejection and competition. Only a few of the metaphors receive noticeably little accolade, and the chosen metaphor is virtually unanimously supported.

This process works well. The list of animals and explanations gives a range of rich insights into how the members view themselves. The outcome of the vote seems to be experienced as just and inclusive.

I then draw the metaphor. The group is asked to annotate the different body parts of the snake in relation to corresponding elements of the organisation (Exhibit DG5).

The group describes the contrast between an angry, frightened cobra, its hood reared, as they themselves were when they joined the organisation. How, in that angry and fearful state, society rejects and attacks the snake, also out of their own fear. When accepted and relieved of its fear, however, the passive snake shows the beauty of its skin, and society can to be taught to see that snakes are beautiful and have a contribution to make.

The detail provided to the metaphor includes: the left and right brain as administration and leadership; the tongue as being forked between God's word and sweet talk into the community; the scales of the skin as the team and the clients in a single fabric, supporting each other; the importance of community resources (rats) as snake food; and the identification of community connections in drawing these resources into the project.

ⓔ This is a powerful and moving statement of the dual role of this organisation in its community.

The snake is one of the most profound metaphors to emerge in the research process, and one that I have already shared with many audiences. It is striking in terms of the subtlety with which organisations and individuals are able to interpret themselves, particularly when compared with the standard of written, literal description we would expect from a CBO.

!

As indicated in Stories of Impact, the changes in the circumstances and attitudes of clients and volunteers, and changes in perception and attitude of families and community members, emerge as a key outcome of the work of the organisation.

✺ The discussion has raised further criteria for success, such as effective community engagement or internal relations. The criteria are again qualitative and intangible.

This case also offers a striking example of the value of metaphor in achieving a detailed and nuanced understanding of development and organisations.

A democratic metaphor process, using participants' individual reflection and voting, offers a strong product. There is useful triangulation between the conclusions drawn from Stories of Impact and Metaphor.

☞ The drawing by the facilitator does not seem to detract from the conversation.

Metaphor is an extremely powerful form of communication in this context. Its potential is confirmed.

Health check

👁 Aspects of the organisation, as identified in the body and surrounds of the snake, are considered for the purposes of a Health Check (Exhibit DG6). I ask, "We have a snake and the different parts of its body are labelled as parts of this organisation. The snake decides to go to the vet, to see if each part of its body is healthy. You, the participants, are the vet. You are conducting a medical examination. As the vet, you will give the different parts of the snake a score out of five: 5/5 if the organisation operates at its full potential for this body part, and 0/5 for a severely sick aspect of the snake."

The elements of the animal and corresponding parts of the organisation are captured onto smaller paper notelets (10cm x 10cm) and placed around the drawing of the snake. The scores are written onto the notelets.

At this point, facilitation becomes so absorbing and demanding, that process notes are neglected. Neither do I manage to capture the reasons for offering different scores.

🔲 A voice-recorder is essential for the purposes of research, although not necessary for the purposes of evaluation. Immediate reflection after the session, together with photographs of images and flipchart notes should be enough to prompt an evaluator's reporting to her client.

🔒 Although valuable and interesting, the emphasis remains on internal development, rather than impact or outcomes for clients (Exhibit DG6). Service effectiveness is only one of many elements and criteria, and is scored at 5/5 in the Health Check. Organisations tend to be strongly invested in the belief that their services are perfect. Their own experiences within the organisation are of more interest for critique.

The vet's prescription

👁 The question asked is, "What would the vet prescribe in order for each of these scores to be raised to 5?"

The discussion is captured on a separate flip chart, to which the scoring notelets have been transferred. We begin with the top scoring body parts, moving into the more challenging lower scoring areas (Exhibit DG6).

The participants developed plans, which include, for example, improving communication through routine meetings, stronger staff induction and contracting systems, a less conflictual management and leadership style and clearer definition of roles.

🔒 A useful session with a strong emphasis on the areas for improvement and potential for improvement. The careful use of appreciative inquiry is critical. The facilitator asks "How do we get from 1 to 5?"; never "Why does this score only a 1, what is wrong?"

The issues that are clearly sources of conflict in the organisation are raised, particularly around communication and leadership style. The method enables these to be presented in a non-confrontational manner as constructive suggestions.

☞ The Metaphor, Health Check, Prescription sequence works well. In summary the process involves:

i) annotating the picture using loosely attached notelets with the name and function of the body parts

ii) reaching agreement with discussion on the score out of 5, and capturing this onto the notelet for each body part and organisational function.

iii) moving the notelets to a separate flipchart sheet (both for space, and to support a right – left brain switch);

iv) planning action to improve scores to the full potential of the organisation, at 5/5.

🔓 This is a superb OD process, even though I say so myself. It does not, however, inform an evaluator of the organisation's outcomes and impacts, or even much on its activities. It is completely inward-looking.

☞ How does metaphor support impact evaluation? The question has been tormenting this process from the outset, and the answer has not yet emerged.

Case study reflection

As with JD, the organisational development issues in DG surfaced rapidly. The extreme demonstration of religious fervour by the Director in the opening prayer seemed in hindsight to be a form of admonishment and a declaration of superiority. The Director's leadership style seemed to lack real charisma and personal authority to motivate. She also seemed to lack sufficient personal connectedness to inspire support in her following. These deficiencies are replaced by a stream of frustrated demands and criticisms, and an attempt to invoke the power of religion into her own embattled role. These challenges have lead to polarisation in the organisation, and a sense among both staff and Director, of being misunderstood and unacknowledged.

The process is highly effective with this group. Despite an intense day, with moments of great vulnerability, at no time are participants defensive. These are individuals whose life experience may have accustomed them to holding vulnerability with maturity.

There is some irony in the greatest power being held among those who have come from situations of least power. The clarity with which the group can self-evaluate speaks volumes about their capacity for reflection, introspection and for holding their own power. This self-assuredness is juxtaposed with an overpowering Director and the group's strong belief in attributing all of its achievements to God.

4.3.4.3. Exhibits from DG

Exhibit DG1. *Emergent criteria for success are achieved through the Stories of Impact session.*

Excerpts from Stories of Impact
COMMUNITY IMPACTS *"People live longer when they get love, attention and spiritual care, as well as food and physical care. There was a client who had a stroke. In hospital there was no change to his condition. Here he has improved a lot. This shows the spirit that moves here. There was a spine TB patient in a wheelchair. He doesn't need the wheelchair now, because of the love and care of the nurses."* *"She was 32 with 3 children and a CD4 count of 2. Her friends and family were pushing her away. She came here, very angry. She has recovered and left. She has received treatment, her CD4 is up, she is back at work, the children will not lose their mother, she can live a real life. God chose us to do this work, so God can give us power. Our purpose it to make people well."* *"I was very sick and had been pregnant for 10 months. Labour would start and then stop. The people here helped me and my child. My child was sick. There was something in the back of his head. They said I should go to a sangoma. Instead I came here, and my child was well. God saved my child, so I serve God."* INTERNAL IMPACTS *"In the beginning I did not have much love for the patients. It was difficult. Many of them use nappies. You can't do that without love. I have learned to love in this hospice. God and the Director have taught me the love I need for this job."* *"I can talk about how I came and changed through the mercy of God. I came here and was addicted to drugs. I know a story of a lady who came here 11 months pregnant. She could not deliver. Through our prayers she had the baby here. God has done many things in our lives. Miracles can happen.* *"I was HIV+ when I came here. I had dreams and the voice of God told me to stop taking pills. I listened to God, and stopped taking them. When I next tested, I was HIV negative. That was almost 4 years ago, and I have had no side-effects or symptoms. Anything is possible with the mercy of God. This is not just a hospice. It is a holy and special place. Before we touch patients we pray. Faith keeps us moving up."*

Exhibit DG2. *The Theory of Change provides the logic for the organisation's existence and contribution.*
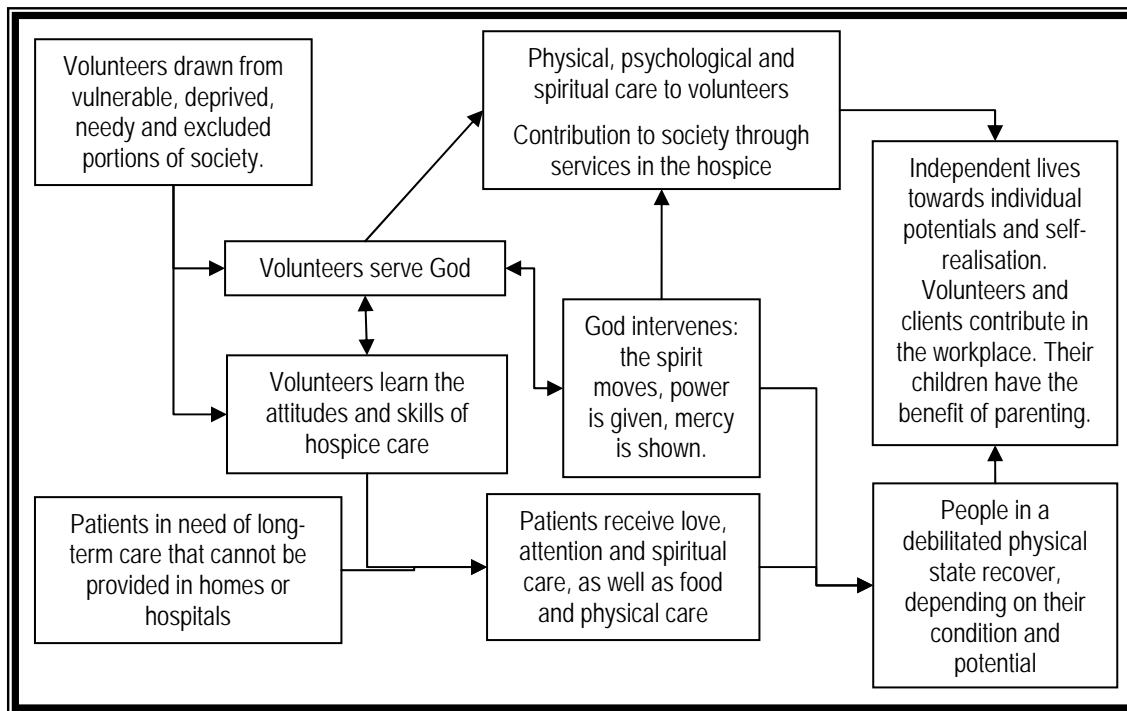
Exhibit DG3. *Success means.*
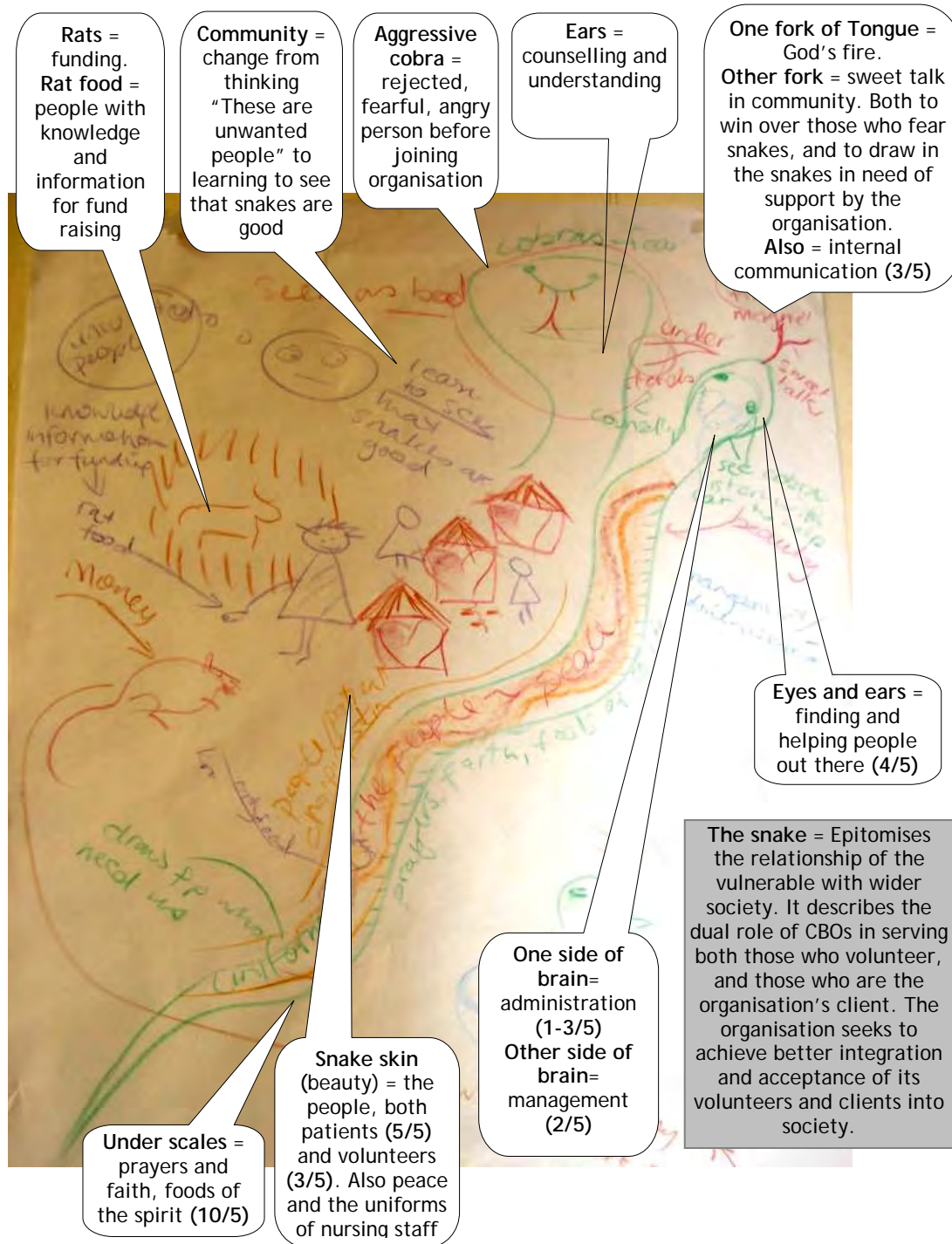
Criteria for success	Number of votes related to the extent to which this is achieved by the organisation	
EFFECTIVE SERVICES Patients healed and their situation improved	7 votes	Areas of achievement
INTERNAL CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS Working hard	4	
Responsibility, and people being accountable for their jobs	2	
Peace	1	
Continuously improving standards of administration	0	Areas of challenge
Listening to each other	0	
Honesty	0	
Respect and love for one another	0	
Playing as a team	0	
Communicating effectively, being clear, hearing what is said and what is expected	0	

Exhibit DG4. *Metaphors for the organisation's character, as given by each participant.*

Animal	Reason given	Criteria for success
Elephant	"*It started small, and is now very big*"	Growth and size
Sheep	"*An animal that takes everything. If rejected, it takes the burden, it can cope.*"	Patience, acceptance, quiet strength
Cow	"*A big animal, which can carry a heavy load, has many roles such as both ploughing and pulling, and can feed us.*"	Effective, versatile, internally-serving
Flamingo	"*A very clean animal. We keep our patients very clean, feed them and wash them.*"	Quality of service
Ostrich	"*A big bird, and when there is a fire, it saves its babies and takes care of them.*"	Responsive in emergencies, protective
Parrot (polly-polly)	"*It listens, and then repeats what you say. It doesn't do what is not said. The team all follow the vision and mission.*"	Management compliance and collective alignment
Tortoise	"*It is rare, it hides, it is unique. It is small and grows slowly without rushing.*"	Uniqueness, invisibility, deliberateness
Snake	"*There is a new clothing label which follows a snake skin design. It is something very good and beautiful. We are like people who are rejected and outcast, and find beauty when we come here.*"	The role of enabling society's least accepted to rehabilitate and contribute

Exhibit DG5. *Metaphor (including the scores allocated to each element out of 5)*

Rats = funding. **Rat food** = people with knowledge and information for fund raising

Community = change from thinking "These are unwanted people" to learning to see that snakes are good

Aggressive cobra = rejected, fearful, angry person before joining organisation

Ears = counselling and understanding

One fork of Tongue = God's fire. **Other fork** = sweet talk in community. Both to win over those who fear snakes, and to draw in the snakes in need of support by the organisation. **Also** = internal communication **(3/5)**

Eyes and ears = finding and helping people out there **(4/5)**

The snake = Epitomises the relationship of the vulnerable with wider society. It describes the dual role of CBOs in serving both those who volunteer, and those who are the organisation's client. The organisation seeks to achieve better integration and acceptance of its volunteers and clients into society.

One side of brain= administration **(1-3/5)** **Other side of brain**= management **(2/5)**

Snake skin (beauty) = the people, both patients **(5/5)** and volunteers **(3/5)**. Also peace and the uniforms of nursing staff

Under scales = prayers and faith, foods of the spirit **(10/5)**

Exhibit DG6. *Health Check and Prescription (including a repetition of the scores allocated to each element out of 5, which link this exercise with the metaphor exercise)*

Element	Function	Score out of five	Elements which were disuse din the plan of action or prescription[21]
INTERNAL EVALUATION			
Tongue	Internal communication and God's fire	3/5	*"We need to have regular meetings. People need to listen, concentrate, commit and follow up. Our meetings are too long. People don't communicate, and they are afraid to talk, because of a lack of respect and low self esteem. One is being asked to manage, and tries to lead. It is the role of the Director to give tasks. Roles and responsibilities need to be clarified." (Director)*
Skin	Team	3/5	*"As volunteers it is difficult to commit fully. Volunteers need to understand the commitment. Better induction and orientation are needed. They then need to be inspired through the word of God. Lack of punctuality is a problem."*
Brain	Management	2/5	*"Respect. The team must respect management. People do not fulfil their roles." (Director)* *"Management style, including dealing with people and conflict management needs to be improved. We need to sit, talk and agree, not admonish, threaten and assume that we are all the same." (Staff/Volunteers)* *"Better planning would clarify what is expected. Better recruitment would identify roles that are fitted to people. More in-service training would help. More recognition of staff would help."*
Brain	Administration	1-3/5	*"Systems and policies are needed"*
EXTERNAL EVALUATION			
Eyes and ears	Finding and helping people out there	4/5	*"This depends on how well we present ourselves to people. Do I have the love needed to communicate with the public?"*

---

[21] "What would the vet suggest in order to get each of these scored from where they are, to 5?" The question asked was. A score of 5 is achieved when the full potential of the organisation, with the human and other resources that it now has, is reached.

4.3.4.4. Reflections with mentor

A period of intensive reflection and several mentorship sessions followed the fourth Case Study.

❧ While a useful process has emerged that provides interesting and profound insights around OD and evaluation in community-based organisations, a clear evaluation process is difficult to isolate? How does this process describe the organisation's contribution to society? There are many excellent OD processes. There is little need for another. In what ways does this research address the issue of evaluation?

Some clear conclusions have emerged

✺ The Case Study stories reflect the types of contribution. Effectively collected, the stories can provide a portfolio of evidence.

The criteria for success and associated scores show the areas which participants consider to be their greatest achievements and those most in need of growth. In practice however, organisations are uncritical of their own ability to provide services. They are also very general in their analysis of this dimension, ascribing the complex range of their interactions to "our work".

☞ Criteria for success could be deepened by asking participants to demonstrate their achievements in the areas that they see as strongest.

✺ Organisational growth tends to be far more finely analysed. Internal criteria are debated much more strongly in the scoring process. Inward-looking evaluation is emphasised by participant with little awareness of how outsiders experience the organisation.

☞ This research is beginning to approach a self-evaluation process, which meets part of the need for participatory, grounded organisation-centred evaluation standards. To be useful to the organisation, and to provide a pragmatic basis for management decisions, thorough inward-looking evaluation is a relevant and necessary component. It needs to be complimented with outward-looking learning and reflection

✺ When the facilitator draws and writes, participants are released from these uncomfortable contributions, and are encouraged to speak. Participants have been consummately at ease with verbal communication, even in English. The

disadvantage of this is that a great deal of control over interpretation and emphasis is given to the facilitator.

