

**TOWARDS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE FOR
PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT
EVALUATION IN THE CONTEXT OF
COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS**

by

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STATEMENT

I, Tracey Louise Konstant, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the thesis submitted by me in fulfilment of the degree PhD (Organisational Behaviour) to the University of Pretoria is my independent work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another faculty or university

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Konstant', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

TRACEY LOUISE KONSTANT

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ABSTRACT

Development asks that the inequity and unsustainability of the widening gap between rich and poor be narrowed, ultimately impacting on households in the most economically excluded communities. Local community-based organisations (CBOs) provide much of the organisational fabric through which development is delivered. Largely resourced by the poorest themselves, many of these CBOs aspire to attracting funds from the development aid industry. In attempting to comply with the rules of these funding sources and compete in funding relationships, organisations become players in the funding game fraught with power imbalance and seemingly contradictory incentives. Neither the funding agencies, intent on disbursement, nor the CBOs in their desire to build organisations and contribute to their communities, seem aware of the true costs of these relationships.

Aid funding is complex, operating at numerous levels, across a multiplicity of varied organisations, stakeholders and contexts. Over the last 60 years, the aid industry has evolved complicated and highly engineered mechanisms to manage relationships with funding recipients, including detailed conventions for evaluation. As part of contractual obligation, criteria for success are pre-defined; outcomes are predicted; and targets are projected. Development, however, is not linear or predictable. It is contradictory and complex. Despite objections and alternatives since the late 1980s, 'conventional' linear, simplistic rationale has dogged the development industry.

The HIV support sector as a focus for funding, capacity building and service contracts from government and international aid agencies, offers rich examples of aid industry dynamics. This research, set amongst small but established CBOs working in HIV/AIDS support in Soweto and Lawley (Gauteng) and Mabeskraal (North West Province), explores alternative evaluation approaches, methodologies and principles, based on grounded evaluation. Two models are tested and compared. Firstly, inward-looking, organisation-based, reflective self-evaluation using Stories and Metaphor. Then secondly, outward-looking, community research using a Most Significant Change approach.

The evaluation processes developed help participating CBOs describe success and outcomes against their own criteria. The approaches use narrative, visual and metaphorical formats. The central purpose of the research is meta-evaluation aimed at an effective process using iterative, cumulative action research based on the principles of grounded theory. Meta-evaluation data included descriptions of the processes and the

nature of evaluation results. They are analysed using reflection, learning and re-design in an action research cycle.

The results provide both practical insights into conducting evaluation, and the principles of effective development in a CBO setting. They demonstrate that grounded evaluation can be used to understand organisational dynamics and programme outcomes. Participatory methods, particularly visual and verbal communication, are shown to be far superior to written communication in this setting. The results demonstrate the mutual compatibility and ethical inseparability of organisation development with evaluation, providing insight into the practice of utilisation-based evaluation. The value of appreciative inquiry and the risks of accusatory inquiry are described. A thread that runs through the results highlights the impact of power, ownership and process use in effective evaluation.

The research has also elaborated some of the intractable contradictions and conundrums in development aid. Money carries the power vested in global economics and market forces. In making funding judgements, evaluators purvey the power of wealth inequity: the very power imbalance which itself purports to address. As a development practitioner, an evaluator's role should be to facilitate pathways out of dependent mindsets. As gatekeepers to financial support, however, their work entrenches distortions in perceptions of wealth and power.

These complex interactions of power and ownership demand moderation and compromise. The industry requires investment of greater energy into theoretical, methodological and practical research. Suggestions for such research are included. Without fresh creativity, development and evaluation will remain frustrated forces within an entrenched, self-perpetuating system of inequity and disparity.

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ACRONYMS

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART or ARV	Anti-retroviral treatment
ASO	AIDS Service Organisation
BN	Code given to Case Study 5
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CD4	Blood cell count indicator for immune suppression (<200 requires ART)
CL	Code given to Case Study 6
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DG	Code given to Case Study 4
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HCBC	Home and Community Based Care
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ID	Identity Document
IEC	Information and Education Communication
JJ & JD	Code given to Case Study 2
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSC	Most Significant Change, also used as code for Mabeskraal Case Study
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
OD	Organisation Development
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of AIDS
QN	Code given to Case Study 3
SADF	South African Defence Force
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign (AIDS advocacy NGO)
TB	Tuberculosis
TT	Code given to Case Study 1
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing (for HIV)



CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Rationale*

1.1.1. Background

Africa in the twenty first century remains the forgotten continent (Chimere-Dan, 1999). This is the continent where poverty is most widespread, nations are least economically productive, food security is most compromised and HIV/AIDS is most destructive (Moyo, 2009). Africa seems stubbornly depressed. Development thinkers grapple with the forces behind the continent's chronic lassitude, in an era of explosive global progress.