In terms of application also, dependency on a facilitated process, reduces accessibility of the method for internal use, and the confidence of the organisation in using metaphor and stories independently.

☞ We could attempt to move control of the format to participants by using digital video. Test an exercise involving creation of the story board for the points participants want to communicate, and have participants capture a set of 3-5 minute videos.

⚡ Appreciative inquiry is vividly rationalised. It is observed that any process of judgement influences the results. Imagined or real criticism draws reactions of defensiveness and loss of power from participants. This observation presents evaluation with a contradiction. Evaluators are required to judge, often with implications for funding relationships. When and how is their judgement role least harmful?

4.3.4.5.   Action and questions leading into Case Study 5

Case Study 4 has provided useful lessons for me around diversity. Faced with a situation of unfamiliar, difficult to interpret behaviour, I am struck by the challenges of interpreting observations and behaviour in a diverse setting. Since most evaluators do not come from the culture or setting of their clients, the implications of diversity are critical. Participation, ownership and power balance are all vested with diversity tensions around wealth, ethnicity, culture and professional position. Diversity considerations are central to the power relations between very different organisations espousing partnerships. Further discussion and a literature investigation on this key emerging theme are needed.

Another important and fresh thematic area arises from the snake metaphor. It relates to the links between evaluation and organisation development, and beyond. Organisations have value and are accountable to their staff and volunteers as a specific client group with its own needs, incentives and vulnerability. This is generally neglected in the culture of professionalism and the industrial view of staff as resources, rather than clients. In a local development CBO the immediate value of organisations to their founders and members is a critical layer of contribution. Attitudes and processes of evaluation must be sensitive to this layer of outcome. Further discussion on this theme is also required.

Interesting fresh insights into the use of Theory of Change are provided in this organisation. While we make assumptions when we test Theories of Change, diversity itself is also founded in assumptions. How do evaluators respond to Theories of Change which are true for an organisation, such as all achievement and problems being derived from God, but which might not align with the evaluator's belief systems? This returns us the argument of outcomes-based, black-box type evaluation, with its limitations in terms of systemic understanding and process management.

Theory of Change can only be tested by the organisation itself. In interpreting and capturing these theories, evaluators need to value diversity and have sincere respect for different assumptions of truth.

Conflict and internal dynamics arose in this Case Study and the findings from previous Case Studies are reiterated. Evaluators need to have a level of skill and awareness to provide basic organisation development facilitation within the context of an evaluation. It is unethical, undevelopmental and irresponsible for an organisation to be left fractured after evaluation interference, however close to the surface existing problems might have been. Much of this may be beyond the control of the evaluator within evaluation time constraints. Nevertheless, sincere effort, attention and evaluation restraint are needed in this regard.

'Stories of Impact' are followed by 'Success Means'. A self-evaluation scoring process of performance against each of these emerging, organisation-centred criteria begins to hint at a process which meets the research question. The organisation has an opportunity to discuss its performance in terms of its own criteria, and to consider where it is either satisfied or disappointed.

The metaphor in this Case Study demonstrates the potential of Metaphor for subtle, detailed, deeply meaningful and complex interpretation and communication. This experience confirms absolutely that Metaphor has exceptional value as a communication and organisation development tool.

The metaphor is then expanded to provide a process for self-evaluation. The snake goes to the vet (the participants); its various organs are inspected for health and rated against a scale. The vet then prescribes actions for each facet of the metaphor, to optimise its health. Participants are lead from a right brain, visual descriptive process (Metaphor), to a left-brain, bullet-pointed analytical and decision-making process (Health Check and Prescription). This creates a rounded and mature outcome for the

exercise, including a documented self-evaluation of the internal functioning of the organisation. I think we've cracked it.

What is not yet cracked is outward-looking evaluation. Participants are giving far more attention and detail to their internal functioning and management, than to their performance and impact in their communities. This is partly due to the use of metaphor, which focuses internally. There also seems to be complacency and confidence, which might be masking defensiveness around their value to their clients. Reflection from perspectives other than their own experience as organisation members is not easy for participants to draw on. It is possible that they are not especially aware of their clients' experience of their services, and do not ask evaluative questions.

One option to prompt this thinking is to structure the conversation towards more balanced reflection on client experiences. Another is to include client voices in the evaluation. Equal weight in the facilitated process to performance inside the animal (inward-looking organisational issues), and of the animal in its environment (services, clients and relevance performance), might stretch this process towards the broader reflection. Another option is to design a quite different process which begins with the perspectives of community members, rather than beginning from the input of organisation members.

4.3.5. Case Study 5: BN

The fifth Case Study is with a gender equity organisation focusing on men's roles and rights. It has a culture of fierce advocacy and strong views on injustices, including those inflicted on men in today's society. The organisation delivers training, workshops and awareness campaigns on progressive and responsible masculinity, particularly with regard to sexual risk behaviour and HIV, while also pertaining to life-skills and vocational counseling.

BN shares donated premises with a cluster of small CBOs in a municipal building. It is lead, managed and largely operated by two men. Three or four other staff members manage some of its projects and activities. It has not been formally funded, although it accepts fee-earning contracts for training work.

4.3.5.1.   Diagram of process
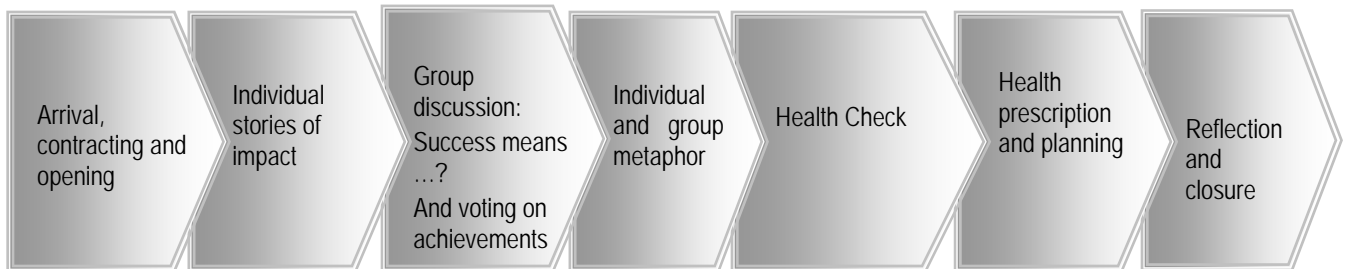
4.3.5.2.   Description, reflection, learning and conclusions

Opening and contracting

👁 I arrive around 9am along with the Director and Deputy. We start at about 11am. The delay is due to most of the participants arriving at work late, and not being aware that the workshop was taking place. Finally one more of the six team members arrives and we decide to start with a group of three. A friend or colleague of unknown relevance arrives for the afternoon.

🔓 Leadership and formality in the organisation seem loose. The two men, who regarded themselves as leaders, seem to do virtually all the work while encouraging others to support them. They do not seem to be leading a solidly formed organisation. Although they try to motivate and inspire, they do not seem to hold much authority or to have achieved serious buy-in from their members.

Stories of impact

👁 The story session is recorded. I state that if they are clear and articulate in their story they will have an electronic record for their own reference (Exhibit BN1).

🔓 They freeze in front of the tape. It dries up their imagination. The stories are rather stultified and self-conscious. Purposeful, conscious recording is intimidating so early in the process.

💥 Casual taping later in the day is less detrimental.

☞ Introduce the voice recorder during the metaphor discussion and the health check. Use notes to transcribe the stories.

🔓 One story reflects the challenge to describing impact where effectiveness leads to clients being lost to follow-up. As 'solved problems', they disappear. In previous Case Studies, reintegration of clients into society is a goal, but is one for which the outcome is seldom knowable.

Another story reiterates the importance of internal accountability and members as first clients, as a volunteer works to vanquish the impacts of abuse in his own past.

The final story epitomises the gender tensions in this group with the female participant saying, "I was working on counselling for young mothers. I gave training and workshops. But I can't see that I have made much difference."

💥 The last story and the gender tension in the group provide an interesting example of shadow dynamics. In addressing gender inequality, sometimes with quite militant views on the rights of men and injustices they face, the organisation faces internal gender struggles which are not seen in any of the other Case Studies.

Success means and voting for achievement

👁 The group finds this accessible. The list of criteria grows quickly. In contrast with other organisations, many of the criteria concern outcomes and impacts on clients (Exhibit BN2). They tend to be qualitative, such as "people relate to our information", or "we create opportunities for personal growth".

🔓 Success Means might provide more opportunities for reflection if it is captured as a mind-map to highlight broad themes for achievement, rather than a list.

☞ Mind map the Success Means conversation rather than listing it as bullets. Use smaller cards and ask participants to arrange them into groups of similar impact. This could then be expanded to incorporate the priorities for action (the Prescription) at the end.

Metaphor

👁 I ask them to think of an animal and draw it. There is outrage at the suggestion, but are persuaded to each draw their own metaphors into a poster (Exhibit BN3). They are self-conscious, ridiculing each other mercilessly about the quality of their drawings. Despite this, their own drawings of the original animals are referred to during the session, and seem to be a source of great satisfaction.

We receive a camel or elephant because of the weight it can carry; a dog for its friendliness and sociability; and a chameleon for its changeability. The last of these is particularly incisive: "We don't have our own plan, we adapt to different situations, whenever we go near colour green, we become green."

With only three participants we have the opportunity to combine the metaphors and elect to use a friendly, sociable camel with a long tongue, which changes colour. I enlarge the drawing from theirs for annotation (Exhibit BN4).

This is the only organisation to place monitoring and evaluation (M&E) into its organisational profile. Cleverly, the group applies M&E ("feedback") to the stomach, which digests experiences, reviews and distributes it to the rest of the body, feeding it in particular to the humps, which represent the ups and downs of organisational life. This is also the first organisation to locate power and influence in their metaphor.

💥 The reaction to the drawing confirms that the use of an image to support rich metaphors requires that it be drawn by the facilitator. This is suggested despite participatory appraisal principles to the contrary.

☞ In drawing the metaphor, I suggest that participants create the first drafts and then write the qualities of the animal that they respond to into their own drawings. The animal chosen by the group is then enlarged from their drawing by the facilitator for annotation, using the angle, size and perspective of their original drawing.

🔓 The contradictions around power in this organisation are thought-provoking. The participants are open to learning from experience, with a well-educated interest

in M&E. Despite this, they speak with a strong external locus of control. Their values attempt to address issues of men as victims and social injustice to men. They see themselves as unable to do what they plan because of lack of resources, but they do not engage with fund raising as a function or a priority.

Management is allocated to both the feet and the head, suggesting a flat organisational structure. They operate as a group of volunteers with little authority or leadership. Each person is self-driven to varying degrees, and the organisation faces the frustrations of different levels of commitment and little consistent division of responsibility.

A conundrum has emerged, conceived in the 4th Case Study, and matured at BN. In analysing the responses of organisations as a facilitator I find myself using my own criteria. This happens both consciously and unconsciously. The criteria might be how well the organisation holds power; the position and style of the leader; or its ability for mature reflection.

Another facilitator might use different criteria, perhaps how happy the volunteers are, whether the organisation receives funding or not, or its standards of reporting and record keeping. All are subjective. The experience probably echoes those of the evaluators who developed 'objectively verifiable indicators' and checklists of measurable, tangible criteria.

In analysing the organisation in this way, I am passing judgement in terms of my impressions and my frame of reference. Is this any different from using previously constructed criteria? In fact, is it more dangerous, since I am subjective and guided by my own assumptions, where the next person's subjective view might be opposite to mine?

<img> **!**
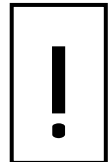
Grounded evaluation carries the profound risk of not reducing judgement in any way, but of making it more subjective and driven by the facilitator's personality and assumptions.

☞ In something of an epiphany, I understand why the forms and frameworks evolved. Their expedience, however, does not make them legitimate. We need to carefully consider how to address subjectivity and the facilitator's personal inclination in presenting an evaluation approach.

Health check

- Scores are given to the metaphor for the standard to which the organisation achieves in each area (Exhibit BN5). The qualities are then scored from 1 to 3 a second time, to prioritise where work is most urgent in building the organisation.

  Major learning and action areas emerge: Leadership scores 2/5 for performance and is given top priority to address: "We don't have a board. Currently we ourselves are the board, and the management and the team."

  The thirteen elements originally identified are prioritised and grouped. The many-faceted beast may have given richness, but it needs to be consolidated for planning. Despite intentions, time runs out and we don't mind-map the areas and issues that might have given more direct access to groups or themes for planning.

- ☞ This labelled, prioritised Health Check could be consolidated with Success Means into a single mind map of issues to be addressed.

- 🔓 The Metaphor process is very strong, and the Health Check makes it even stronger. A final step is required that formulates these reflections for communication with partners, clients and funders.

Planning

- By extracting the top priority issues (3 star) with lowest performance scores (1/5), the group develops an organisational development plan (Exhibit BN6). In this Case Study it concentrates on formal structures and processes.

  Largely due to group distractions and delays, we do not have time to extend the planning and self-evaluation to a set of evaluation messages for an external audience. This particular group of participants is adept at abstract thinking and would probably have been capable of carrying out this task.

- ☞ In order to economise on time for the next Case Study and test models for communication, exclude Stories of Impact and Success Means, and begin with Metaphor. The first two components are accepted as valuable and are strongly recommended. They no longer need to be tested.

Group reflection and closure

- Issues around finance come up before we have even introduced ourselves. The Director hints that it has cost him R7 (€ 0.70) to come out to meet me. On departure the team tries to persuade me to drive them to each of their various

scattered homes. I decline on both requests and reflect on the implications later. In the interim it is arranged and assumed that I would buy lunch for the group, despite my suggestion of 'bring and share'.

This is the only experience across the study of organisation members attempting to gain more than a day of facilitation from my visit. All the other groups have been natural and relaxed. This is the first organisation in which direct reference to differences in class and wealth has arisen.

🔓 How does the entitlement/dependency game influence power? It is very subtle. As I experience it, the person who is asked for wealth-related favours (myself - the driver/buyer) is left with a sense of guilt around entitlement. The person who takes the role of needy dependent has a sense of being deprived in their normal everyday life. Both lose power. Both fuel assumptions and divisions, the class fabric is pulled tauter and the divide widened when this happens.

💥 Class and wealth awareness, differences and tensions are a reality in development practice. Professional evaluators are likely to be employed and wealthy, while participants in development relationships tend to be volunteers or low-income employees. The clients of these organisations are probably poorer still.

☞ All degrees of wealth from the employed professional, to the locally wealthy stipend-earning volunteer, to the extremely poor client have responsibility for holding their boundaries with dignity and respect for the other. As an evaluator, however, the responsibility lies in holding ones own wealth position with comfort and assuredness and assuming and expecting the same assuredness from participants. Impressions of disparity, sympathy or apology are fraught with power distortion, and limit assumptions about satisfaction to the single dimension of material and financial wealth. They are pointless and destructive to power balance.

👁 The organisation carries a fundamental self-limiting paradigm that seems to be the major obstacle. They identify strongly with their chameleon nature, but experience it not as adaptability, but as a lack of focus: "We get involved with other people's visions and missions. We do it for income. We don't do our own mandate. We do those people's mandates."

The organisation takes on paid consultancy work in the name of the organisation, providing male-friendly HIV training and communication. They provide facilitation

and training on HIV to men, women and families, from a male perspective. They regarded this work as being in conflict with their core purpose. Their purpose seems to be to provide similar male-friendly services free of charge. They see income generating activities as responding to the goals of others. Their Theory of Change is fraught with the tensions of these contradictions (Exhibit BN7).

The contradiction begins to strike the Deputy Director in the course of the day's discussion. There is a debate among the members of the group as this rises to the surface:

"Adaptability makes us lose focus. But the work that we are doing is in line with our vision. We have never done any work with external partners that is not in line with our vision, e.g. we do basic HIV training which includes gender awareness." (Deputy)

"I would challenge that. I don't think that most of the things we do are in line with our vision, like PMTCT (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of AIDS)." (Director)

"It is. We are men speaking to women on PMTCT. We choose to talk about PPTCT (Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission). We say that men should attend the ante-natal clinic. The way we train PMTCT is not the same as others, because of our vision." (Deputy)

We discuss the concept of an income generation business model running alongside a charitable organisation as being a sustainable and accepted design. I do not get the impression that they really resonate with this. They seem to continue to experience resistance, guilt and lack of fulfillment around income generation.

BN's relationship with money is complex. Wealth is both attractive and repugnant, desirable but distasteful. They seem to claim an identity with poverty, while denying themselves the right to a sustainable income. This creates an internal tension in their pursuit of the financial resources they desire, and yet hold in contempt.

Participants show disproportionate interest in reflecting on a lack of resources as something out of their control, something that prevents them from being effective, and that prevents them from living their vision with integrity: "If we don't have resources to go and help people, we can't go. The work we do for other organisations that earns income falls under planning, because it enables us

to get resources to implement our plans." They regard their ability to respond to the needs of clients who are prepared to pay for their services as a fundamental weakness of their organisation.

👁 The other ironic contradiction is the relationship in this organisation around gender. Women ("the ladies") were purposefully invited to join the organisation in order to live out its gender equity values. This is not going well … "We always make sure that we communicate everything that happens." (male); "They communicate among the men, they exclude the women members." (female); "No that's not true." (male); "The males communicate every second. They don't talk to the women." (female); "When we call their cell phones are off." (male)

💥 Shadow dynamics are starkest where we try hardest and have the most vehement views

☞ Discuss and review the literature on the influence of shadow as it relates to evaluation and organisations.

💥 In this Case Study, facilitation requires careful holding of the line between allowing an organisation to reflect on itself and draw conclusions on its own needs and growth, and confronting it with logic flaws as I see them. DG's assumptions and logic around divine intervention does not seem to undermine the organisation and are at home in the Theory of Change. Assumptions in BN around repelling money, do seem to undermine them, and are self-defeating in the Theory of Change. Is this judgement appropriate from an external facilitator? Are these distinctions true, or only a product of my subjectivity, comfort areas and defensiveness?

☞ Despite my angst, I recommend that facilitators can and should take the role of mentor around issues that are safe and accessible in so short a contact time. This should mainly involve probing and questioning of assumptions, towards supporting organisational reflection.

👁 The group is decidedly dismissive as it reflects on the day and work:

'We have been doing some of these things, but not looking at them in the same way";

"The language that you use is different. We are ghetto boys. We grew up in the township. We didn't grow up in the suburbs. We use a township approach,

depending on the participants, the language we use changes. We are not used to the language you use."

"We are able to adapt. We can speak to people who are Sotho, Zulu, Pedi, and we are able to adapt and communicate with them."

"We are intending to have tavern talks, my dear."

🔓 The immediate feedback suggests that the session is not warmly received. It seems to have raised defensiveness. (I later discover that this was not the case for all participants. I met the Director at a meeting several months later and was told that the Deputy Director had used the session intensively, and that the organisation had indeed grown.)

Listening to the recording, I understand their feedback. I used long sentences, quickly spoken, sometimes rambling and inarticulate.

On the other hand, how much of the negative feedback is about reclaiming power? The meal-time experience where lunch is chosen at the supermarket, and participants hang back until I pay might have got us all a meal, but at what cost? It involves the experience of queueing like children behind the white lady with the purse. Despite the group leader having contrived the lunch situation, the awkwardness that accompanies it left the relationship fragile for the latter part of the day. To what extent is this due to my mild annoyance at being manipulated in this way? I made a conscious effort to ignore it and move on. I don't think it is a major determinant in the afternoon.

👁 The voice recorder is highly effective and a lot more of the conversation is captured than in processes that rely on notes and recall.