My main interest here, however, lies a long way below the power games of national and global politics and economics. The realities of this malaise are experienced at local level (Russel & Schneider, 2000; Amuyunzu-Nyamongom et al., 2007). Development need is only hearsay in the offices and conference rooms of professional development industrialists. In informal settlements and poor communities, it is life (Marais, 2005). It is in these settings that clusters of people, drawn to hope inspired by their own dynamic movers and shakers, gather to try to solve the problems of their own communities (Salamon, 1994; Kotzé, 2004; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). True social development happens at local level. This is where pathways into inclusion and participation in the economy need to be worn by those bold enough to march out on poverty.

Local social organisational structure is formed of essential threads. The first is local government and local level public service, with all of its potential and opportunity to transform (Friedman, 2002; Ramkisson, et al., 2004; Health Systems Trust (HST), 2008). Alongside this weakly performing potential, the people themselves form local community-based organisations (CBOs) (Edwards & Sen, 2000). This varied network of collectives forms the social fabric that has potential to open the gateways out of the margins (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Heinrich, 2001; Kilby, 2006).

In an increasingly market-driven world, governments around the globe are withdrawing from their role as the primary deliverers of public services, in favour of service provision by the private sector (Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Kilby, 2006; Albareda, 2008). In so doing, the public sector sometimes relinquishes most of its direct responsibility, such as in the provision of electricity in South Africa. For other services, the state provides a poor standard of mass public service, such as in education and health care. This creates the niche where the private

sector competes to provide expensive, better quality services to those who can afford them.

Those without income, living on the edges of core settlements, or in the infrastructure deprived informal settlement areas, find themselves without access to services (Russel & Schneider, 2000; Seekings, 2003). While services are, in theory, available for everyone, in marginalised settings they are frequently offered below a minimum standard to meet basic needs (e.g. medical facilities offered in state hospitals that are so sparsely distributed that they cannot be reached without unaffordable transport costs). In some instances, they are not provided at all (e.g. many marginal localities have no social worker, ambulance service or food parcel distribution). Globally, CBOs and NGOs are emerging in greater numbers to answer these opportunities and fill the niche of services for the poor (Bebbington, 1997; Mirafteb, 1997).

Community organisations may react to this situation in two ways. They can invite concerned donors to fund them to become local level service providers, filling the service gap with non-professional service equivalents or mechanisms for negotiating access to public sector facilities (Mirafteb, 1997; Kilby 2006; Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 4). Alternatively they can confront the tax base of the nation, and demand their constituents' share of its productivity, including the rights and opportunities to actively participate in that economy (Robinson & Friedman, 2007). The latter is the traditional and purist role of civil society - activists and advocates that hold society to account and creating social bridges. The role of activist can be in direct conflict with the former; the emerging role of community organisations in local service provision (Bebbington, 1997; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall, 2007; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Howell, 2008; Winkler, 2009). Although often conflated in organisations, visions and strategies, meeting the immediate needs of the poor is a very different business from addressing the causes for their situation. Responsiveness and activism have been steadily eroded where financial dependency shifts civil society from being government's '*watch-dog*' towards its '*lap-dog*' (Bebbington, 1997, Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hearn, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; National Department of Social Development (NDoSD), 2005).

To become service industries for the poor, CBOs may enter into subcontracts with government or donor agencies in a model similar to that of private sector service providers (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Uphoff, 1995). In entering into these contracts, CBOs become primarily accountable to those who contract their services, rather than to those who use them (Hailey, 2000; Edwards & Hulme, 1996). Clashes of organisational culture

are inherent to these relationships between CBOs and the large bureaucracies of the development industry (Abrahams, 2008).