Facilitator's reflection

💥 Power and money are intertwined in our society. Masculinity, money and earning are also deeply linked. In a gender awareness, justice activism group, what do wealthier females represent? This is far deeper and more complex than I can begin to fathom.

☞ Practically, a facilitator should try to avoid allowing wealth disparity to be any more obvious than necessary. Already, we arrive in a private car, write and speak English confidently, and have to make a visible effort to disguise our delicacy regarding rickety, outdoor, paperless pit latrines. We need to remain sensitive about further exacerbating differences in wealth.

Practical tip: Take a simple, moderate packed lunch and be happy to share it. Also bring a gesture gift, such as soft drinks and biscuits for everyone. If an awkward situation seems to be arising, disappear for half an hour to 'make a phone call' and regroup after a break.

4.3.5.3.   Exhibits from BN

Exhibit BN1. Emergent criteria for success are achieved through the Stories of Impact session

Excerpts from Stories of Impact
Director (Male) *"We met a guy by name of David in one of our AIDS campaigns. Already he was withdrawn, even depressed and suicidal, not knowing what to do with his HIV status. I started counselling that person, and we spent some time together. I didn't realise the impact I was making. After 6-8 months he came and told me the difference I had made for him. He joined TAC (Treatment Action Campaign) and became very active in TAC. He was very thankful, that was the first time I realised that I can make a difference as an organisation."* Deputy Director (Male) *"For me it actually started a long time ago. My father was very abusive. I always thought I would be better than him. I believe that there are men out there who can take a stand against violence. I became an activist. I want to help men who believe that violence solves problems."* Trainer (Female): *"I was working on counselling for young mothers. Gave training and workshops. But I can't see that I have made much difference."*

Exhibit BN2. *Success means.*

Criteria for success	Number of votes: To what extent is this success achieved by the organisation
OUTCOMES and EFFECTIVE SERVICES: People understand and relate to our information	3
Creating opportunities for personal growth and self-awareness for our clients	2
Restoring human dignity	2
Achieving our goals of transforming lives and changing attitudes	1
Economic empowerment for clients through work-related skills INTERNAL CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS	1
Getting ladies onto the staff – achieving gender balance	2
Improving and changing our work through learning and developing facilitators' skills	1
Having resources for BN to realise its potential (This was remembered long after completing the rest of the list.)	1

Exhibit BN3: *Choosing a metaphor. Participants' drawings of their characterisations of the organisation.*

Camel = carries a heavy weight, is patient and perseveres

Elephant = also, carries a weight, is patient and perseveres

Chameleon = it changes according to its circumstances. The organisation changes direction in order to respond to opportunities for funded work. "We don't have our own plan, we adapt to different situations, whenever we go near colour green we become green. We adopt from external sources. Whoever is doing what, we send people to join."

Exhibit BN4. Metaphor (including the scores allocated to each element out of 5)

Humps (the ups and downs - the uphill process of meeting challenges or issues, the downhill run of achieving breakthrough) = achievement of the organisation's vision and purpose. **(Women 2, Men5)**

Water in the humps = progress achieved, issues resolved and attitudes changed

Luggage/ 'morwalo' = target audience and the issues that they bring **(3)**

Brain = the two senior managers.

Head (thinks, leads, decides - a mirror of the feet) = strength, management, focus and values - but exercised through leadership rather than implementation **(2).**

Senses (**ears** as aerials, **eyes** as watchdog, **mouth** as mouthpiece = Community Liaison Officer, connecting with the needs of the community and feeding into planning and leadership, ensuring that the organisation remains relevant. **(0-1)**

Neck (links the head to the body) = planning **(5)**

Long tongue = potential to reach out to the community.

Blood and heart = internal communication **(2-3).**

Stomach (digests experiences, reviews and distributes its contents to the rest of the body) = M&E function which receives feedback ('feed', 'back') from the humps / back. **(4)**

Knees (taking the weight when we stop, strong and enduring - even if the feet are weak, the camel remains upright) = programmes, two overlapping programmes of training, workshops, awareness raising, counselling. **(4)**

Tail (this is where an animal's power comes from) = influence

Feet (moving forward, not sinking in, on either soft or hard sand) = strength **(5)**; management **(2-3)**; focus and discipline **(4)**, adherence to values and beliefs **(4)**. ("*If we don't have a focus, how can we expect others to understand what we do?*")

A friendly, sociable camel with a long tongue, which changes colour. A metaphor with plenty of complexity and subtlety. Planning is designated as the link between operations and leadership. Internal communication is the heart of the animal, via the information centre (the stomach).

Exhibit BN5. *Health Check, Prescription[22] and Prioritisation[23] for action (including a repetition of the scores out of 5 allocated to each element, linking this exercise with the metaphor exercise)*

HEALTH CHECK SCORE	→ INCREASING PRIORITY FOR PLANNING AND ACTION →			
	0 (LOWEST PRIORITY)	1	2	3 (HIGHEST PRIORITY)
5 STRONG	Challenges and achievements - changing public attitudes (men's score = 5) (**Humps**)[a] Planning (**Neck**)	Strength (**Feet**)		
4	Programmes (**Knees**)[b] M&E functions (**Stomach**)[c]	Adherence to values and beliefs (**Feet**)	Focus and discipline (**Feet**)	
3	Carrying target audience (**Luggage**/ *Morwalo*)			
2-3		Internal communication (**Blood**)	Management (**Feet**)	
2	Challenges and achievements - changing public attitudes (women's score = 2) (**Humps**)			Leadership (**Head**)[d]
0-1 WEAK		Community liaison officer (**Senses**)		

[a]   *"Income generation can come into one of the humps as a challenge: the lack of resources. Most of the time we can't do much to get resources, we can't proceed with our own mandate without funding and resources."*

[b]   *"Even without resources we are able to survive on our own. We are able to walk without water"*

[c]   *"For a training workshop we always have a pre-test on attitudes and understanding of gender issues. On the last day we give a post-test. We use other tools too"*

[d]   *"We don't have a board. Currently we ourselves are the board, and the management and the team."*

---

[22] **Prescription:** "What would the vet suggest in order to get each of these scores up to 5?"

[23] **Prioritisation:** The group was then asked to vote for which elements needed most urgent attention in terms of planning and organisation development.

Exhibit BN6. Sample of health check and planning process planning flipchart. Emerging from the prioritisation exercise, the group defined the following work plan as capturing it development priorities:

Prioritisation by stars.

Metaphor element, score and prioritisation on loose notelets transferred from the metaphor diagram after scoring.

Plan grouped & sequenced.

Planning decisions.

Summary of planning decisions

1. Conduct a skills audit of staff, especially around leadership and management.

2. Reorganise programmes and structure to show functions and allocated responsibility to staff.

3. Prepare job descriptions and a simple performance management process, including a more active role of all staff in planning.

4. Institutionalise mentorship, information sharing, communication of successes and staff training using existing staff knowledge.

5. Hold regular meetings to improve staff ownership and communication (part of 4).

6. Plan and implement resource mobilisation, embracing both human resources and financial resources.

Exhibit BN7. *Theory of Change, with dotted lines indicating the elements of the Theory of Change that were questioned during the process*
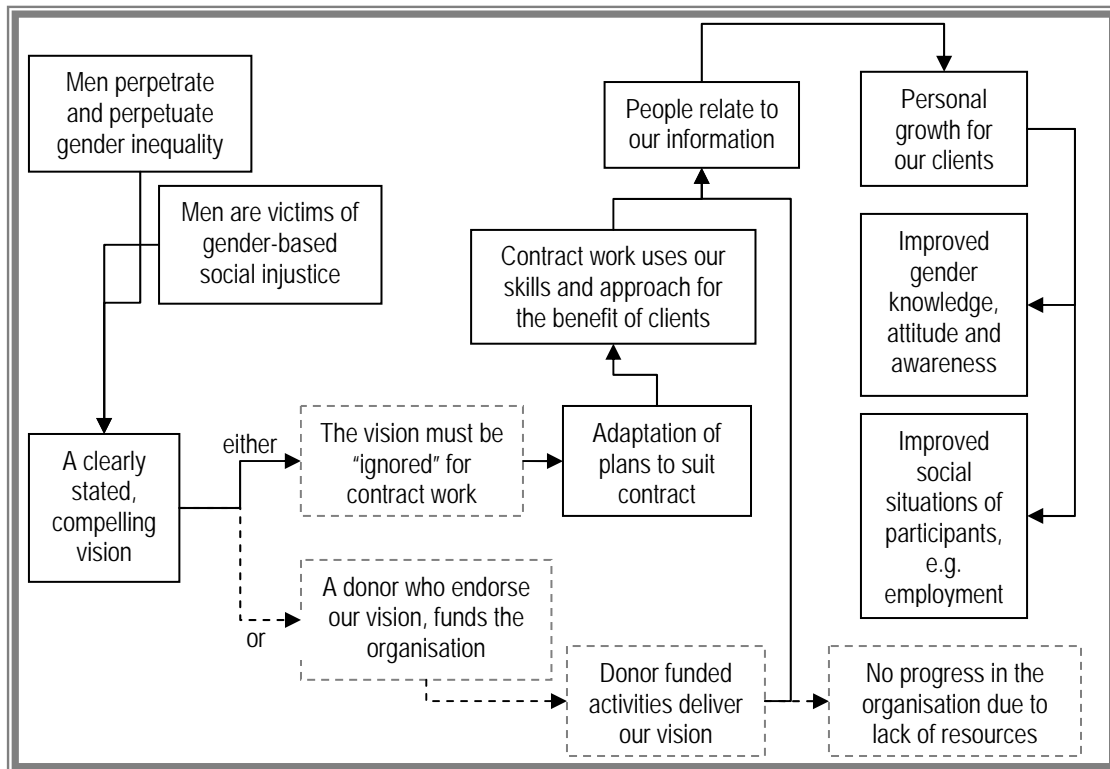
4.3.5.4.   Action and questions leading into Case Study 6

Multi-dimensional diversity is a theme for this Case Study. The experience reiterates the importance of evaluator awareness, values clarification, reflection and sensitivity. Diversity issues are key in thinking about evaluation and organisational relations.

By individually drawing and labeling metaphors, a 'pen' compromise is reached. The participants' drawings are 'the real thing'. The facilitator recreates their images to support discussion.

In this Case Study, a clear plan of action under 'Health Check' priorities is agreed. This step provided the planning and action completion of the action learning cycle. It ensures that the organisational development component of the study is well rounded. It also provides the evaluator with insight into the types of actions which might correct the organisation's weakest areas, giving far greater insight into the reasons behind these weaknesses.

The challenges of logistically feasible formats for communication which do not depend on written accounts remain unresolved. An alternative format for discussion using digital video is suggested to attempt to answer this particular challenge. With the

expanded and extended process, a one-day time frame has reached its limits. In order to test this option, the next Case Study will lose the Stories of Impact session, since this no longer needs testing to be firmly established as a valuable and accepted part of effective, grounded methodology.

I find myself reflecting on these organisations in terms of my own criteria, despite exercises and intentions to draw out participants' criteria. In fact one of my criteria is my opinion of their criteria! My observations are interpreted in terms of my criteria. I find myself looking for indications of power, self-realisation and impact awareness. This returns again to the theme of diversity management and power. Evaluators may convey the words and imagery of the organisations they evaluate. Their interpretation and representation, however, are given through the lens of their own assumption, emphasis, criteria and ontology. As soon as an evaluator acts as a channel for communication outwards from the organisation, these subjective and personal filters come into play. Subjectivity is unavoidable. Equally, the subjective filters of the listener have as much impact on what is actually communicated as the intentions of the speaker. Greater reflection and discussion on the implications of subjectivity and judgement to evaluation practice and principles are required.

In many ways a core process is confirmed and established. Its potentials and limitations have become clear. Suggestions for the next Case Study include either minor adjustments or major deviations for this part of the journey. Natural closure seems imminent.

4.3.6. Case Study 6: CL

The final Case Study involves a relatively new organisation working in an informal settlement on the far perimeter of urban Gauteng. Not far from Orange Farm, this is among the most marginalised and impoverished areas in the country. Employment is the exception. Access to services is extremely difficult. Transport to the nearest developed areas is expensive. People living in these settlements have few options in a life of severe deprivation.

The organisation was founded by members of a church about one year prior. Its site belongs to the owner of one of the few brick houses in the settlement. A shade cloth lean-to shelters most of its gatherings. A lockable, prefabricated office houses a donated computer and a basic office. The Directors have reasonable IT skills, and their communication and organisational systems are quite sophisticated.

It has been only a few months since volunteer carers and counsellors have been invited to join the organisation so that its work might begin in earnest.

4.3.6.1. Diagram of process

The plan for DM is to drop Stories of Impact and Success Means in order to provide time for the making of a DVD. The planned process included:

| Introductory discussion on the organisation's history and what it does | Individual and group metaphor | Health Check | Health Check to a mind map for action points and prioritisation | Discussion on partnerships: story board for communication | DVD : an honest, visual, narrated account of what is important to us, what we give, what we are learning, what you can expect. | Reflection and closure |

4.3.6.2. Description, reflection, learning and conclusions

Introductory conversation: the founding story

👁 The discussion opens with a group of newly employed caregivers (field staff). The Directors do not join us at the beginning for unknown reasons, but come in later. The first accounts of the organisation's history are therefore rather scant.

Social problems around basic needs have been identified: "So many tablets. No food." "They are too ill to walk." "People have nothing to do, no income, they get depressed." (Exhibit CL1). The church called for volunteers. This group of volunteers is assembled by three Directors.

🔒 In the absence of Stories of Impact, the conversation begins with a general, rather than specific account. A superficial overview of the work of the organisation is shared. When I probe for detail, one of the participants says, "I think we should wait for management so that they can answer these questions".

The carers seem to be experiencing the conversation as an interrogation. They respond as if it is extractive and slightly threatening. The day remains superficial, possibly due to a lack of personal stories at the outset. It may also be a reflection of how new the organisation is.

👁 The carers have been told to attend the session. Managers seem to feel a little superior, and regard the engagement as a training experience for a new group of carers, rather then an organisational reflection process. This severely weakens the opening of the session. It is resolved when the Directors became interested, and joined the group.

⚡ The exercise reveals the value of the Stories of Impact format over open discussion. Stories carry participants' own momentum. They retain power and reduce the need to question and probe.

☞ Stories of Impact are indispensable.

Individual metaphors, and metaphor votes

👁 The group is asked to reflect on how they see the organisation. They are invited to draw an animal, and explain their reasoning to the group (Exhibit CL2). This provides a stimulating session. The individual drawing is a source of much banter, and also reluctance and shyness in a few cases. Two or three in the group are very capable, including the dolphin drawer, whose metaphor finds resonance with most in the group.

🔒 In this very new initiative, participants' depth of acquaintance with the organisation is noticeably less nuanced than that of more established groups. The following qualities seemed to be most admired: Sensing problems (4); Cleverness (4); Calm (3); Strength (2).

The organisational quality that emerges most strongly is that of reaching out through sensing need and extending to meet that need. The group identifies with sensitivity and penetration into the sometimes hidden needs in the community. Its role in addressing the social problems of illness, food and transport for medical care align with this quality.

A theme that emerged in several of the metaphors is that of 'cleverness'. To what extent does the organisation give a sense of upliftment in a context of marginalisation and inadequacy? The value of community organisations in inward accountability to supporting the optimism, hope and self-esteem of its volunteers is again highlighted. In some ways the metaphors seemed to express the needs that the participants have from the organisation as much as the qualities they see in it.

It strikes me that the qualities expressed in metaphors reflect what participants wish from the organisation, as much as what the organisation intends to provide to community clients. As a microcosm within the larger community, members of these organisations represent the vulnerabilities experienced by their clients.

☞ These collections of individual metaphors could be reinterpreted to describe the situation in the setting. The needs of organisation members provide definitions of 'poverty' in these marginalised settings. In this case, experiences of helplessness, anxiety and invisibility might be reflected in "strong/clever"; "calm" and "sensing problems".

Metaphor, health check and development plan: Dolphin

◉ A dolphin receives consensus. Together with two of the participants, I draw and annotate the dolphin based on the conversation in the rest of the group (Exhibit CL3): "The dolphin is big, but it has a gentle heart. It sense when there is trouble and comes to help."

The metaphor shows a clean, neat simple structure.

As a newly formed organisation, roles are few but important, and the depth of roles and functions have not yet been explored. As a group in its formative stage, relationship building and position clarification are particularly important.

Personal connections are very important. Wherever roles are directly associated with any individual (e.g. Director), they score 5 in the Health Check. Indeed, in this Case Study's Health Check most elements of the organisation are scored at 5/5.

The high scores reflect the untested early enthusiasm of the organisation. It is too early to have experienced much frustration, faced many challenges and obstacles or built relationships that are complex enough for confrontation. In this case, a

high scoring self-evaluation speaks of a need for experience and practice, rather than an organisation that is operating close to its potential.

✴ This Case Study demonstrates how self-scoring is useful for relative areas of growth within an organisation. It is not a reflection of actual performance against potential. Less flattering and more complex scoring is likely to be a rough indicator of organisational maturity.

All organisations in the study have scored their strongest areas as 5/5. None have engaged with the concept of 'reaching potential' as an expectation. They considered their strongest areas to be perfect, and the rest are scored relative to that perfection.

☞ The facilitator needs to be sensitive to reasons for excessively high self-scoring. Organisational immaturity might only be one possible explanation.

👁 In the development plan, clear, achievable areas of activity are identified, creating a convincing and credible impression of their capacity and potential (Exhibit CL4).

DVD

👁 The exercise is aimed at communicating evaluation results, using visual and verbal media. The facilitator's role is to guide the organisation to a story-board of criteria for success, metaphor and organisation analysis and planning. The group should then consult and move out into the community with a digital camera. Their task is to capture the achievements of the organisation and its Theory of Change (Exhibit CL5) into a mini-documentary of short clips.

This assignment is taken on with great enthusiasm. Participants gloss over the story boarding stage. The DVD content is quite quickly conceived by the group, without much planning and without a firm story board. We then tour the surrounding residences as a large group, with individual carers engaging with their own clients.

The DVD footage taken by the participants among their clients and community members gives an instant and clear impression of the realities of life in informal settlements, which would be difficult to convey in words. The problems of the community around HIV, medication, poor living conditions and lack of transport are reiterated (Exhibit CL6).

The DVD does not, however, manage to reflect the Stories of Impact of the organisation or the role of the organisation in the community.

🔓 While the content clearly demonstrates the problems, it does not illustrate interventions by the organisation. Perhaps clients find it difficult to recall and describe experiences of counseling and support groups. Their problems are highest in their minds.

Alternatively, the organisation's activities may be limited to hearing of the problems of the intractable challenges of remoteness, cost of public transport to medical facilities and lack of social welfare provision.

💥 A process of far stronger planning and story boarding would be required. The focus would be less vague if the session had opened with Stories of Impact and Criteria for Success. In this format, Metaphor could have been dropped in favour of a more structured planning and story board exercise.

☞ An alternative process would be something like: 1) Stories of Impact > 2) Success Means and scoring success > 3) Story board of a documentary based on areas of achievement (high scores) and challenge (low scores) from the stories > 4) Planned capture of 5 minutes illustrative clips per scored item.

In this format we had excessive appreciation and insufficient self-critique or planning for growth. Without the rigorous self-analysis of the Health Check, concrete areas of action are unlikely to emerge.

🔓 A major concern is that the process does not seem to me to be particularly respectful of clients. There are a lot us. Most people wait outside, but very small shacks receive 2 or 3 visitors at once, wielding a digital camera. Confidentiality is non-existent.

💥 This anxiety may be influenced by my own socialisation around privacy and personal space, and my professional perspectives on ethics. Perhaps I should trust that people born and raised in the informal settlements know their own social boundaries well enough to behave appropriately. That said, confidentiality, denial, stigma, protection of HIV status information and visibility of HIV, are issues across the HIV discourse which are acknowledged to be fundamental to addressing the epidemic. No organisation or visitor can afford to take this lightly. Since I am a member of the team, and the filming is taking place at my suggestion, the implications are very much my responsibility.

☞ Story based methods need to open with discussions on ethics, and be controlled by the lead researcher, even while the participants or field workers might not fully engage with the importance and meaning of confidentiality.

☞ While ethical practice between an organisation and its clients may be negotiated according to local norms and a researcher or evaluator cannot risk the possible infringement of a public process.

👁 Our technology for this medium is not optimal. The sound volume of a basic digital camera tends to be too soft. Cameras' compression file formats are not necessarily universally compatible, and many may require that software be loaded. In this case, the DVD could not be saved onto the organisation's computer for its own use.

🔓 While the concept has potential, suitable technology is a constraint. Instead of written reporting templates, simple technological support such as standardised software, file formats and equipment would have been more enabling.

👁 DVD offers one avenue of engagement which is potentially preferable to written reports.

☞ I recommend that the use of appropriate, affordable digital camera technology and communication systems be researched and supported by agencies for feasibility as an option. This would require thorough ethical consideration, and consultative development of guidelines for DVD reporting.

👁 This entirely new dimension raises new issues, particularly around technology and ethics. I have reached a juncture marking full circle in the research: back to a point of exploring a new methodology.

☞ The exploratory research has reached a point where it would need to step out into new territory to continue, and is therefore considered complete for the purposes of this research.

4.3.6.3.   Exhibits from CL

Exhibit CL1. *Emergent criteria for success as achieved through the opening discussion on the organisation's formation and purpose*

Main points from organisational overview
The Directors formed the NPO about a year prior. One of the Directors raised the problem of HIV at a church meeting and called for volunteers. Most caregivers have been recruited within the last 2 to 3 months.
The organisation supports patients with chronic diseases including HIV. Many of the patients are on medication, but adherence is challenging because of a lack of food The other key challenge to treatment is the cost of transport.
Their advocacy message is simple and clear: "*We need food. We need transport for the ill. We need ARVs to be supplied at the local clinic.*"
The carers are not yet trained. They are to become lay-counsellors, offering an opportunity to clients to talk about their challenges. The organisation's support group is a core offering.
The organisation is in its formative stages. The daily attendance and commitment of new volunteers is an achievement. The main activities needed are training of new volunteers as lay counsellors, educating them on the issues confronting residents of the community.
The future includes finding and enabling solutions through partnership, advocacy or social and medical services to address the basic needs of the community.

Exhibit CL2: *Choosing a metaphor. Participants' drawings of their characterisations of the organisation, with the number of votes each received in selecting a shared metaphor*

Jackal = "*Clever. Thinks wisely before doing. Protects her children by holding them against her, and they feel comfortable all the time. It shows love to people around Lawley. Doing more work, that it can't afford.*" (4)

Dolphin = Big, but has a gentle heart. It senses when there is trouble and comes to help. (7)

Monkey = "*Clever and gentle. Always busy. It does not stay in one place. It is always doing its job*". It picks up what is left behind. (5)

Giraffe = "*An animal that can sense things that are very far and high. It reaches high branches on the tree and can feed itself … our organisation can feed the community with nutritious food. Our organisation can, at the end of the year, with flying colours, grab a high position in the Department of Health, after the statistics.*" (4)

Elephant : "*Gentle and clever*". Sweet and willing to help each other. (3)

Rabbit = Is cool and collected. (3)

Hare = "*An animal that can sense when there is trouble in the community and it can help the people who are sick or who can't help themselves. Our organisation can sense when the people are not feeling well, and can take them to the clinic or the hospital so that they can get medication.*" Calm and clever. (3)

Butterfly = "*It has senses and it's always looks for green or colourful pastures*" (4)

Sheep - "*Very clever and gentle. Protecting its kids and very strong. I want this organisation to be strong and calm like this animal.*" Quiet, protects its children, a nice animal. (2)

Lion = It looks soft and furry, but it is strong inside. It has bite. (1)

Exhibit CL3: *Working in metaphor, with scores out of 5*

Skin = the Church (5)

Fins = care-givers

Wing Fins (the power) = caregivers' outreach (4)

Lungs = support group (5)

Air hole = caregivers flow of services (5)

Brain = decision making guided by the support group (4)

Eye (holds the vision) = director - (5)

Tail Fin (driving force) = the Director, who coordinates the caregivers (5).

Stomach = information to the community. It needs to be filled. (5)

Baby dolphins = community connections, some through other NGOs. (4)

Heart = core values and patience (5)

Ears (senses) = the voices of the community

Mouth = coordinators for communication

Dolphin: It senses distress a distance away, travels at great speed and dispatches the enemy with strength and courage. A pack animal, with sophisticated social structures and communication. The metaphor captures the aspirations of the organisation to be a hero in a community that is extremely remote, under-serviced and in a state of considerable distress regarding food security and illness. It evokes a yearning for a miracle solution.

Exhibit CL4. *Plans for groups of qualities of the organisation, according to related functions, linked with the metaphor.*

Function	Plan of action or prescription
Support group **(lungs)**; decision-makers **(brain)**; hearing community needs; **stomachs** that need to be filled with information. The insights lead into the Directors' vision **(eyes)** and community connection **(ears)**.	*Find a solution to the lack of food (food parcels, food gardens, food donation).* *Bring more people to the support group to relieve stress and isolation. Initiate new activities that will attract them.*
Values: Patience **(heart)** and the Church **(skin)**.	*Education through the church to embrace people with HIV, and make them feel welcome. Give them chapters and verses from the bible that are relevant.*
Drive power of the caregivers **(fins)** and the Management **(tail)**.	*Educate the church to embrace people.* *Directors and the caregivers need to learn more. They need to be updated on HIV. They need information, training, mentorship, skills, organisation development, IGA skills.* *Build the relationships with the AIDS Consortium and the Department of Health towards this.*
Communication **(mouth)**	*Find resources and partners.*

Exhibit CL5. *Theory of Change, with dotted lines indicating the elements of the Theory of Change that are questioned during the process*
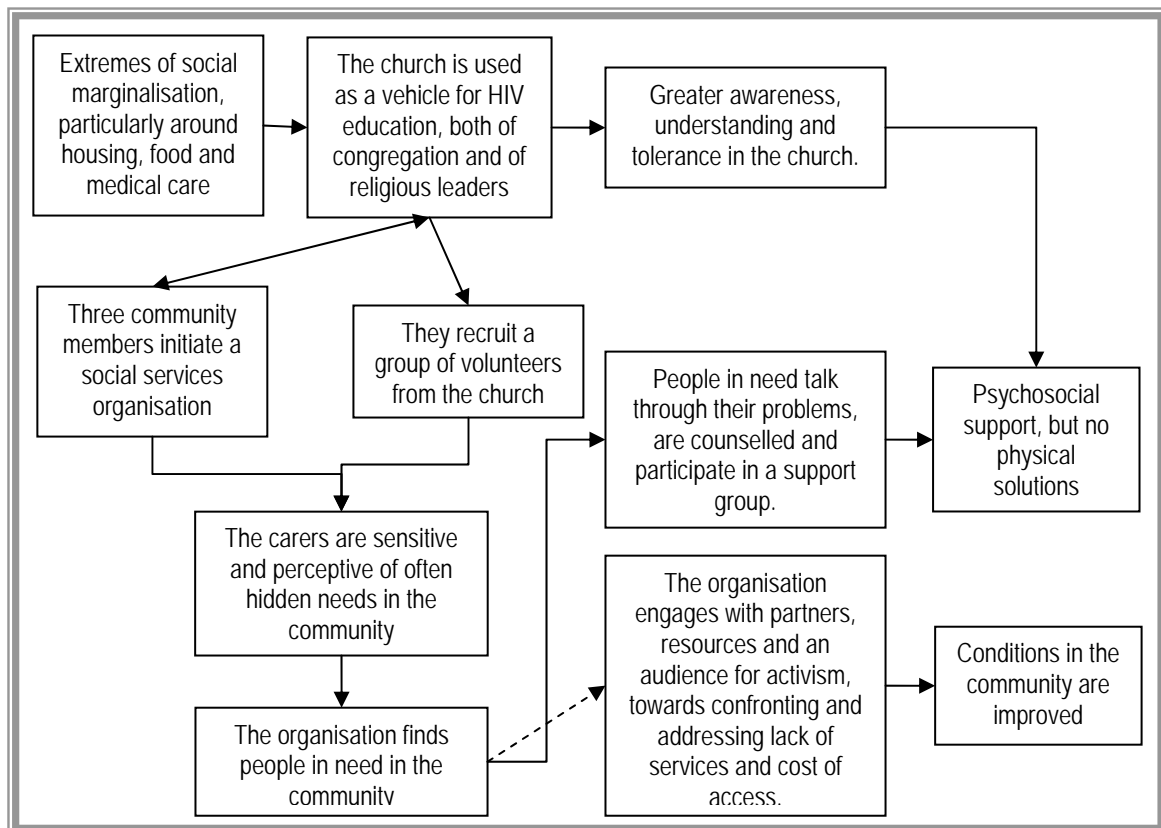
Exhibit CL6. *DVD: Sound bites from interviews captured by caregivers*

Lady 1

> *"How can we help you?"*
>
> *"I am sick. HIV. I am drinking treatment, but sometimes I don't have food. I am not working. I must take treatment without food. When this goes on for a long time I start to get very sick. I can be fine for 1 month, and then very sick the next month. I don't have an ID book."*
>
> *"So do you take ART?"*
>
> *"No, but now I am prepared to get ART. I don't have money. I was supposed to go there with a friend, but I couldn't go (cost of transport). This is why I am so sick. I have many children, no food and I'm not working."*
>
> *"Do you need our help?"*
>
> *"You can help with food, clothes and ID. I can't get grant money because I don't have an ID"*

Lady 2 (bedridden, shack, large variety of pills)

> *"What do you need? Food or something else?"*
>
> *"I used to get a [disability] grant for asthma, but they have cut my grant. I have treatment for asthma, TB, high blood, arthritis, diabetes and spinal chord. The medicines soon ran out, and I had no transport to get more. My problem is money for transport. Sometimes I don't have food to take with this medicine. If people don't give me something I don't have anything at all. The children get something to eat at school, but at home there is nothing for them. When they go to school they carry no food. Today I want to take the medicine, but there is no food."*

4.3.6.4. Action and questions leading into Case Study 7

Stories of Impact are sorely missed. The alternative opening, which I had imagined would require less time, is far weaker in rapidly reaching to the crux of the organisation's purpose. The experience absolutely confirms the importance of opening with stories, and the value of structured reflection around these themes for participants.

The collection of individual metaphors as a preparatory step to a collective metaphor provides interesting and valuable data in its own right. The themes of cleverness and strength run through the metaphors, reflecting the meaning of the organisation to its members.

The Case Study offers further reflection on evaluator's criteria versus participants' criteria. Despite being a new organisation in a severely deprived area, with intractable problems and little recourse to solutions, participants scored themselves as highly successful in all respects. This needed to be interpreted to make sense. The superficiality of this self-critique emphasises a need for a separate community-centred

process which might hold a mirror up to the organisation, and help it to see how it is perceived in its community.

The alternatives explored so far have provided organisational evaluation, planning and reflection, and impressions of purpose and effectiveness. The approach remains unsatisfying, however, as a method for impact evaluation. The nature and value of impacts experienced by community clients is difficult to ascertain using this approach. A quite different approach is needed towards designing a grounded, reality-based method, which answers questions of impact evaluation.

4.3.7.   Concluding the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor process

The Stories and Metaphor phase is complete. It has resorted to an approach which rapidly facilitates organisations into reflecting on their strengths, weaknesses and purpose, in an appreciative, participatory manner (Figure 13).

Figure 13   *Revised recommended Organisational Stories and Metaphor process, as emerging from the Gauteng evaluation processes and meta-evaluation*

Principles of evaluation whereby process supports development, power balance is enhanced and reflections have value and integrity have emerged from the Case Studies. These principles, as well as those which emerge from the next phase, are discussed in detail in the Discussion Chapter.

The following summary provides guidelines on the practical application of each step of this process.

Keep

STEP 1. Arrival, constracting and opening

In organisations with strong leadership and management, an invitation to a guest facilitator to spend time with the organisation is usually a credible introduction. Even so, the session opening requires that the facilitator contracts with each of the participants, some of whom might not be aware of the process.

If leadership and management are in a position of tension, however, contracting for the session may be less straightforward. Participation may actually be undermined by virtue of having been initiated through an instruction from the top. In Case Study 2, for example, the tensions are such that, after a confrontational and interrogative reception, I offered, "Since you had no idea I was coming, and you have a lot of other work to do today, please feel comfortable to cancel this session." This posed an interesting dilemma to the group. They wanted to derail and confront any initiative by the Director by refusing to participate. They also wanted an opportunity to verbalise their complaints in a forum. They elected to continue, but from contracting onwards it is clear that the session would be as much an organisation development experience as an evaluation. Results needed to be interpreted in the light of this.

Keep

STEP 2. Individual stories of impact

Success stories are acknowledged as a valuable resource for impact evaluation (Barter & Renold, 2004; Reeler, 2005). Participants are asked to recall a specific event when they felt that the organisation made a difference in a person's life or in their community. They then share this event with the group. The story can be captured by another participant as it is being related.

Stories of impact provide a strong and meaningful account of priorities in communities and the contributions that organisations believe their clients most value. From stories, we learn that impacts differ in unique context of each case. For the most part, the only common thread is that impact refers to making a positive difference of some nature. Intangible achievements such as dignity, hope or self-respect, seem to give relevance and meaning to the tangible results of interventions. Only stories can convey this meaning behind impact.

Outcomes vary. They might include identifying marginalised children, helping them to be clean and clothed, cleaning their homes, teaching them to cook, giving them a sense of normality through Christmas celebrations and gifts, and ensuring that they have shoes and foster parenting, and do not visibly stand out as disadvantaged at school. This wide

variety of physical, tangible interventions can be generalised to intangible impacts such as human dignity and self-respect, family cohesiveness and a sense of position in society. The value of Stories of Impact is clear. The manner in which it has been facilitated in this study has worked well.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Increase</td><td>STEP 3a. Group discussion: Success means …?</td></tr>
</table>

Inspired by Stories of Impact, participants then reflect on what success means in their context. A brainstormed list of criteria for success can then be collated for self-evaluation. Participants vote according to their opinions of the organisations current best performance areas against its own success criteria.

In noting the areas that receive fewest votes, the process quickly raises a thorough understanding of immediately relevant organisational needs. Internal elements of the organisation are generally more rigorously explored by participants than those relating to services and impact. Service quality criteria tend to be limited to "excellent service delivery" and similar impenetrable statements.

This distinction between internal and external criteria needs to be made explicit. In capturing Success Means themes, one column should be allocated to internal criteria, and another to their clients' experiences. The facilitator should encourage equal attention to each column.

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Drop</td><td>STEP . Do More Of, Less Of…</td></tr>
</table>

Participants are asked to reflect on what the organisation should i) do more of; ii) do less of and iii) continue to do in the same way. The process then tries to interrogate generalisations. We may ask, for example, why the 'more of' has not been done in the past.

Despite this, the process generally produces a superficial analysis, with largely repetitive responses around "We should do more of the same and less of the opposite." It does not substantially add to the data.

A more concerning problem with this methodological step is the impact of negative questions. "What should we do less of?" raises a sense of vulnerability. Any attempt by an external facilitator to probe and deepen the analysis, provokes a defensive reaction. Defensiveness is observed to reduce data quality, and to undermine the process value to the organisation.

The session is dropped at the fourth Case Study.

Keep

STEP 4a.
Individual
reflection and
individually
drawn and
shared
metaphors for
the organisation

Participants are asked to select an animal that most reminds them of the organisation and the reason for their choice. Restricting metaphors to animals is found to be preferable to opening the options more broadly. Inanimate objects such as circles, diamonds, moons, pebbles dropping into ponds each carry personal associations, but offer limited opportunity for analysis.

The facilitator needs to encourage a non-competitive group culture. The attributes of each person's contribution should be recognised with interest. A collage of individual images should be produced as a collective effort.

Keep

STEP 4b.
Choose a group
metaphor and
analyse the
organisation

Detailed analysis requires a single, shared metaphor. This means that one person's metaphor idea must be carried through. Participants are asked to democratically select a single animal for use in the rest of the session. Inevitably at least one person in the group offers an observation that is profound and useful: "We communicate with each other and find and help others who are out there like a dolphin" "We are like a snake, rejected by society, angry, afraid and feared, and yet beautiful when we release our anger". While several metaphors might find support in the group, one metaphor usually finds consensus. In order to reach consensus, unlimited votes must be permitted. Participants raise their hands for any and all metaphor with which they resonate.

The selected metaphor is then drawn on a large sheet by the facilitator. The group is asked to associate the different parts of the animal with the organisation. The head, left and right brain, eyes, ears, speaking and eating functions of the mouth, skin, stomach/s, lungs, blood stream, heart, udders, tail, are all associated with parts of the organisation.

An obvious limitation is that ownership of the process and basic good participatory practice would recommend that participants do the drawing. In all of these Case Studies, however, participants felt appalled at the suggestion that they draw. When a participant does volunteer to lead the drawing, the detail is not captured.

This lack of confidence concurs with participants' great reluctance to write. It highlights the importance of verbal and visual communication as essential in effective relationship building.

Expand

STEP 5. Health Check: self-evaluation of the health of the elements of organisation

The parts of the metaphor are each scored individually. The total scores are added up and noted. The process rapidly identifies the healthiest and least healthy elements of the organisation.

This process provides a non-threatening, constructive and practical entry point to understanding and planning the growth areas of the organisation. It is a high quality, internal evaluation tool, providing insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. It demonstrates the group's ability to analyse its own capacity. The step is essentially an internally driven 'due diligence' process, where criteria for due diligence are entirely provided by the organisation.

There is a tendency for participants to be inward-looking, with insufficient critical analysis of their delivery performance. In every organisation in this study, a score of 5/5 is given to "service delivery", which is already too broad a generalisation. There is potential for stronger facilitation around this reluctance to be self-challenging in an outward-looking perspective.

Keep

STEP 6. Health prescription and management planning: capacity and growth path priorities

The group then considers how best to raise the score of each 'organ' of the metaphor: "What achievable activity or change would raise this element to its potential of a full score of 5/5? You have given the brain (management) a score of 2. What can you do to raise it to 5?"

The key to this approach is that it remains appreciative. We do not ask "Why only 2? What is wrong?"

Research

STEP. DVD communication .

The DVD and story board exercise is intended to experiment with an outward focus. It is not especially successful in this study. To be effective, far more process detail, thorough planning and structuring would be required.

What we learned from the attempt is that the content of DVD would need to concentrate on more than simply enumerating problems. A story boarding process would be needed to identify messages and devise a script and images to communicate these.

It is also important to consider the highly sensitive ethics consideration for film media using public participation. While many development situations may tolerate this risk

well and benefit from the further exploration of film, HIV is a particularly ethically sensitive context. Great caution would be needed.

Reaching this juncture therefore signified a natural end to the exploratory research process, and closure to the organisational Stories and Metaphor Phase of this study. It has provided practice and principles in partial answer to the research question. The methodology recommended by this phase is strongly organisation-centred, grounded in reality, emergent and open to complexity.

Where the method does not answer the research question, however, is in the outward-looking evaluation of impact of an organisation's interventions as experienced by community clients. The recommendations above include opportunities for focused reflection on impact by organisation members. These impressions are biased, and limited in their scope. A form of community-centred, rather than organisation-centred inquiry is needed to compliment Stories and Metaphor. This too should be grounded, emergent and appropriate to complex settings.