CBOs' programmes are generally fluid, highly responsive and strategically vague (Kaplan, 2002; Strode & Grant, 2004). Their systems are necessarily loose, organic and opportunistic. They tend to rely on their knowledge, observation, intuition and good sense in making decisions, rather than a documented and formally justified evidence base. To the extent that they embrace a community-centred culture, they are immersed in participatory, consultative processes. These processes progress at the slow and sporadic pace of community dialogue (Chambers, 1995). They are likely to view satisfying, well-attended or rewarding activities as achievements, with little soul searching on the outcomes or impacts of these activities. Their organisational style may well be effective for their voluntary, locally inspired membership. It is less convincing, however, for the large bureaucracies of the aid funding industry (Bornstein, 2006a; Gasper, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Mebrahtu, 2002; Yachkaschi, 2006). Scepticism and stand-off infiltrate these relationships, and accountability of CBOs, more often of others in the relationship, is a matter of much debate (Lehman, 2007).

The CBO environment is charged with complex, convoluted, multiple, often unsynchronised accountability relationships. Heinrich (2001) talks about the monitoring and evaluation of civil society as being like "trying to nail a pudding to a wall". CBOs are *inwardly accountable* to a volunteer workforce that is both their key resource and their first client. They are *downwardly accountable* to the communities they serve, but without mechanisms for being held to account by these communities, they are potentially out of synergy with their other lines of accountability (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Edwards, 1999; Ebrahim, 2003; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Gray, et al., 2006). Where they are funded, they are also variously and differently *upwardly accountable* to multiple donor agencies and government. These too are seldom aligned to CBOs internal or downward lines of commitment.

In a world where money is power and funding is a cause for desperation, the power held by funding sources for upward accountability tends to overwhelm streams of commitment both to clients and to themselves (Eade, 2007). CBOs come to be dictated to by funders' requirements, that are informed a long way from the needs of communities or organisations (Bornstein, 2006a).

The burgeoning discipline of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has been integral to this pattern of funding agencies' need to maintain control and feed their own upward accountability demands. In the fluid, spontaneously structured systems of CBOs with

multiple, interacting and yet contradicting lines of accountability, M&E has not emerged in any systematic form. Thinking, planning and evaluation depend on the leadership style within each organisation. It may be based on observations and community dialogue, or on the authoritarian position of the leader's interpretation of the local situation. It is however unlikely, to incorporate data, reporting or routine, rigorous record keeping (Eade, 2007).

Where relationships with funding agencies become part of CBO life, however, evaluation systems and rules are a requirement (Hailey, 2000; Ebrahim, 2005). These systems range from basic financial auditing to complicated accounting for the effectiveness of interventions. Funder-designed rules and conditions are dictated with varying flexibility and openness by different funder cultures. Virtually all mainstream systems are based on predictive, 'logic-based' models (Gasper, 2000). At contracting, organisations are engaged in time-bound, outcome-oriented projects, which are funded on the basis of predicted impacts, indicators and targets (Abrahams, 2008). This highly structured, linear design paradigm is directly co-opted from frameworks used in military, engineering and private sector contexts in the late 1960s. Despite these linear approaches being vaunted as superior, useful and powerful; they seldom outlive the donor relationship that requires them, and are seldom adopted for any purpose other than to maintain financial relations.

There is little to support the assumption that the logic applied in these settings is appropriate in complex social situations (Gasper, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006). Instead, they are accused of distorting development, exacerbating power discrepancy, reducing organisational coherence and sustainability, fostering deception and undermining organisational self-assuredness (Bebbington, 1997; Mirafteb, 1997, Lewis, 1998; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001; Howell, 2002; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

1.1.2. Development as power

Development can be seen as power to self-determine and achieve a suite of basic human rights (Edwards & Sen, 2000; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008; Taylor, 2009). Power is relative, often to the power of others. Even power over oneself lies relative to a situation. The experience of power is profoundly affected by the processes through which organisations engage with each other (Reeler, 2008). Formal research, intimidating terminology, complicated quantitative approaches, impersonal checklists and dictated requirements of imposed systems constitute the exercising of power

(Miraftab, 1997; Kilby, 2006). When funders control criteria for success, dictate processes for evaluating success, and use financial opportunities to maintain this authority, power is placed firmly in the hands of the developed (Bornstein, 2006a; Eade, 2007). The target audience of the community organisation becomes the wealthy (the funding agency), rather than the poor (their community clients) (Ebrahim, 2005; Kilby, 2006). This power distortion risks warping the organisational psychology of grassroots development organisations (Gasper, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006).