The Most Significant Change method of Davies and Dart (2005) seems to offer this potential.

4.4 Outward-looking evaluation: Applying Most Significant Change methodology in community development setting

4.4.1. Research setting and context

The purpose of the Mabeskraal Most Significant Change (MSC) exercise is three-fold.

- The programme partners, with Oxfam America and the AIDS Consortium as leads, wished to train associated organisation members in the skills of MSC evaluation, for the future learning of the programme.

- The practical field time component of the training is expected to provide an evaluative research piece on early indications of the outcome of the programme, in order to steer its strategy in the next phase.

- The partners afforded this Doctoral research the opportunity to conduct a meta-evaluation of MSC as an outward-looking, community-centred evaluation process.

The North West Gender, Culture and HIV programme had been launched about two years prior, although some of the key activities had only recently come on-stream. Based on its original Theory of Change (Oxfam America, 2008) the programme was motivated by four thematic areas:

Encouragement of positive cultural practices by traditional institutions and leaders, particularly through support to local traditional leader. Kgosi Mabe's, communication campaign on gender and HIV.

Capacity building of service providers. The programme partners included national NGOs and local CBOs (Table 5). The programme had supported the establishment of the AIDS Consortium's North West Province branch, which provide information, training, mentorship and networking for CBOs, including the Mabeskraal partners. Sonke Gender Justice had also discussed gender awareness with local CBOs, and had provided fund raising, collaboration, advice and mentorship.

Development of a coalition to advocate for the fulfillment of the rights of communities. The programme had encouraged the emergence of organisational partnerships between these NGOs and CBOs. The programme anticipated that these relationships would expand and consolidate in time towards a formal coalition.

Learning and sharing of knowledge. The fourth major programme objective was the ongoing practice of action learning, sharing and evaluation, towards continuous

refinement of the programme's strategy. The MSC process fell under this programme objective, while simultaneously contributing to capacity building for partner organisations.

4.4.2. Diagram of process

The process follows the steps outlined by Davies and Dart (2005) as closely as possible. We attempt to review the value of the published method in the context of South African CBOs, as a participatory, narrative approach to outward-looking evaluation (Figure 14)
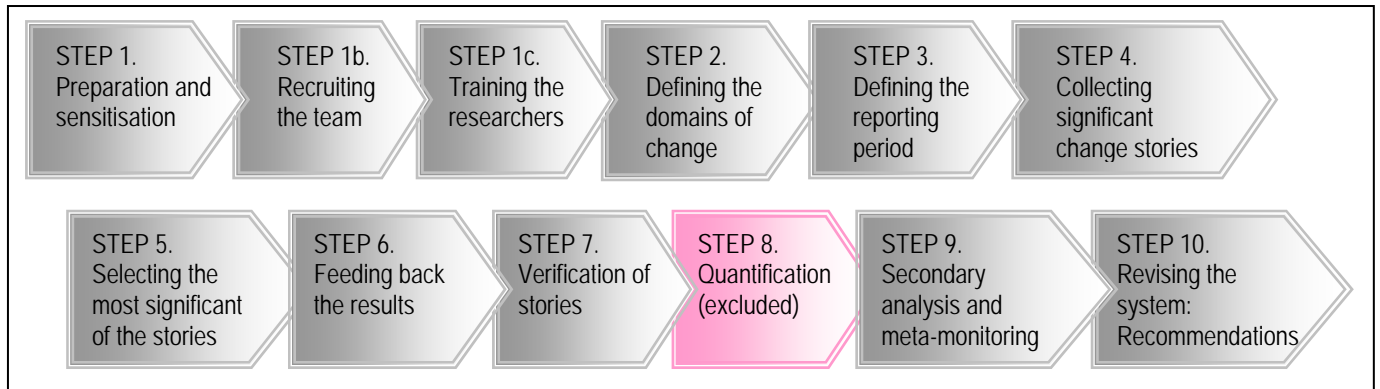
Figure 14   *Diagram of the MSC process as designed and intended for the Mabeskraal study.*

Source: As outlined by Davies and Dart (2005)

4.4.2.1.   STEP 1. Preparation and sensitisation

◉   The evaluation is presented to the Office of the Traditional Council for endorsement. This is necessary, correct convention in a traditional authority's jurisdiction. Kgosi Mabe readily approves. He has consistently given encouragement, leadership and support to the programme. The Kgosi also lends his authority to sensitising the public to the upcoming intrusion, encouraging them to participate with openness. He will participate as a respondent himself.

Letters of permission to interview groups at high schools, and to meet with Department of Health staff at the local medical facilities, are obtained from relevant district-level government departments. The engagement with local authorities and knowledgeable local CBOs enables us to achieve this with minimal bureaucratic inconvenience.

☉   Organisation-centred, inward-looking evaluation generally remains relatively isolated from the greater community. These evaluations are negotiated directly between participating organisations and evaluators. Community evaluations,

however, involve interviewing the public and imply the visible presence of research teams. Some source of local authorisation is advised.

An appropriate local authority might be the Mayor, Ward Council or Traditional Leader, or more than one of these.

☞ Where interviews are to be extended to public servants, correct government protocol within each department is absolutely essential. Public servants will seldom entertain an interviewer without a correctly sourced letter of authorisation.

4.4.2.2. STEP 1b. Recruiting the team

👁 One of the design elements of MSC is that it can be conducted by community practitioners or community members, with a minimum of training (Davies & Dart, 2005).

We assemble a team. It comprises fifteen practitioners from six CBOs and NGOs working in Mabeskraal, along with a representative from the office of the Traditional Council (Table 5).

4.4.2.3. STEP 1c. Training the researchers

👁 Training comprises two initial class-based experiences (Appendix 4 & 5), followed by two weeks of fieldwork. Ongoing reflection and analysis support continuous learning. The training is intended to provide: i) basic skills in interviewing and qualitative data collection; and ii) an understanding of concepts of MSC and Theory of Change.

Interview skills

👁 Researcher training is designed to be strongly participatory, practical and experiential. It must sufficiently, although superficially, introduce the team to some of the skills of qualitative field research. Training is required to give critical, practical experience in four key skills: listening; probing; note-taking; and collecting stories of significant change (Appendix 5).

👁 Simple *listening* exercises are used to demonstrate common bad listening habits, and the value of active and reflective listening.

🔑 These exercises are enjoyable and might be useful if applied in management, but probably make little difference to research skills.

- 👁 *Probing* to uncover the relevant details of the story proves challenging for inexperienced qualitative researchers.

- 🔓 Probing skill is critical to qualitative, narrative-based research, and is not necessarily readily acquired by new researchers. Most participants' skill improved dramatically with field practice although data remained of a relatively low richness compared with professional qualitative research.

- 👁 *Note-taking*: It is unreasonable to imagine that community or NGO team members, without academic or secretarial experience, can take verbatim notes. Without some degree of competence in narrative data collection, however, the entire research exercise is a waste of resources. The training session and mentorship heavily labours the pointlessness of holding unrecorded conversations.

    !

- 👁 Early observations during training suggest that notes will be thin, at best. Voice-recorders are supplied as back up and supplement. While some do, many of the team do not invest the additional time required to review voice recordings and enrich their notes. In the absence of professional translator-transcribers for recordings, interviews produce far less content than might have been hoped.

- 🔓 Probing, questioning and interviewing skills need to be covered well in training. More practice time than our short training schedule allowed would have been valuable. Mentorship and debriefing during fieldwork continues to concentrate on these skills.

    Voice recording, translation and transcription are non-negotiable costs if MSC is intended for academic social research connected with development and community organisations.

    For the purposes of programme evaluation, however, these costs would render the method unfeasible. Compromises between data quality and quantity again need to be carefully balanced.

- 💥 Although data wastage could have been reduced if interviewers had spent time with a mentor transcribing parts of the voice recording, this would have been extremely time-consuming.

- ☞ Data wastage would be reduced with smaller teams, fewer interviews and several research mentors. Closer supervision and a slower process may also have improved interviewing standards.

- MSC requires a specific and targeted type of interview response. It requires that the *Most Significant Change story* be intuited from the less relevant parts of an interview: Discussion and practice are required for the team to grasp the concept of distinguishing a story of most significant change, within the various points raised in an interview.

- While any qualitative research is difficult, MSC research is particularly challenging. This is because it cannot follow a standardised questionnaire. Far from being easily accessible with minimal training, the method is actually more difficult than most.

- Metaphors are used to illustrate an interview process which begins broadly, but then identifies and isolates the story or stories of most significant change, and probes to enrich these stories with detail. We use the analogy of stepping stones to cross a stream. The objective of finding and hearing a story of Most Significant Change is equated to exploring the other side of a stream. It may be possible to cross over in a single leap, or in one direct question. It is more likely, however, that several stepping stone question will be needed for a story to emerge. Once the story is in reach, the stepping stone questions are no longer needed. The researcher then turns to probing, uncovering and detailing the story (Figure 15), or exploring the opposite bank.

- The other analogy we use is that of the water diviner. A water diviner uses a divining rod to test for water in different directions. Once found, the divining process ends, and a well is dug to reach the water. The digging of the well where there is water is equivalent to uncovering the details of the story of change.

- This interviewing skill is particular to MSC. The researcher must be perceptive enough to realise when 'water has been found' or 'the opposite bank has been reached'. He or she must then probe to discover all the detailed facets of the story of change: its chronology, supporting factors and outcomes.

Figure 15   *The stepping stones: Guiding themes are identified to guide researchers towards hearing a story of change within the broad realm of gender, culture and HIV communication. Once identified, probing questions are used to populate the detail of the stories.*

⚡   This is one of the most difficult concepts to grasp, and probably contributed substantially to the level of interview waste.

👁   The inclination of most of the team in their early interviews is to treat the stepping stones as a structured series of questions, moving on to the next question after short, superficial answers (Exhibit MSC4a). The result is a set of curt answers to closed questions. None of the interviews conducted in this way yielded stories of significant change. Part of the problem seemed to relate to the anxiety of the researcher to complete the listed questions, rather than probing through the experiences of the respondent.

With mentorship and iterative analysis of their own notes the team's fluency with using their own questioning as a route to a story of Most Significant Change increased. Many have grasped the concepts and practice to a reasonably sophisticated degree by the end of the fieldwork.

⊙ Training and fieldwork is based on the Davies and Dart (2005) technical guide (Figure 14). We attempt to apply the method as purely as possible in order to ascertain its appropriateness in this setting.

The first training session attempts to convey the abstract concepts of theory of change, leading into domains of change. Although participants contribute dutifully, they are bored and disengaged.

The second training session (Exhibit MSC1) is purposefully designed to be entirely practical, interactive and experiential, drawing on the theory of the method only when essential. This session is far more interesting for participant.

🔓 Abstract concepts should be kept to an absolute minimum especially for practitioner-researchers. Terminology around 'Theory of Change' and 'Domains of Change' is just as daunting as 'Logical Framework' and 'Objectively Verifiable Indicator'. While we might consider the former to be more legitimate to a complex, dynamic system, they are equally 'Greek' to development practitioners.

⚡ In a practitioner-centred setting all such terminology needs to be translated into tangible, useful, practical concepts.

☞ It might be preferable to conduct an exercise that asks "How does our programme work?" for Theory of Change, and "What differences do we think we are making?" for Domains of Change.

🔓 It is normal for facilitators to hold far more process insight than participants. It is unlikely that many team members fully grasp the process through which they are being facilitated. To the extent that we hope that participants will lead similar processes independently in the future, however, the underlying structure is important to impart.

☞ A longer closing session would be useful. Thorough debriefing on each step in the research process and explaining its principles and purpose after the experience constitutes a sound experiential training method. Team evaluation of the method would also be appropriate.

⊙ The Mabeskraal exercise invests approximately 6 days for training and closure, and 8 field days, involving 14 people. I provide a total of around 20 days in preparation, training, field management and analysis.

The time (total person days) invested in this evaluation is far more than the human resources investment of most evaluations. This is primarily due to capacity building in MSC skills as one of the key project objectives, with the actual evaluation outcomes being secondary in the cost:benefit.

☞ Where possible, evaluation should be linked into a broader organisation development process, including collective planning and programme design.

Data wastage is expected and acceptable in capacity building evaluation. An equally effective MSC process might have been achieved with, perhaps, two mentors and six community researchers, who allocate a substantial proportion of field time to transcription, translation and mentorship.

4.4.2.4.   STEP 2. Defining the domains of change

👁 This step is undertaken during the inception training day at the beginning of the process (Appendix 4). Domains of change identify broad areas or issues at stake. They are not performance indicators, and should not be precisely defined (Davies and Dart, 2005). By deliberately leaving them loose, the content emerges from stories to redefine the domains. The research team uses this boundary to define the study, and as entry points for interviews.

In this study several Domains of Change are identified by the research team prior to the fieldwork linked to the Theory of Change (Exhibit MSC2). These Domains of Change then determine the 'stepping stones' of the research process (Figure 15). One reason for setting domains of change at the outset is to support confidence in the research team, many of whom feel uncertain around what to ask in interviews

🔓 A major drawback of defined Domains of Change, or stepping stones, is that most researchers in their early interviews use these as they might use a standardised questionnaire. This tendency is corrected as team members become more confident in their interviewing.

An alternative approaches is to provide only a broad research question. This would be linked to the purpose of the study. More detailed domains are drawn out during the story analysis (Davies and Dart, 2005).

☞ On the basis of this experience, I would recommend that rather than 'stepping stones' or Domains of Change, MSC should be applied with more grounding than is used in this study. At the beginning, a simple evaluation boundary would have been sufficient and appropriate. For the Gender, Culture and HIV Programme, it

might have been phrased as "The Most Significant Change for you, regarding what you say, believe and do about HIV".

◉ In an overly short preparatory process, a method is needed that rapidly selects Domains of Change. They are defined using the following process:

1) The original Theory of Change is charted on the wall (Exhibit MSC2)

2) The different elements in the Theory of Change are discussed, and the group is asked to vote for the parts of the Theory of Change that they consider to be most strongly reflected in programme effectiveness: e.g. "Are we really observing that men's knowledge is increasing when the Kgosi talks about HIV?", or "Does greater knowledge in men, really lead to families seeking medical support?".

3) The areas that receive the most votes are seen to bear out the original rationale. These are captured separately, and reworded as Domains of Change.

4) Although derived from the original Theory of Change, Domains of Change, or stepping stones, are intended to be rigidly applied.

🔓 This process is not particularly effective. It artificially narrows the starting point. The assumption that programme objectives directly align with Domains of Change is equivalent to evaluating on the basis of prediction. This is the flawed assumption that has motivated this study and the emergence of MSC approaches.

💥 It is critical that the Domains of Change process moves well beyond the original Theory of Change and programme logic. A light awareness of the programme logic during interviewing is important, in order that emerging stories that are relevant are explored. The evaluation must, however, caution against exaggerating the original logic at the expense of investigating the changes that have unfolded in reality.

☞ The experience emphasises the value of allowing the emergence of Domains of Change from the data. In an iterative process, which I capture under the verification step below, these Domains of Change can be elaborated as they emerge. A broadly bounded research question at the outset which allows the Domains of Change to emerge is recommended.

4.4.2.5. STEP 3. Defining the reporting period

- Respondents are asked to discuss changes they have observed over the two year period in which the programme has been active.

4.4.2.6. STEP 4. Collecting Most Significant Change stories

Field planning

- A stakeholder analysis is conducted during training and planning. Key stakeholders are identified in terms of their interest and influence in HIV, gender and culture. A strategy is devised for reaching the various target groups (Table 5).

  The area is divided into the demarcated municipal zones of Mabeskraal (Exhibit MSC3). The geographic framework is annotated with the institutions and local social gathering points located in each zone.

  Interviews are conducted by groups of two or three researchers. One person is designated as interviewer, another is responsible for note-taking and the third is the team observer. Voice recorders are used for verification of the notes.

The interviews

- Researchers are dispatched to different zones on different days. They have day plan for reaching targeted stakeholder groups. The interview process gathers a total of 45 stories of significant change, of varying detail, relevance and intensity (Exhibits MSC 4, 5, 6).

  Many stories do not align with the world view of our team. There are stories of sexual risk behaviour, despair, misunderstanding of the science of HIV, and ignorance of CBOs efforts at intervention. There are also many stories that exceed our expectations. There are stories of people taking control of their lives and their health; of pain and transformation; of demanding health services and successfully accessing those services; and of sound knowledge and awareness of HIV.

  Some interviews enjoy enthusiastic reception and long, detailed narratives. Others are met with outrage, others with friendly hilarity. On a few occasions researchers are chased away in a volley of obscenities.

  Interviews that are most successful include conversations with counselling staff in the clinic, CBO members, and with high school pupils. Men in *shebeens* are also

easily interviewed and willing to discuss their views. Non-medical people at work, such as taxi drivers and school teachers seem to be somewhat more restrained and preoccupied, but nevertheless share their views.

Unemployed or retired people in their own homes are among the most difficult group to access. Despite efforts at sensitisation, door-to-door interviewing at people's homes is least successful. The subject of HIV remains highly sensitive (Exhibit MSC4b). The team considers much of the reluctance to result from people's cultural sensitivity to the privacy of their homes with regard to outsiders to the community.

☞ Any community-centred interview process suffers from sample bias driven by consent to be interviewed, and availability and accessibility. In this case those interested and involved in HIV are most willing to be interviewed. They are also most likely to have positive stories (Exhibit MSC5a). People with the greatest need and least visibility, such as those at home, are less accessible. Not accessible at all are people in the workplace, most of whom commute out of Mabeskraal, who are likely to have completely different experiences and needs.

Shebeens (for men) and churches (for women) provide opportunities for least bias and most loquaciousness, although data trustworthiness might be variable. Even then, stories told by men in a bar and women in a church group inevitably carry a 'location' bias inspired by the connotations of drinking versus religion.

 In a further source of bias, partner CBOs naturally and helpfully take researchers to their 'best clients'. These are people with whom they have strong, positive personal relationships.

☀ Evaluators' attitudes to bias require yet another compromise. We need to rationalise evaluation as 'light research' with its primary purpose in management and organisational growth. This does not require the data rigour of academic or social research. Pragmatically, evaluators who wish to canvas public opinion might approach the accessible variety of stakeholders on the basis of convenience and opportunity, drawing as widely as practical and possible, and accepting the imperfections that this implies.
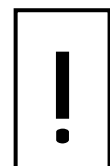
☞ A variety of convenient settings for public interviews is recommended in order to reduce bias and enrich the understanding of the situation in its complexity. In the case of Mabeskraal these are:

- Participating CBOs' clients and support groups

- Shebeens (mostly men)

- Church organisation meetings (mostly women)

- Clinic staff, with permission of the District Department of Health

- School youth, with permission of the District Department of Education and school authorities

- A sports gathering of youth and adults

- A few interviews in people's homes, accepting the challenges of reluctant responses

- Key informants identified and interviewed by appointment.

Data, even quantitative, is essentially a form of fiction. Its plot, selectivity, focus and interpretation are defined by the author. Verbal accounts, however truthful are certainly fictitious. The memories, selective emphasis, world views and temperaments of respondents all serve to filter events into a unique version of events.
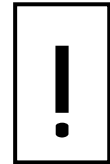
Narrative research celebrates this bias as data. Probing questions such as "What makes you see it that way?" help to enrich these fictions into the complex understanding necessary for social interventions.

Just as people tell their stories as fiction, they also experience programme interventions in the context of their own myth. Evaluation that acknowledges and understands these myths offers a depth of power and insight into people's realities that can begin to frame effective programmes.

4.4.2.7. STEP 5. Analysis: Selecting the story of most significant change

A key principle of MSC research, although one that we find quite difficult to apply in practice, is that community members should analyse their own data. According to the published method, the analysis takes the form of repeatedly selecting stories of change as being most significant in subsets of stories, until a single story of Most Significant Change is identified.

Both this principle and selection in community focus groups are challenging.

The story analysis steps we undertake in Mabeskraal burrow into the data through several steps of story attrition:

Is there a story of change in this interview?

👁 Most stories are presented as hand-written notes. These are posted up on the walls of the debriefing room at the end of each day of interviewing. The field team then scores the notes from 0 to 3 according to whether a story of significant change has been recorded (Figure 16, Exhibit MSC 4, 5 & 6). Interviews of complaints, general statements, hopes and stereotypical views are not regarded as stories of significant change. Each story is rated by at least three researchers, and the average rating is calculated (Figure 17).
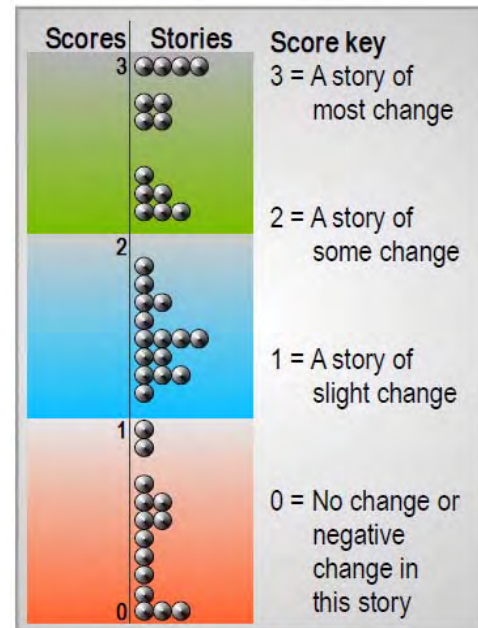
Figure 16   *Ratings of stories for accounts of significant change*

The ratings are then used to select the top ten stories for analysis. Many of the stories score quite weakly (Figure 16). Sufficient, however, are regarded by the research team as being interesting and revealing accounts of significant change.

👁 There is an important distinction to note at this point. The rating process does not judge the significance of the change. Rather, the story itself is rated in terms of whether the respondent has provided any account of change at all. Respondents are not always cooperative. Many interviews are dominated by stories of life experiences, recommendations to

Figure 17   *Field researcher Lerato Mpatho of Bacha ba Kopane considers the content of interview notes in terms of stories of change, in order to rate them for inclusion in the Most Significant Change analysis process*
(PHOTO CREDIT: ANDREA MAYER)

various authorities or opinions about the behaviour of others, rather than a description of a personally experienced significant change.

☞ This step in the process is not raised by Davies and Dart (2005). It becomes clearly necessary in this study. Many interviews, particularly at the beginning, do not produce a story that warrants further analysis. The exclusion of these early in the process saves a great deal of time and energy.

👁 During the process of rating it becomes clear that stories of deteriorating situations are being rated 0 and excluded. In another review of all stories, accounts of negative change are flagged for inclusion in the discussions (Exhibit MSC6).

☞ A code for negative change should be provided in the ratings.

The story (or stories) of most significant change

👁 A second round of story attrition considers the top 10 scoring stories. This is achieved through focus group discussions: two with the field team; and then five with community members facilitated by field team members.

Selection of the Most Significant Change story by field researchers: The ten stories are shared between two groups of field team members. Groups are asked to reach consensus on a single story of most significant change. A note-taker captures the reasons for the group's decision, and presents this in plenary.

The team finds this difficult. One group manages to agree on a single story. The other group chooses three which it feels all have equal significance.

Selection of the Most Significant Change story by community focus group discussions: The researchers then divide into five teams of FGD facilitators. Each team takes a full set of photocopies of the same 10 stories into 5 focus group discussions with community members (Table 5). In each discussion they arbitrarily select 3 or 4 of these stories to read out, towards selecting a single story of most significance.

Where the researchers found this difficult, community focus groups find it impossible. Some groups fail to form, with people leaving or not participating. Others rapidly fall to discussing related matters or HIV in general. Other groups discussed the stories for a short time and then disperse. Only the after-school youth group seems to embrace the research game, and selects a single story.

The group work is generally so incoherent, that it makes virtually no contribution to our understanding of significant change.

These discussions have little relevance or appeal for community participants. On balance, the various processes for selecting out and analysing stories for relative significance are rather inconclusive. The results of the evaluation are primarily based on the research team's interpretation and discussion of the top ten stories.

Some of the challenges to a substantial community story analysis include:

- Researchers themselves are bored by reading and rating all 45 stories. It takes a great deal of persuasion for them to execute just this task. Asking community members to do this is unthinkable.

- We are able to persuade community members to participate for a maximum of around an hour. A thorough analysis would have required their engagement for far longer than this.

- A process of community analysis asks unprepared local volunteers to spend time talking not about themselves (which takes far less persuasion), but about a matter of interest to a research team. The process lacks relevance or interest for most participants. They are happy to share their own stories, but find the analytical session uncompelling.

- All participants, researchers and community members, are reluctant to engage with the story-competition concept of a 'winning' account. At all stages of the process there is the inclination to state that all stories are very significant.

What is each story's significance?

After each of the focus groups (field team and community FGDs) the field team gathers to share conclusions on the significance the stories. The feedback is captured in a mind map, clustering results into thematic areas (Exhibit MSC 7 & 8). These thematic areas come to be regarded as the main conclusions of the study. A story which illustrates each is used to feed back the results of the study to the community *imbizo*[24] (Figure 18).

---

[24] Imbizo - Public meeting to discuss and agree community business, generally hosted by the traditional leader

The story of Most Significant Change

☄ The selection of a single story is central to the Davies and Dart approach, and lends the method its title. Our experience in a community development setting is that it is over-engineered and contrived. The purpose of selecting one single story seems to be lost on participants, and somewhat obscure to us all. Davies and Dart (2005) suggest that the discipline of selecting one story as most significant asks respondents to reflect deeply on their needs and priorities. It is intended to provide strong, clear management direction and strategic guidance. My observation, however, is that becoming obsessive with method tend to derail reflection.

Story of Kgosi and the Youth
Boswagadi and the Challenges facing older people
Story of personal experience and behavior change
Story of the youth and behavior change

Figure 18   *Excerpt from the programme for the MSC Imbizo, Mabeskraal, 25 September 2009*

🔓 It is also possible that the setting of a South African community, thinking about development and HIV, is one in which competition and conflict are unwelcome. Perhaps people feel more at ease being democratic and inclusive, even with stories.

Collective analysis of stories of change

☄ This stage of the process needs to be managed far more as a stimulus for discussion, than as a structured story review and selection exercise.

Field workers, rather than community members are able to select stories of very significant change as discussion pieces. This reiterates the value of engaging community members and CBO staff as researchers, despite compromises in data quality.

It is important that a team conduct the analysis, even where time constraints might tempt a lead researcher to analyse more conventionally, using themes, codes and qualitative data analysis software. A participatory analysis adds greatly to relevance and accuracy.

Engaging FGDs to discuss a theme which is supported by a story would provide collective analysis. The task of story selection, more than story discussion, may be the cause of most discontent. Drawing out the significance of these stories

together, to consider generalisations about the trends and causes of change in the community, might have raised more interest.

In the Mabeskraal setting a shadow group of CBO and NGO staff not included in the research team, might have been appropriate. The high school group participated with enthusiasm, and is a group which most evaluations could call on. In order to draw on the diversity of viewpoints, recruitment from other stakeholder groups is also important in principle.

A process design structured around stories as stimulus for discussion, with a more physically and visually active process might also have been more effective.

Greater clarity on the purpose of the exercise would also have assisted. We defined the purpose as selecting a single story of change, and providing reasons for this selection. This is not a particularly meaningful purpose. A purpose such as discussing the causes, effects and strategic implications of the change might have been more relevant. Analysis refers to assigning meaning. Reflection and discussion on the meaning of stories of significant change is provides an adequate process for participatory analysis.

☞ In the light of the importance of this step, greater thought and planning needs to go into how best to facilitate uninitiated community or organisation members to engage with distilling conclusions from the narrative data. Careful thought around approaches other than the one we took in this study is essential. Participants, process and facilitators would need to be prepared in advance.

4.4.2.8.   STEP 6. Feeding back the results

👁 A community feedback imbizo is called in close collaboration with Kgosi Mabe about a week after completion of the fieldwork. Around 50 invited participants arrive (Table 5). During the introductory remarks the Gender, Culture and HIV Programme is described; participating NGOs and CBOs are presented; and the MSC process outlined (Appendix 6).

The goal of this meeting is two-fold. Firstly, to provide community members with feedback on the themes that have emanated and observed changes. This is intended to market partners and programmes and to raise awareness around issues of gender, culture and HIV. Secondly, the meeting has evaluation value, providing us with a wider, more interactive forum for fresh responses, where opposing viewpoints and more general opinion can be aired.

Four of the researchers present a story which epitomised each of four major areas of significant change that have emerged (Figure 18). Between each story, the audience is facilitated to provide confirming and disconfirming viewpoints.

Debate is animated around several of the Domains. Interesting and unexpected discussion paths transpire. These serve to inform the programme on dynamics, priorities and social divisions that have direct impact on its implementation (Exhibit MSC10). We discover that culture is alive and well, and in conflict, in Mabeskraal. It is not expressed in the ways we predicted in conceiving the programme or the MSC research. There is no mention of bride price or the customs around property at the death of a family member. The one cultural theme that is raised on several occasions, especially among older people, is *boswagadi*.

It is an ancient disease, treatable only with traditional medicine. Some believe that HIV and *boswagadi* are one and the same disease, thereby denying the existence of HIV. Others, notably the traditional practitioners, considered them different. Still others, the faith-based contingent, deny the existence of *boswagadi*. The argument is intense. It is rooted not as much in the medical technicalities of diseases, as in fundamental beliefs around religion and tradition.

There is little doubt that this debate rages beyond the realm of HIV and sexuality, and into every facet of society. Overlaid with gender tension, the predominantly male custodians of tradition and history are toe-to-toe with the purveyors of religion and its majority female following.

The programme needs to acknowledge the camps. The great majority of South Africans approach traditional healers before approaching the public health service. A similarly large proportion of people attend churches regularly. These two institutions are far more popular than health facilities. Both groups have a captive audience. Both need to be engaged by HIV programmes, although this research would suggest that it might be wise to keep them separate. Each needs mentorship and information to reflect on its specific role in the epidemic.

Having aired differences, and greatly enriched our understanding of community concerns, the audience is asked to select the story that represents the most significant change. In typical pattern they declare all the stories very significant.

This step is particularly valuable, although it tends to be neglected in many evaluations. Verbal feedback and an opportunity for members of local structures

to respond collectively, and to exchange opposing and aligned views in a single forum, greatly enriches the evaluators' understanding of community dynamics.

☞ The clear recommendation of this study is that community centred evaluation should close with a local public gathering where feasible. This might involve presenting results at a church service, joining a local IEC[25] meeting or a campaign day event. As in Mabeskraal, it might be achieved in cooperation with local authorities, inviting relevant stakeholders to a meeting under official auspices.

Confidentiality and ethics in community feedback

🔒 While the Mabeskraal imbizo is regarded as largely successful it does raise one serious concern in terms of method and policy. One of the stories which is read out verbatim to the audience of 50 local community members, includes detail such as "I am a single woman, 50 years old, with three grown up children, living in X section, and my husband left me three years ago, and I am HIV positive." While the person's name is not mentioned, there must be few members of a small community for whom this account is not a breach of confidentiality and public disclosure of an identifiable individual's HIV status.

💥 The experience highlights the risks of deploying inexperienced researchers from among community members. Similar inappropriate conversations might have taken place out of my hearing and understanding. A great deal of confidential information can be aired in narrative research. The interactions among a group of 14 local people with existing relationships and community ties, cannot reasonable assure confidentiality.

As team leader in this group, a mistake as serious as this one is a severe oversight on my part. Too late, it becomes clear that novice field workers need to present their feedback reports verbatim to the team leader before airing them at a public meeting. Notwithstanding time constraints, this needs to be an absolute priority.

☞ MSC researchers need to be conscious that narrative methods are particularly vulnerable to ethics infringement. Confidentiality, the subtleties beyond naming names, and the risks and consequences of accidentally breaching the privacy of respondents, must receive

> **!**

---

[25] Information and Education Communication – IEC meetings often refer to large public meetings, sometimes politically motivated, to inform members of the community on any matter that concerns them.

exhaustive attention through training, mentorship and supervision.

Interview preliminaries should advise respondents that while their names are not being recorded, and researchers will not willfully breach their privacy, they need not feel obliged to share personal information.

In the practical interests of confidentiality, the fewer identifiers that are recorded in the data, the safer the integrity of the research process. Only absolutely essential demographic information need be recorded (possibly only age and gender). In Mabeskraal we note marital status, location, number of children and employment information. These are not used in the analysis or interpretation. These demographics are unnecessary and constitute a major risk to anonymity.

4.4.2.9. STEP 7. Verification of stories

👁 The focus groups and imbizo provide community verification of the stories. Opinion varies strongly on the legitimacy of some of the stories. This texture of opinion and range of perception adds to a clearer understanding of the significance of these stories. Other stories are widely endorsed by the public forum.

☉ Stories, however 'true', are fictions. Verification is really a process of enriching stories by opening the floor to different fictions, from dissenting viewpoints. Whether stories find local consensus or alignment, the programme has the opportunity to respond to broad agreement or to different stakeholder groups, as appropriate.
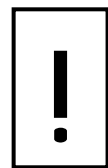
☞ This step has potential for expansion. A longer, more thoughtful process with further iteration would have allowed themes to be verified as they emerge. The process of choosing stories of significance, identifying themes, and then approaching relevant informants to provide additional stories within the emerging Domains would add rigour, detail and greater certainty to the process.

In the place of collective story selection, participants and focus groups would be more valuable in verification and elaboration of conclusions. Using purposive sampling of respondents and illustrative stories, the emerging themes around significant change could be tested with several audiences.

4.4.2.10. STEP 8. Quantification

👁 Certain stories of change suggest indicators of change, some of which can be quantified. People state, for example, that deaths from AIDS have decreased since

there are fewer funerals this year. They say that health seeking behaviour had increased and cases of stigma and discrimination are reducing. While some of these might suggest quantitative data, we do not attempt to locate sources of these data during this study.

The observation bears out the value of using grounded research to generate criteria for change and indicators of impact. This would be in contrast to the norm for generating indicators of change as a precursor to programming and evaluation.

If the programme sees practical merit in quantifying these impressions, local health centre statistics could provide some of these data. Leads regarding indicators or progress criteria can be fed to the health and social monitoring authorities. Organisations could communicate and exchange findings in closer partnerships with these monitoring agencies.

4.4.2.11.   STEP 10. Revising the system: Recommendations

Community teams

A community-drawn research team has great process-use value. The data and conclusions demonstrate that only 4 days of training do indeed equip a group of non-researchers to interview and analyse using research and evaluation concepts. As participants, the members of organisations gained a far deeper understanding of dynamics in their community, their role, and the opportunities to apply evaluation in their own work. The evaluation process leads naturally into changed policy and practice, with relatively little formal, separate planning and reflection. It also raises the confidence of team members, and assures them of their ability to absorb and apply a completely new set of skills. As such it is appropriate and valuable.

There are compromises, however. As researchers, the team is essentially untrained. This is reflected by the following:

- Short interviews, since probing skills are weak (Exhibit MSC4c).

- Notes are extremely brief, since note-taking skills are novice (Exhibit MSC4d).

- As experienced group facilitators in their professional capacities, but inexperience researchers, many team members rapidly shift from researcher mode to awareness raiser. They are tempted to correct their informants,

offer explanations and inform the views of respondents. In interviews where respondents deny the risks of HIV or state reluctance to use condoms, for example, interviewers return to the team debriefing proud of having taken the opportunity to conduct a sensitisation and training session.

- Amateur researchers (and locally ignorant, if experienced, team leaders) pose high risk to ethical practice. They may be insensitive in their enthusiasm and unrestrained in approaching vulnerable respondents.

⚡ The characteristics of the non-judgemental researcher, who listens well and probes sensitively, are thoroughly reiterated in training. In practice, nevertheless, a locally recruited team of development practitioners is more likely to do community outreach, with a little bit of MSC research, than to conduct a programme evaluation.

☞ Provided we can draw sufficient insight and information from stories, this compromise can be accepted. The value of process use and analytical quality outweigh the costs.

> **!**
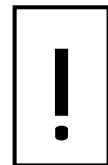
Training and ongoing team management does, and should, strongly emphasise research, objectivity and non-judgemental attitudes. Locally recruited teams are capable, to varying degrees, of moderating their enthusiasm for their core business, and wearing a researcher hat. This does not come naturally, and needs to be strongly conveyed in training and reinforced during feedback.

🔓 One might consider recruiting somewhat more experienced researchers, and pairing them with community-based practitioners in interview teams. Might this be more effective from a research data perspective?

Perhaps, but this would carry its own costs in organisational dynamics and a different source of bias. It is also likely to have negative implications of reduced process-use in terms of confidence, ownership, responsibility and insight from community practitioners.

☞ On balance, unless exceptionally high standards of data rigour can be justified over organisational learning, these compromises are warranted. In developmental evaluation, data rigour should be regarded as only one criterion, and one that is secondary to data adequacy. The evaluation process is generally adequate for programme and partner learning using a locally recruited team.

👁 By defining the Domains of Change as they are revealed from stories of change, the process informs programme strategy. Iterative processes, such as this, are the essence of ongoing formative evaluation. Learning and realigning enable the strategies, rationale and activities of the programme to evolve (Exhibit MSC10).

In the Mabeskraal process, the field team analyses the significance of stories and some of the implications for action. I then formulate these into a report and capture the results into recommendations, with a fair amount of further analysis and interpretation of my own (Konstant, 2009a).

🔓 I do not regard this as an ideal process for evaluation. The contracting out of authorship makes little contribution to evaluation and organisational learning. It constitutes a lost opportunity for facilitated planning.

☞ A stronger process would have been to extend the facilitated time by a further 3-4 non-consecutive days. In this time an emerging Theory of Change and planning process could be distilled in a collective, team space.

🔓 Evaluation reports are invariably delegated to consultant evaluators even where a strongly participatory process is conducted. Reports take time. Written documentation is intimidating. Many people feel self-consciousness around sharing their writing. All these conspire to relieve them of the responsibility, and therefore the learning opportunity, of being their own authors.

☞ Authorship of the results would have been far stronger if it had remained with the commissioning organisations.

Different formats, such as annotated mind maps, bullet-pointed flip charts and diagrammatic Theories of Change can replace the conventional format of written report and lists of recommendations. Experimentation with different formats for planning and recommendations and with graphic M&E would be transformative in this sector.

4.4.2.12. Exhibits for the Mabeskraal Most Significant Change process

Exhibit MSC1. Participants' handout : Training objectives and learning outcomes for MSC fieldwork team, in the second training intervention.

Partners' meeting for the NW Province Gender, Culture and HIV programme
MSC Field Work Preparation and Training :– 1-3 September 2009

Meeting Objective:

To build field team capacity to learn about the significant changes in the Mabeskraal Area with regard to:

1) Where and how is HIV being discussed
2) How have the views and actions of traditional leaders changed, and how has this influenced view and actions of the community
3) How has behaviour changed with regard to a) demand for services; and b) sexual risk behaviour
4) Each of these questions is asked for a) male/female; b) youth/adult; c) within organisational settings of traditional leaders, traditional healers, CSOs and public.