One consequence of playing by funders' rules is that capable, intelligent, locally knowledgeable development practitioners expend energy inventing indicators and grappling with fine distinctions of funder terminology and communication rules (Bornstein, 2006a). They may spend undue proportions of their time writing reports for which they themselves see little relevance or value, when they could be focusing on leading and managing their organisations (Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

In addition, CBOs, having been established by unpaid volunteers, are rooted in a culture based on the careful use of limited funding (Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Heinrich, 2001). This is in stark contrast with the "burn" mentality of funders, in their output-oriented environment where the stipulated rate of fund spending, or "absorptive capacity", is a vaunted performance indicator (Chambers, 1995).

Appeasing foreign ethics and wooing the culture of funding, begins to take precedence over a focus on understanding and meeting the needs of beneficiaries (Jaime Joseph, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Kotzé, 2004). Organisations risk losing sight of their purpose, diluting their integrity, and moulding projects to suit the expectations of those with financial power (Hearn, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Bornstein, 2006a). Utopian vision, the capacity to question and oppose, radical criticism, political activism and control over their own administration are all compromised when organisations become financially dependent (Bebbington, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000).

1.1.3. The culture of the CBO-service contractor

No longer primarily representatives of their communities and, therefore, less legitimate as members of civil society, organisations come to resemble the private sector more than civil society (Uphoff, 1995). They seek out the commercial opportunities of the specific niche at the low income, third party sponsored end of the services market. While their contribution in this niche is valuable and commendable, indeed essential to a large proportion of the population, it only weakly resembles development (Bebbington, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Miraftab,

1997). Unless on some level CBOs address the causes for underdevelopment, rather than dabbling at the symptoms and dulling the immediacy to address the causes, they are simply a cog in an inequitable system.

The quality of the funder:service-provider relationship, and the potential for civil society to become a national and global '*guide-dog*', depends on the capacity of community organisations and their funders to engage with each other with equal confidence and assertiveness (Birdsall, et al., 2007). In reality, however, financial power tempts a relationship based on subservience, where community organisations find themselves in unequal and misnamed '*partnerships*' (Kilby, 2006).

Inevitably, despite insistence on prediction of outcomes and spending rates, reality does not happen in the logical patterns imagined by these models at project conception (FAHAMU & CAE, 2004). Organisational change is not linear or predictable. Organisations are 'contradictory, ambiguous and obtuse' (Kaplan, 2002). Development occurs sporadically. Inertia, crisis, revolution and consolidation are more typical of development processes than the linear predictability of cause and effect (Quinn Patton, 2002). Investment is unlikely to link causally or directly with achievements as planned.

One insidiously damaging phenomenon is that organisations may learn to 'endear' funders through creative reporting, subtle deception, manipulation and selective emphasis (Bornstein, 2006a; Chambers, 2005). The very process of manipulation humiliates, wastes time and emotional energy, instils fear and dilutes internal authority. Funding incentives encourage organisations to shift their focus towards their achievements, and to underplay their failures. In so doing, they lose opportunities to learn, their self-respect and their sense of personal power are eroded and as a result, development becomes undone. Perhaps the most diminishing effect of organisation embracing 'the game' is the loss of the sense of the seriousness of their social role (Bornstein, 2006a). These tensions in the balance of power tend, ultimately, to disempower rather than uplift development partners (Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Kaplan, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006).

1.1.4. The funders' case

Large development funding agencies operate at scales of millions in currency, thousands of people, hundreds of projects in dozens of countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2010). Funding agencies face risk of being charged with massive scale corruption, or with reallocation of their budgets, and therefore their jobs, unless they can demonstrate their own worth. If their finances are squandered or

stolen, they are held accountable to their own power structures. Some monitoring of the destination of their spending, and the outcomes of their interventions is necessary and critical to their own learning and management (O' Dwyer & Unerman, 2008; OECD, 2008). Conventional, logic-based evaluation is designed primarily to meet these needs (Ebrahim, 2005; Kilby, 2006; Gray, et al., 2006). Any alternative system for evaluation must renegotiate and meet funders' needs for accountability.