Enabling objectives:

By the end of the course, participants should be able to:
1) Capture comprehensively, the details of stories, including sound bites
2) Listen well, and listen in a way that encourages story telling
3) Interview well to achieve rich stories across the domains of change
4) Facilitate group discussions on these issues and capture the stories and conversations that emerge in focus groups
5) Analyse stories for significance, themes and gender disaggregation

The field team should have:
6) Heard each other's stories of Most Significant Change
7) Defined the stakeholder groups to be interviewed and agreed a strategy on accessing each of these groups, including group and individual meetings, and gender disaggregation.
8) Agreed on terms of engagement and ethical practice for the research process.
9) Planned division of roles, allocation to interviewing teams and logistics for field work next week.

Exhibit MSC2. *The original Gender, Culture and HIV Programme Theory of Change*
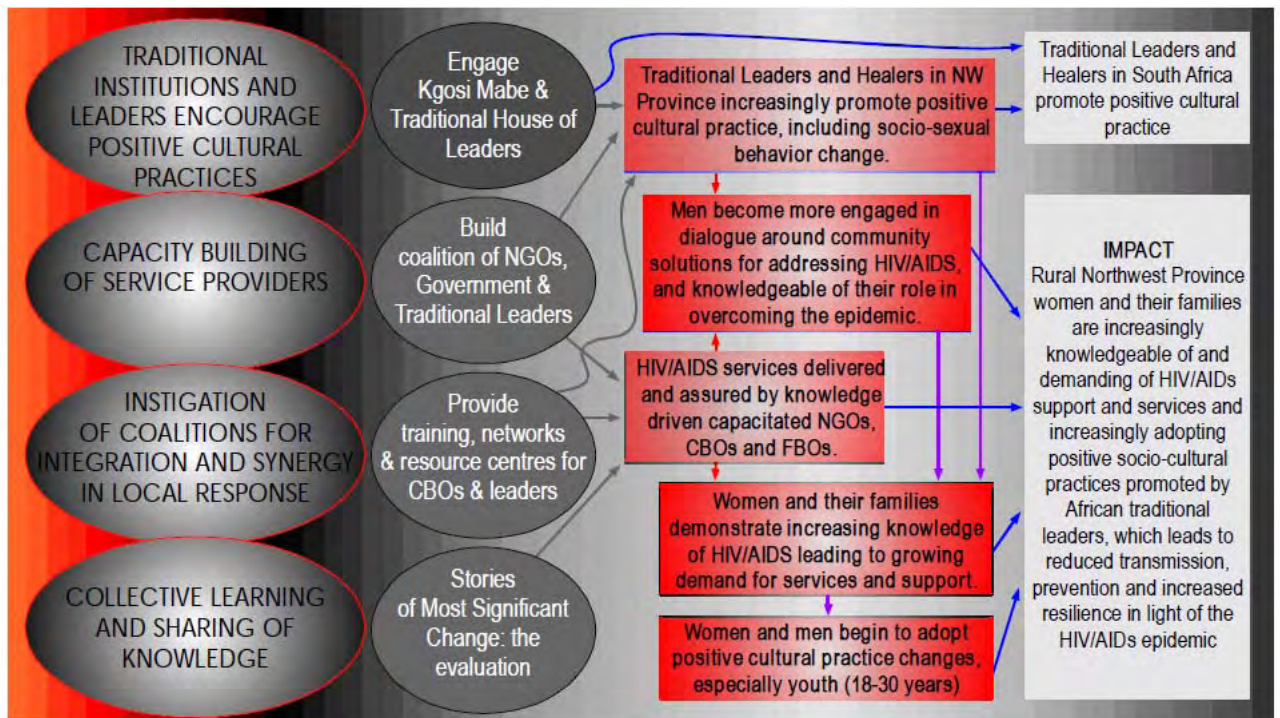
Figure 2. Theory of change for the gender, culture and HIV programme
A theory of change is the articulation of the underlying beliefs and assumptions that guide a strategy. These constitute the rationale by which an intervention is imagined to produce change and improvement. Theories of change represent beliefs about what is needed by the target population and what strategies will enable these needs to be met. The theory of change establishes a context for considering the connections between the organization's or programmes mission, its strategies and the outcomes it envisages. The theory of change represents an evolving understanding of the situation in which we intervene, and is adapted as we learn through experience (Adapted from The INSP Theory of Change Tool manual, short version. May 2005).

Source: Diagram prepared from Oxfam America SARO (2008)

Exhibit MSC3. *Flipchart of geographic areas of Mabeskraal (N: Makweleng & Lenyeneng; NE: Stadium; E: Nkgarane; S: Mamakaa & Leseleng; W: Mphatong; C: CBD). Annotated with section characteristics and the locations of CBOs, schools and hospital. Used to guide interview plan for each day*

Exhibit MSC4. *Sample transcribed interviews: No change stories that scored 0.*

4a) TITLE: RATE OF HIV/AIDS (Score 0)

How are you affected by HIV/AIDS?

Well! We living in days where HIV/AIDS is our home language, yes we all got affected, we have family members infected, friends infected. It's sadly to watch somebody closer to you suffering whereas you both know & knew what to do. To pretend that disease though we know. Mistakes do happen.

Organisations in Mabeskraal

Yes we can organise things, some things that can make us aware of how to treat people with AIDS, how to prevent and that won't be new on our ears, though we heard all that ages ago but still the rate of HIV/AIDS still growing.

Has the way men & women relate to each other changed

By the look of my eyes, by the knowledge that I have, yet men & women do live together married but you won't find every married couple faithful & trustworthy. You might find men or women cheating end up being in an unprotected sexual active out of marriage & that would obvious end up causing HIV/AIDS & would come up in the marriage of which is totally being selfish.

What has changed with how Kgosi talk about HIV

As I remember well, I never heard Kgosi talking about HIV so I won't say further.

What has changed around where you hear and talk about HIV

According to me there's no change I hear same things all the times.

Change in keeping yourself safe from HIV and impact of AIDS

The safest way is to abstain, but since we all won't abstain other option is to condomise that's what will keep us safe and also to consider what have been said about HIV/AIDS that it do exist. . .

My conclusion

There can be too much books about HIV/AIDS, services to talk about it, but the thing is we won't all consider that whereas we all know AIDS exists and the only thing that count is attitude. Attitude towards it gave '*re e tsayayang AIDS e tota*' as killer, as our friend or what? And we shouldn't make it our friend '*e tla re tlwaela ruri, AIDS ke sera.*'

Her change to do with HIV: Change in keeping yourself safe from HIV and impact of AIDS

4b) TITLE: RESISTANT LADY (Score 0)

This lady welcomed us well. She was busy doing washing under a tree so she brought us chairs to sit down. But when we briefed her about why we were there she became so uneasy, she started to become reluctant. Because she said that she doesn't know anything about HIV/AIDS and she never heard of it. She was really lying she was just answering us just to finish and so that we can leave. Her mother is known to speak about this issues and she even speaks to her about them. She agreed that her mother speaks to her about HIV/AIDS, but still insisted she doesn't know anything about it. I think that the reason why she was also reluctant was that in a group there was someone she knows and lives in the community, she was scared maybe she would go around gossiping about her in the village.

4c) TITLE: DR DRIVER (Score 0)

I stay in Mabeskraal centre. I think I know something about HIV but it never touch me or affect me in that way

There is no change, the way because people are dying and some are in denial. I think Kgosi is our celebrity he should always be there in every event that is happening or held in our community. I hope that can change everything about issues of domestic violence and HIV

Taxi association must always be given a letter when there is Imbizo because always we are busy on the road we don't attend the meeting of the Kgosi. I love women and I would like to know more about HIV and gender-based violence

Community support groups and all the local organisation must be one big family and start to spread and educate and motivate and initiate the word and dangers of HIV/AIDS gender based violence.

4d) TITLE: MAKWELENG (Score 0.725)

We interviewed three old people from Makweleng between the ages of 56-67 years old.

I have heard a lot about HIV/AIDS but I don't understand. I hear people talking but I still don't understand.

According to me as a lay man looking at HIV/AIDS from a distance I can't say that if is going down or not because I don't know the figures.

I have observed that the youth knows about HIV/AIDS, they know about condoms.

Exhibit MSC5. *Sample transcribed interviews: Stories of most change, scoring 3.*

5a) TITLE: I AM POSITIVE (Score 3)

What she knows about HIV!

HIV/AIDS is a disease transferred during sexual intercourse and it doesn't have a cure. As a care giver you can get it through blood transfusion if you have an open cut and while you are taking care of an infected patient.

Her story of significance

My parents died, I was living with my siblings. I had a boyfriend because it was tough to take care of the household. He promised me help and it was easy for him to manipulate me as I didn't know his/my status.

I met Ausi Motshidisi in 2004 and she introduced me to Botho Jwa Rona and I volunteered. It was against the policy to talk to people about HIV while you don't know your status as a counsellor. So, I went for VCT and found out that I am positive. I confronted my boyfriend and it created a conflict, and people had already told me his status until I snooped around his files and discovered that he is also HIV positive. He died in 2005.

It was difficult to come to terms with my status, there was too much stigma and discrimination from everyone. I decide that I have to change this challenge by going for counselling, treatment and out of that I got the encouragement to create a dialogue by disclosing my status. I even went for an interview at Motsweding FM in 2004. I also established a care and support group in Makoshong Section and it is called Reamogetse Support Group which means, "We have accepted".

I received so much care and support from my group, family, organisation and the community. There is behavior change around the youth, more especially the girls. They are easy to talk to and they understand that once you have unprotected sex, you might get pregnant and HIV infection so there is much awareness and outreach programmes in Mabeskraal.

I personally have changed the ways to protect myself from getting re-infected by HIV, by using condoms all the time when I have sex. I was also blessed with an HIV negative baby in 2008. My life has changed to the point whereby I can now describe myself as: patient person; noble, caring and loving; empowered and strengthened to work with HIV infected persons. I am a counselor. I am a confident woman.

5b) TITLE: MY EX- COCOON (Score 2.8)

A mother of 3, what she understands about HIV/AIDS is that it is not a friend but a parasite. It feeds on a person's blood and it has killed 2 of her friends. And today her ex-husband is also positive.

She lived a double life for a long time and no one could have ever imagined the things that her family was going through. Her husband used to beat her up every night of their married life. She made excuses for him until she had a knock of what she calls "a big reality check". According to her, men haven't changed their abuse behaviour against women.

She was diagnosed of STD illness, and what shocked her is that she never slept around. So Botho Jwa Rona has made a difference in her life by teaching the nation about HIV/AIDS, because she learned and went for VCT. After the results came negative she divorced her husband.

What she thinks of HIV?

It is the devil. One chooses to allow the devil to enter his/her heart and life. We all heard about HIV and we understand it so well and yet we choose to ignore it.

She added that the Kgosi & government have done enough as well. We as the nation fail to appreciate and learn, in order to act rationally and make informed choices.

What is it that you do to protect yourself?

Ha ha ha! You are a naughty girl my child! She said, she uses condoms regularly with her new boyfriend and she also sometimes tries to abstain from sex. As sex is an exercise and no one should feel obliged to have it to please another person.

She said that her motto now includes telling a man to get lost if he gets upset of being told to use a condom. No rubber, no sex.

We have seen change in the service delivery, there are Apollo lights, water and electricity, and we even have a beautiful library. I get my services by demanding and taking part in the community meetings.

The significance of my story is change in personal behaviour (VCT, divorcing an unbalanced partner, demanding men partners use condoms) and support from the NGO, Botho Jwa Rona

Exhibit MSC6. *A story of negative change.*

TITLE: THE "WORDS" BY GAMBLERS! (Score 0, flagged for insight on negative change)

What we heard about AIDS is that it is unprotected sex; it has something to do with faithfulness and abstaining. They preach about HIV/AIDS everywhere. People hear but do not understand. We as youth, we are ignorant; some of us sleep with people infected under the influence of alcohol. We know that we have to use a condom.

From 2008, there is no change; it has come from bad to worse. Especially in Mabeskraal, there is no job–creation. Tavern causes AIDS as the kids leave school to be in taverns. They use their bodies to get alcohol so many people are killed by AIDS.

Two of my friends (close) and other people I know are dead because of AIDS.

In my life nothing has changed because I have one partner of 7years and we have a child together.

No protection – I don't use condoms because she takes VCT every 3 months and I won't use condoms until I find out that she is cheating on me.

We don't think that men and women treat one another well because they don't respect each other at taverns, you may find a girl cursing a boy or a boy buying drinks for a girl to get her drunk so that he can take advantage of her.

We talk about HIV/AIDS in taverns, car wash and at our gambling site. We talk about the dangers of decision making so our solution from getting HIV is gambling and avoiding girls that way we are saving our lives. When we are horny we simply masturbate. Some of us use condoms but when we are drunk we don't use it.

We get condoms at the taverns, some of us carry them in our pockets always.

The girls don't ask for condoms, they lack information and they prefer material things like cars not condoms.

The Bacha ba Kopane Organisation is doing a great job in the village, there is outreach of awareness about HIV/AIDS. Even Ausi Motshidisi, she and her colleagues are taking care of the patients and giving support. But for us gamblers and substance abusers, it's hard for us to listen to Michael when he is talking because still he is doing the opposite of what he is preaching.

Otherwise, Kgosi is being heard but he should be 100% committed and participating as well.

Exhibit MSC7. *A section of an analytical mind map generated during feedback and collective story significance discussion of field team*

Exhibit MSC8. *Mind map captured into a thematic diagram*
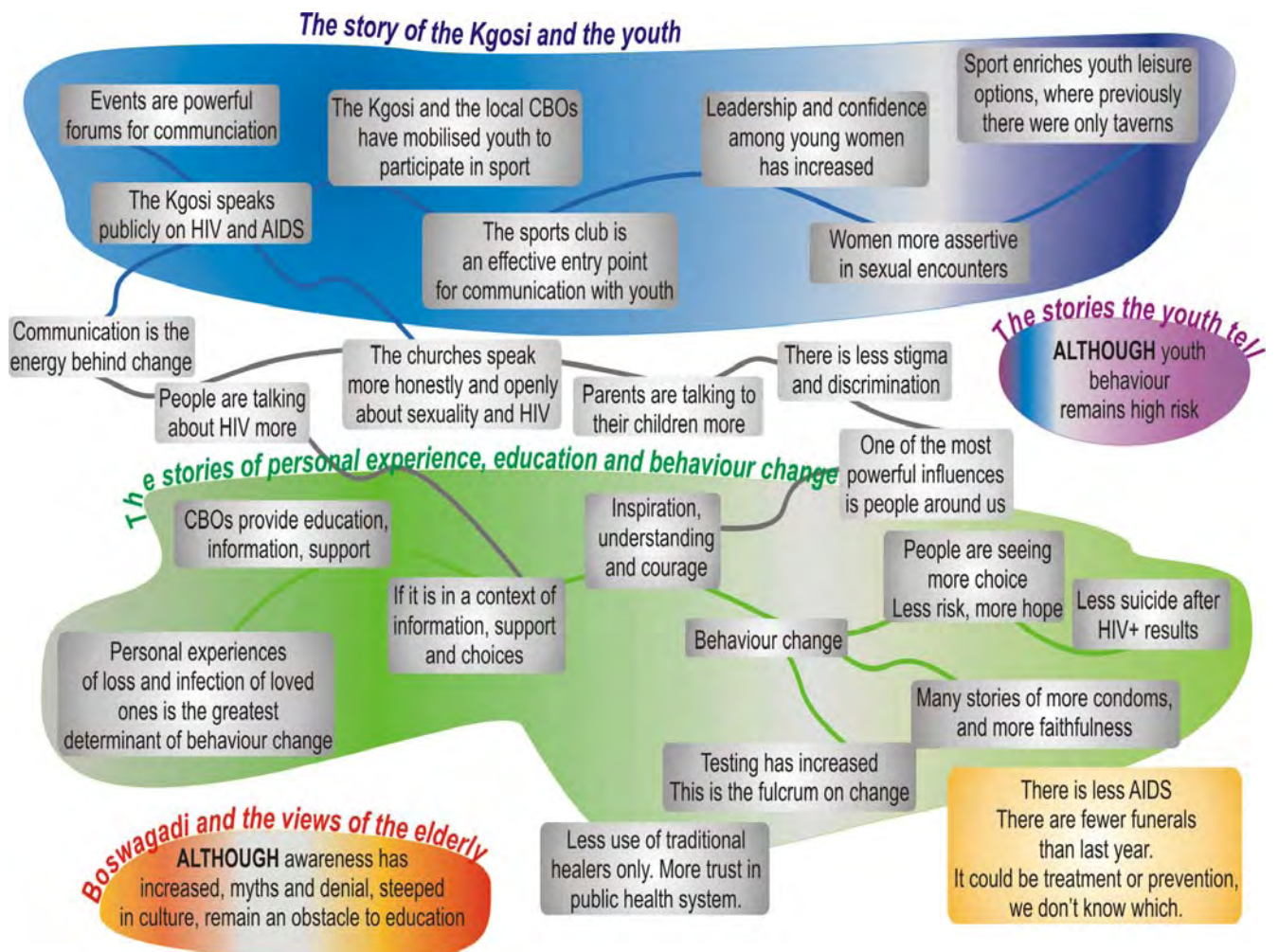
Exhibit MSC9. *Demonstrating local diversity and dynamic tensions: The use of stories in evaluation, and the impact results of the community imbizo discussion*

The custodians of traditional culture who were most informed on *boswagadi* where the *diphiri* and the traditional healers. The *diphiri* are a slightly mystically imbued group of elder men, who dig the graves and oversee the cemetery. The *diphiri's* story attributed HIV to *boswagadi* as far as possible, …

Interview with the Diphiri

"HIV is It is a disease caused by people not mourning to honour the deaths of their loved ones or partners. It is the fault of the Pentecostal Christian Churches who do not honour culture. They encourage widows and widowers to go on with their lives just after their partner's death. The Kgosi should call an imbizo to stop these churches from disrespecting culture and ensuring that deaths from *boswagadi* are reduced." (Male grave-digger in his late 60s)

Heated exchange at the Imbizo

"*Boswagadi* and HIV are not the same. *Boswagadi* is part of us. It has always been there. It is part of our culture. It is in our blood. It is caused when two people are together and one dies. It is caused by someone having sex, whose partner has passed away, and they have not then taken the correct medication. With *boswagadi* you swell up, your stomach swells and there are sounds inside you, and then your whole body swells. The person must go to the traditional healer and get medicine. If you do not treat *boswagadi*, you will die. But it is not like HIV. For example, a pregnant woman with *boswagadi* cannot pass it on to her child. Also, people can be saved from *boswagadi*, but HIV cannot be cured." (Male traditional healer in his late 60s)

The traditional healer we interview is well-educated on HIV. He has positive professional relationships with the formal health system. He also firmly grasped the rights and wrongs of his own realm: that of culture, ritual and herbal medicines. The traditional healer regarded HIV as a disease, not particularly associated with culture. As part of his service as healer, he addressed as best he saw fit, through referral to formal public health care.

"Witchdoctors are against God. *Boswagadi* cannot touch you if you are a believer. My husband died in 1997, and I am here. I am OK. It is through God and Jesus Christ that I am here, and all can be saved … " (Female religious leader, early 60s)

The faith-based leadership was providing the community with a religious alternative to traditional culture. Its package tends to be more focused on morality and the will of God than medicine.

Source: Konstant (2009a)

Exhibit MSC10. *The final constellation of themes and results, and a Theory of Change as it emerged from discussion, mind mapping and collective analysis.*

TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND LEADERS ENGAGE EFFECTIVELY WITH ADDRESSING HIV

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

COLLECTIVE LEARNING AND SHARED REFLECTIVE STRATEGY

Engage Kgosi Mabe & Traditional House of Leaders

Engage traditional healers and religious leaders, as the key community gateways

Encourage multiple working relationships among all those involved in HIV and gender (CBOs, NGOs, various government sectors, traditional leaders, healers, religious leaders)

Local CBO representation expanded to include workplace HIV functions, and entry level workplace orientation and induction for young adults

CBO-led and CBO-paced growth in skills and confidence, through various capacity growth opportunities. Engagement in appropriate leadership enhancement processes.

Partner organisations continue to learn through community outreach research and reflection.

The Kgosi's investment in gender conscientisation continues.

Those who define culture and beliefs are well-informed, supported and capacitated to address HIV in their respective contexts.

Opportunities for youth engagement in recreation, leadership and transition into participation in the economy

Strategic engagement of least accessible groups achieved, particularly young adults and men.

Community organisations specifically target men in conducive locations and situations, for treatment and care, psycho-social support and HIV prevention.

CBOs continue to be present and increasingly relevant to all sectors of the community

Women continue to engage more assertively with their own choices.

The belief systems of communities begin to constructively engage with HIV. Stigma and discrimination continue to decrease. Knowledge increase.

Youth are more purposeful and engaged in society, becoming less vulnerable to self-destructive behaviour, including high risk sex.

Men take ownership of addressing HIV. Gender roles defined constructively, as men feel greater sense of validation.

An increase in health seeking behaviour. Little evidence to suggest, but perhaps behaviour change is inspired for some towards reduced HIV infection.

IMPACT
HIV infection reduced among all sectors of the population. The impact of AIDS mitigated.

HOW CAN THIS COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP STIMULATE THE LOCAL ECONOMY, AND INFLUENCE NATIONAL GROWTH AND INCLUSION POLICIES, TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF ECONOMIC INEQUITY THAT UNDERPIN HIV

4.4.3. Concluding the MSC Phase (MSC STEP 9)

Our experience has affirmed Davies and Dart's assertions that the iterative use of narrative methods provides owned, trustworthy, credible and relevant insights. The study confirms the appropriateness of this approach in a local development context. We have demonstrated how community members, with minimal training, are able to collect and analyse data on changes within their own environment.

This study suggests some areas for moulding of the published method for the context of local level community development evaluation. The following summary of evaluation recommendations, or meta-evaluation, includes my suggestions of the steps to keep, increase, reorder, modify, delegate and add. These conclusions are summarised in the re-engineered process depicted in Figure 19.

STEP 1a. Preparation and sensitisation

STEP 1b. Recruiting the team

STEP 1c. Training the researchers:
- Purpose and process
- Interview skills
- Ethics and conduct

STEP 2. Defining the research boundaries

STEP 3. Defining the reporting period

STEP 4. Collecting significant change stories

STEP 5. Analysis:
Selecting significant stories
Mapping reasons for significance
Defining domains of change

STEP 6. Feeding back the results, confirming and disconfirming stories.

STEP 7. Verification of stories

STEP 8. Revising the system: Collective recommendation

STEP 9. Team secondary analysis and meta-evaluation

STEP 10. Coalitions and cooperatives for quantification

Figure 19   *Revised recommended Stories of Significant Change process, as it emerges from the Mabeskraal evaluation process and meta-evaluation*

Keep

STEP 1a. Preparation and sensitisation

This is valuable where the public is engaged in evaluation. It is essential for large or visible evaluation exercises where local authorities (traditional or local government in particular) may wish to be consulted and where the public is expected to participate.

Keep

STEP 1b.
Recruiting the
team

Engagement, training and facilitating a research team that is drawn from the community and the commissioning organisation/s, is an inspired and valuable contribution to evaluation policy. It creates a direct avenue from evaluation into organisational practice and learning, and supports growing confidence and institutional knowledge on self-evaluation and community feedback.

The use of novice researchers does, however, imply compromises around data waste, data quality and researcher professionalism (Exhibit MSC4). High quality narrative-based, qualitative research would ordinarily require some of the most experienced of field teams.

Despite this, the benefits far outweigh the costs. Integrated, informed data analysis by the team; immediate and continuous organisational learning; local access to stakeholders; capacity building for independent evaluation; a culture of learning in communities and organisations; and raised researcher confidence and local awareness are a few of the benefits observed in this study.

The conclusion of this study is that the use of locally drawn research teams is excellent practice wherever appropriate. The expectations of commissioners and team leaders around technical competency must, however, remain realistic.

Increase

STEP 1c.
Training,
mentorship and
supervision

Team training is integrated with evaluation planning. In addition to learning background on MSC and research skills, participants took decisions on stakeholders, process and interview strategy.

Sufficient training is critical to an effective MSC process. There are several areas in which more facilitator contact would have supported better process and outcomes. More detailed discussion would have useful, particularly in the following areas:

- Evaluation interview and analysis skills might have benefited from more training and practice time.

- Discussion and agreement on ethics is a critical element which needed more attention in training.

- A closing overview and team evaluation of the MSC approach would have better equipped organisations to use the concepts.

- A substantial collective recommendations and planning session on the findings would have enabled more explicit integration of the results into organisational learning and programme practice.

Every evaluation exercise is restrained by resources, both in terms of contracted inputs and seconded staff. There is never quite enough of some of these time-consuming and therefore high cost interactions.

Reorder

STEP 2.
Defining the research boundaries

This experience suggests that Domains of Change are best defined later in the process during analysis. Research planning should be limited to a broad boundary of enquiry, defining the scope of discussion and the entry point from which interviewers begin to probe for stories of change. This boundary relates directly to the research purpose, which needs to be clarified in the opening discussion.

Keep

STEP 3.
Defining the reporting period

This is just one of various decisions taken by the team during the integrated training and planning sessions. In the Mabeskraal process, it would not have warranted its own step.

Keep

STEP 4.
Collecting Most Significant Change stories

The story collection process works reasonably well, although compromises are required. The characterisation of evaluation as 'light science' is a useful insight. Evaluators need to remain conscious of the paramount value of learning and experience. Organisations involved in this way can directly apply information to their programmes and capacity. Utilisation-based evaluation would encourage us to remain sanguine around adequate, if imperfect, data. It is more important to remain strongly principled in promoting powerful experiential learning and ownership.

Modify

STEP 5.
Analysis:
a) Selecting the most significant stories

This step deviated substantially from the Davies and Dart published method. In a verbal, complex setting and a strongly socialised, democratic culture, single-mindedness tends to run counter to the natural inclinations of our audience. Indeed, attempting to create

one-dimensionalism in a complex, dynamic system is in conflict with the underlying assumptions of this study. The experience here reinforces the importance of multi-dimensional, radial and systemic thinking.

I would recommendation that the concept of a single story be dropped from the process. The process that this study suggests involves:

- Ranking and selection of top stories;

- Discussion on their relative significance with several participant groups;

- Analysis into thematic areas; and

- Iterative discussions towards verification of conclusions.

A process termed "Stories of Highly Significant Change" might be more accurately descriptive in this context.

Reorder

STEP 5. Analysis: Defining the domains of change

Davies and Dart (2005) note that defining Domains of Change may occur at the outset or later in the process. Our experience here, having attempted to outline Domains to some extent during preparation, is that more grounded definition of the Domains of Change later in the process is preferable. The mind-maps generated during analysis by the field team naturally and meaningfully highlight the Domains of Change as they arise in the data.

Keep

STEP 6. Feeding back the results

The community *imbizo* is a powerful element of the exercise. It should be included in some form in every community-centred evaluation.

Keep

STEP 7. Verification of stories

In a field as abstract, personal and subjective as HIV, gender and culture, story verification involves canvassing viewpoints and verifying tentative conclusions, more than establishing story veracity or truth. In Mabeskraal, verification involved being open to confirming and disconfirming views. It could have extended to actively seeking additional stories and group discussions on the emergent thematic area of the four (in this case) Domains of Change.

In other development situations, such as service provision, human rights or infrastructure outcomes, tangible verifiable claims might well arise from stories. A relatively simple process of cross-referencing with different respondents, and public airing of claims would be sufficient. The collection of conflicting and confirming stories from different sources should be integrated into the story collection process, as part of ongoing analysis (Figure 19).

Expand

STEP 8. Revising the system

The field group created in this process and the skills they gain, provide excellent opportunities for collective strategic analysis, conclusions and commitments. This is under-utilised in the Mabeskraal study. Ideally, an MSC process would close with collective revision of the programme, partnership or organisation's Theory of Change.

Expand

STEP 9. Team secondary analysis and meta-evaluation

Our shared time and energy in Mabeskraal would also have been usefully extended to include a reflective process on the MSC evaluation itself. Collective discussion and reflection would have instilled commitment, awareness and confidence in team members to conduct equivalent evaluations independently. Greater awareness of the process and the purposeful intent of each step would only have been grasped in a reflective exercise.

Team discussion would also have strengthened the insights of the meta-evaluation. Sufficient reflection on process and outcomes is recommended in implementing this method.

Delegate

Quantification

Stories of change produce various indicators for further analysis and quantification. The process confirms the value of post-hoc generation of indicators or criteria for quantitative analysis. This bears out the study rationale that grounded generation of such indicators is more appropriate than their prediction.

Practitioner organisations only need to quantify useful management data. A community-centred evaluation may suggest various indicators, some of which have little influence over management decisions. Care should be taken that gratuitous monitoring of these

does not absorb CBO resources. Accepting the impressions of community members at face value might be largely sufficient.

The story themes can, however, be of great monitoring relevance to wider management of local health and social information agendas. Community organisations need to work in partnership with local public sector services in the exchange of qualitative accounts, grounded indicators and quantitative data. Collective cooperative M&E at community level, involving a range of stakeholders, provides key opportunities to enhance the relevance and performance of all.

Add | Ethics, local customs and codes of conduct

Ethics and conduct are discussed during training, field work inception and throughout the research process. There is sometimes disagreement on correct conduct. Many in the group, for example, felt that despite their lack of counselling and social work skills, they are qualified to interview youth and children under 18 years of age on HIV and sexuality. As CBOs they ordinarily work with youth and children on these matters with few ethical restrictions. Despite the debate, we resolved to only interview these youth respondents in groups in the formal setting of school and the local library. Given our lack of qualification in child counselling, children under 14 are to be excluded from the sample altogether.

Despite such discussions and some agreed policies, several ethics and conduct infringements occurred, or are narrowly averted. The account above of inadvertent identification is not the only breach. I am personally involved in a travesty of local custom in a cemetery, which created a conflict situation requiring resolution. A recently bereaved child is almost questioned by a group of unqualified adults, a situation only averted by objections of a social worker in the group. All of us, in different ways, are ignorant of locally and professionally appropriate behaviour.

Even more discussion around risks, conduct and correct protocol might have assisted. Well-meaning ignorance is probably the greatest threat to ethics. Clearer grasp of research ethics, confidentiality, inadvertent disclosure and child rights would have been useful. Risks are increased with a larger team of less experienced researchers, and a less locally savvy team leader.

This is a challenge inherent to MSC evaluation in social development settings, and one which application of the method should take into careful account. Stories of significant change are, by design, intrusive, personal and often emotionally charged (Exhibit 3b).

This underpinning to the method creates a need for a clear and strong policy and codes of research ethics, tailored to each research context.

4.4.4. Gaps: What the method does not achieve

The MSC approach provided community perceptions of changes, some of which directly linked to the activities of the partner organisations. The answers this gives to the programme are that certain activities have been notice, that the public has appreciated them, and the reasons for their appreciation. Story content provides an informed view of current themes, helping to design an increasingly relevant, evolving Theory of Change for programme strategy (Exhibit MSC10).

What the MSC study cannot explain is *how* the programme is effective or not, or the aspects of management that have worked well, or haven't. It gives the partnership little insight to the impact of a coalition, as opposed to individual efforts, or the quality of relationship within and between organisations.

Although vaunted as true impact evaluation, and valuable in connecting with public experience, outward-looking evaluation gives only superficial insights on programme and organisation management. Community-centred stories are indispensable in focusing programme purpose and strategy. They fall a long way short, however, of sufficiently informing programme design and management unless they are complimented with inward-looking evaluation.

4.5 Conclusion to the results chapter

The Results Chapter of this study describes how the exploratory process has been conducted and analysed. It describes the activities, and the reflection and analysis process integral to iterative, emergent research. At the end of each of the two phases, a set of conclusions has been reached around effective alternative methods for evaluation of CBOs from inward-looking and outward-looking perspectives (Figure 20).

The first provides a process based in Stories of Impact, Success Means and its rating, Metaphor subjected to Health Check and Prescriptions for future action. The process is participatory and grounded in the realities and the opinions of participants on their own performance. This inward-looking approach answers some of the aspects of the research question, and is recommended as a powerful option for CBO evaluation.

In answering the research question from an outward-looking perspective, the chapter describes a second approach. An MSC process for gathering stories of change among community members is explored. By collectively analysing these stories, we gain depth

to our understanding of a development situation and recommendations to programmes' Theories of Change. The process provides insights into adapting the Davies and Dart (2005) published method for MSC. The results present the challenges and opportunities that MSC provides and its potential as a complimentary activity to organisation-centred evaluation.

Together these methods provide an alternative to external evaluation criteria and prediction-based evaluation which meets the standards of participatory, grounded, reality-based, organisationally relevant processes. The use of grounded, verbal and visual methods for both inward-looking and outward-looking evaluation processes is strongly supported by these results. The findings are not without challenges and future research will continue to adapt and refine these approaches.

The discussion below provides insights into the major methodological practice themes that have emerged from this study. More important than methods, however, are principles for developmental evaluation. These are fundamental to the effective implementation of methods. However developmental a process might be, if it is applied with undevelopmental attitudes, it cannot succeed.

My experiences with the organisations with which I have shared this journey have provided insights into the dynamics of evaluation, outsider facilitation and organisational learning that have profoundly influenced my own perspectives. These emerging principles are the generalisable outcomes of this research. They are discussed below for debate and further reflection in an unfolding understanding of developmental evaluation.

The results presented above draw on Michael Prack's (2010) advice to qualitative writers around synchronising and balancing data and analysis. It offers a model for qualitative presentation based on the cyclical reflection ideas of Taylor, et al., (1997) (Figure 6). Although specifically designed for action research, it has application across a range of grounded, qualitative, process-based research methods. The application of this simple, intuitive and very helpful analytical framework is recommended as valuable in presenting qualitative data.

STAGES				
PREPARATION, SENSITISATION, TRAINING, PLANNING, ARRANGING	STORIES AS THE CORE DATA AND PRIMARY STIMULUS	COLLECTIVE ANALYSIS. REFLECTION, THEMES & FORCES	DRAWING MEANING: LEARNING, EVALUATING & OPTIONS	ACTION INTO LEARNING: PLANNING AS EVALUATION RECOMMENDATION

INWARD LOOKING

Arrival, contracting and opening

Contact, leader contracting, logistics

Individual stories of impact from organisation members

Organisation members decide on what success means? Self-rating against these criteria

Individual and collective metaphors for the organisation

The Health Check: details self-evaluation of the elements of the organisation

MANAGEMENT LEVEL DECISIONS: Health prescription and planning for organisational growth

OUTWARD LOOKING

Community sensitisation and collaboration with local leadership authorisation

Recruitment & training of organisation members as evaluators. Team and mentor/s dispatched to the community

Stories of change from team and from community respondents

Collective analysis: What changes and significances emerge from these stories?

What are the stories of most significant change?

Rethinking the theory of change: how does this situation work? What have we learned from the stories?

STRATEGIC LEVEL DECISIONS: Achieving significant change

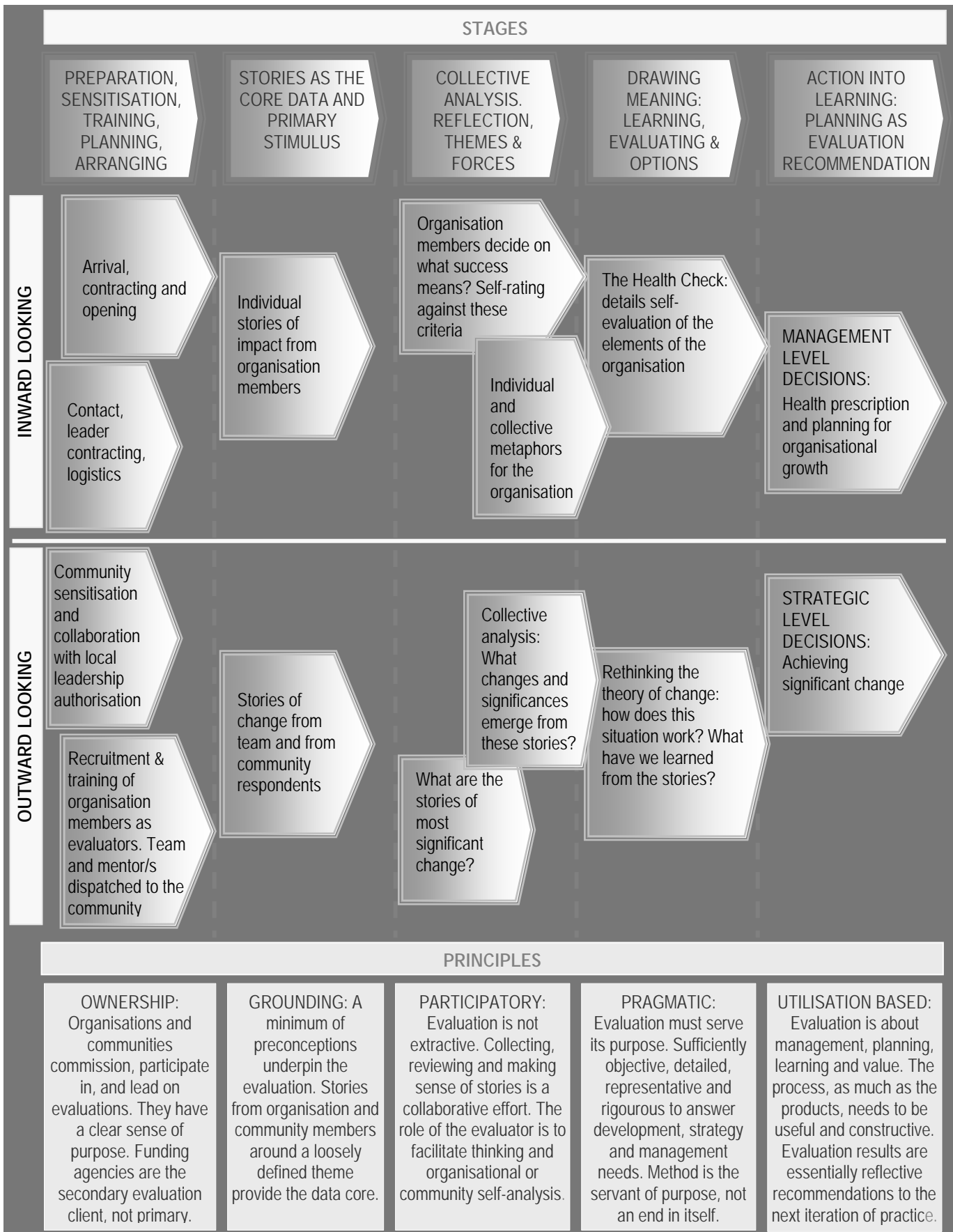| PRINCIPLES				
OWNERSHIP: Organisations and communities commission, participate in, and lead on evaluations. They have a clear sense of purpose. Funding agencies are the secondary evaluation client, not primary.	GROUNDING: A minimum of preconceptions underpin the evaluation. Stories from organisation and community members around a loosely defined theme provide the data core.	PARTICIPATORY: Evaluation is not extractive. Collecting, reviewing and making sense of stories is a collaborative effort. The role of the evaluator is to facilitate thinking and organisational or community self-analysis.	PRAGMATIC: Evaluation must serve its purpose. Sufficiently objective, detailed, representative and rigorous to answer development, strategy and management needs. Method is the servant of purpose, not an end in itself.	UTILISATION BASED: Evaluation is about management, planning, learning and value. The process, as much as the products, needs to be useful and constructive. Evaluation results are essentially reflective recommendations to the next iteration of practice.

Figure 20   *Process overview conclusions of the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor processes, and the North West Most Significant Change exercise*