While funders may raise the objection that viable, scaleable alternative do not exist (Mebrahtu, 2002; Bornstein, 2006a), processes such as theory of change, Most Significant Change and participatory appraisal have been well described and published since the early 1990s (Chambers, 1995; Edwards, 1999). Despite this healthy discourse among development intellectuals, large scale practice has been impervious to the mainstreaming of these concepts. Until convinced and motivated to change, funders will continue to enforce their current system with its perceived advantages of established mechanisms, convenience and entrenched credibility, despite its inherent inadequacies and negative impacts.

This study is primarily intended to be another drip from the tap of objection. I explore methods of organisational evaluation for CBOs in particular. The aim of these methods is to measure productivity and performance, while meeting CBO learning needs and also attempting to meet the accountability needs of those who fund them. More compelling than method, however, the research should provide practice-based insight on the dynamics of evaluation and organisations' responses to evaluative enquiry, towards informing principles of developmental evaluation.

This research is based on the conceptual framework that evaluation based on grounded theory, rather than predictive positivist paradigms, permits more accurate, useful and empowered communication. In exploring methods that facilitate outcomes being captured primarily from experience, I present pragmatic alternatives to prediction and linearity.

1.2 Problem statement

<p>Conventional, predictive evaluation systems used by funding agencies for HIV and AIDS CBOs are too simplistic, rigid, linear and one-dimensional to accurately assess the contributions of these projects in communities, or to facilitate evaluation processes that contribute positively to organisational development.</p>
--

1.3 *Research objectives*

To identify viable evaluation process elements and principles for assessing the outcomes of CBO efforts in building a community-based response to the impact of HIV, which:

- i) Support CBO self-determination and development as organisations;
- ii) Encourage responsive project planning and organisational learning;
- iii) Respond to the accountability needs of funding agencies.

1.4 *Ontology*

Ontology: "*Philosophy: The branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being. Logic: The set of entities presupposed by a theory.*"¹

Ontology refers to a view of reality. It asks us to consider what assumptions, or pre-suppositions, underpin our theory of reality. It describes the world view from which a researcher takes her perspective. Quinn-Patton (2002, p.134) considers ontology to refer to a belief in a single, verifiable truth, as opposed to socially constructed multiple realities². This fits well with the definition. If we assume that there is a truth, and that it can be described and determined, our theory reflects this. If, however, we assume that truth is relative, and can only be described as a vantage point, then theory must be quite different.

Along a 'truth - no truth' scale, I would tend to have 'no truth' leanings. Not, however, to the extent of post-modernism, where no truth means 'any truth goes'. This thesis begins from a standpoint of objecting to the perspective of conventional evaluation that takes its methods to be acceptable. In objecting to this view of truth, and postulating another perspective, there is a clear attempt to define right from wrong in a certain context, and to consider other contexts into which this might be generalised. The moderate view that truth is relative to a social situation and to the realities of a certain perspective would capture the ontology of this study. Discussion on the power over truth, and the power to be the perspective that dominates, underpins this study.

Social constructivism captures this ontology well (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 96). Reality is our own definition and interpretation of events, and is embedded in our responses.

¹ The New Collins Concise Dictionary for the English Language, London (1985)

² Intriguingly, Rossi et al. (1999:422) and Mouton & Marias (1990:19) give this exact example as defining 'epistemology'. For the purposes of this discussion I give 'ontology' the honour.

People have multiple realities influencing how they interact. The theory is referred to as “ontological relativity” (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 97), suggesting that worldviews are relative to perspective, and that empirical or positivist proof cannot prove or disprove their legitimacy.

This worldview has profound implications in the study of development and power from a critical change perspective. If truth is relative to perspective, then the perspective of the powerful will prevail, unless social conscience moderates this power (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 98). Critical theory is therefore the core epistemology that emanates from constructivism in a social development context.

1.5 Epistemology

Epistemology: “*The theory of knowledge, esp. the critical study of its validity, methods and scope.*”³

Quinn-Patton (2002, p. 134) describes epistemology as ‘How we know what we know’. It refers to matters such as objectivity, subjectivity, validity or trustworthiness of our conclusions, and generalisability.

Constructionist ontology is associated with epistemological subjectivity, related to the acknowledge bias of critical theory (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 98). It is necessarily qualitative and emergent (Creswell, 2007, p. 47). Constructivist founded methodologies consider truth to be based on consensus; facts to have no value except within a framework of values (or a story); causes and effects to be an outcome of interpretation; and specific findings to be situation specific and non-generalisable. While a thesis based on the assumption that all truth is relative and non-generalisable might be seen to have little point (Hanrahan, et al., 1999). This must be answered by a value bias towards generating greater equity for the voices of those least heard in policy and practice. With this humanistic (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 179) rights-based value lens on development, constructivist research comes to be hinged in critical theory (Potter, 1999).

The epistemology of this study is therefore best captured under critical theory (Mouton, 2001; Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 79). Critical change research acknowledges a value bias and the ideological standpoint of social contribution, from which the research emanates

³The New Collins Concise Dictionary for the English Language, London (1985)

(Potter, 1999). It may be political, socially conscientious, challenging of injustice or inequity, or motivated by any area in which change is deemed necessary by the researcher. Critical change research does not pretend to be objective (Kelly, 1999, pp. 412). It acknowledges that research is transformative in itself. This knowledge must be acknowledged and held with integrity (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 130-131). The researcher acknowledges herself as a variable in the study (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 548-549).

Mouton (2001) regards critical theory to align with a participatory paradigm, with action research as methodological approaches. The analysis captures this research perfectly. As a meta-methodological study, epistemology is relevant at the two main levels of meta-methodology and methodology.

Diversity and development research are invariably critical. In these sectors, ethics dictate that any intervention should serve a constructive purpose in the lives of participants. This concept is probably not debated. Where evaluation professionals may disagree is around what constitutes constructive change and valuable social contribution. Mainstream evaluation may promote independent, external evaluation as constructive development practice. The ideological standpoint of this study, however, is that 'participatory evaluation' and 'empowerment evaluation' (Rossi, et al., 1999, p. 36 & 58) have primacy in a community development context.

The research comes from a standpoint that questions the supremacy of 'might is right' and the ascendancy of market forces as a determining power. It calls on society to confront evolving dynamics around power, wealth and money with maturity and integrity. As victim of our own global culture we need to confront these systems from within them (Potter, 1999). It is about reining in the monster created, and reclaiming the supremacy of human thought, respect and relationship.

Critical change evaluation is usually based on action research (Potter 1999), and the methodology for this study is based on an interactive, cumulative action research approach, which is described in greater detail in the methods chapter.

1.6 Delineation and limitations

This study uses case studies of facilitated, grounded evaluation, in an iterative action research meta-evaluation model. The aim is to observe and reflect on the quality and results of these evaluation exercises, and to design improved processes in each iteration. Aspects of the evaluation that have worked may be expanded. Aspects that failed were changed or dropped. The criteria of making these changes were a reflection

of the research objectives. How did each element of the process hold power and provide learning? Is it producing information that is useful to management and credible? Would a funding agency be able to use this information in understanding the contribution that this organisation is making to its community?

The target group has been HIV and AIDS CBOs. The geographical areas were Soweto and Lawley in Gauteng, and Mabeskraal in North West Province. These were selected opportunistically, as the areas where organisations volunteered their participation. The study therefore has not attempted to evaluate organisations that are reluctant to engage in reflection, or for whom such communication is threatening or unwelcome.

While the HIV and AIDS sector represents a massive proportion of CBO, it is also a sector that works in very different conditions from traditional CBOs which might focus on local economic development, water or environmental issues. It should be noted that as a result of the wide-ranging impact of HIV and AIDS, the vast majority of social welfare CBOs, including children, nutrition, health, gender, family and social support, have been absorbed into this sector. Nevertheless, dynamics may be different in those CBOs that remain largely outside of core HIV support.

The communities in which organisations were set ranged from the rural village of Mabeskraal, to suburban Soweto, and into the informal settlement of the Lawley area. The research therefore did not extend to city centre, urban settings, or to remote, agricultural rural areas. The data were also not analysed in terms of community type or location. While the environment had profound impacts, each participating CBO was unique and its environment was only one of several determinants. There were therefore few generalisations made around responses in relation to setting. Generalisations around types of CBOs were not the intention of the study. Different CBOs contribute to the building of a process, which should be adaptable and valuable to a wide range of organisational cultures.

The study also focuses on CBOs, out of a range of stakeholders relevant to the research question. Evaluation and donor professionals participate in a reflective questionnaire, but the study methods do not extend to other input from relevant stakeholders. This is largely due to retaining focus on determining a set of methods and principles, and leaving the debate on stakeholders' response to future research. Time, resources and research volume preclude this potentially interesting dimension.

1.7 *Definitions of key terms and concepts*

Most of the terms in the title are self-explanatory. They are defined here largely in terms of how they are interpreted for the purposes of this study. A range of terms that apply to the research method are elaborated in that chapter.

This research bridges two academic communities which are quite isolated from each other and which employ similar terminology with very particular definitions. The business, training and human-resource management world refers to assessment and evaluation in one sense. The broad term, 'research', also loosely overlaps with these concepts. The development world has little interest in assessment, but has made a global discipline out of its interpretation of monitoring and evaluation. Given that this thesis rests in a Faculty of Economics and Management Science, it is important to clarify these definitions as they are applied in the development sector.

1.7.1. Community-based organisations

Community-based organisations (CBOs) are groups of people from a community who come together to serve the needs of their community. They are locally founded, staffed and focused.

Beyond this definition, they are highly diverse. They may be entirely voluntary and operate from beneath a shaded gathering area; or they may have several salaried staff working from local offices. Some are faith-based, others not. Their work may be focused or dispersed, and may include local health and counselling services, material support to vulnerable children and adults, education and awareness raising around themes such as gender and HIV, and a wide variety.

1.7.2. Evaluation

The term evaluation refers to the large and expanding field of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) which has become an increasingly high priority for government, and has been important to international aid agency for several decades.

Monitoring refers to the routine tallying of inputs, activities and outputs, and would encompass budgeting, stock management, human resource statistics and the activities of an organisation. It is useful for budgeting, auditing, resource planning and work plan management.

Evaluation describes the outcomes and impacts of those activities. Quinn-Patton (2002, p. 10), from a development evaluation academic setting, refers to programme evaluation as "*the systematic collection of information about the activities,*

characteristics, and outcomes of programmes to make judgements about the programme, improve programme effectiveness and/or inform decisions about future programming. ... Evaluative research, quite broadly, can include any effort to judge or enhance human effectiveness through systematic data-based inquiry."

The definitions of organisational development authors, Cummings & Worley (2005, p. 178) are not dissimilar: "Evaluation is concerned with providing feedback to practitioners and organisation members about the progress and impact of interventions"

The term evaluation is also used in organisational behaviour to refer to individual performance management in the workplace (Robbins, et al., 2009, p. 361). It is important to emphasise here that this is not the definition of evaluation that is relevant to this thesis. Evaluation here refers to "understanding the value" of organisations and interventions at a higher organisational level than the individual.

Evaluation is useful for determining and justifying a strategy, understanding a context and its needs, and learning from the strategies of the past to inform management in the future. Have these activities served a purpose? Has a positive difference been made to society by these efforts? If so, is it relevant, meaningful and reasonable relative to its cost? What tells us whether this difference will be sustained or not, and the extent to which underlying causes of the problems are being addressed? Evaluation tells us about the direction and emphasis of future activities towards engaging in a particular situation.

1.7.3. Participatory

Participatory development has an entire, and debated, literature of its own (Robinson & Cousins, 2004; Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). Like "community" it is a term that is ambiguous and vested in power and interest. Who participates? Who leads? Who follows? Whose voice dominates? Who is not participating in participatory approaches? The use of the term in this thesis does not become absorbed in this debate. 'Participatory' is simply used in contrast to externally driven processes where the power outside of an organisation has control over the processes within that organisation.

For our purposes, therefore, a participatory evaluation gold standard would refer to a process which is requested and commissioned by the organisation being evaluated, where that organisation's members provide the content and focus of the evaluation, where the results are of direct value and use to the organisation, and where the organisation has the right to disseminate its learning where it sees fit. The platinum

standard would be an evaluation that is also facilitated and conducted independently by the organisation through its own learning culture.

1.7.4. Development

The definition of development has evolved substantially over the last 60 years. It began as providing infrastructure and economic support to post-war Europe (Moyo, 2009), which was then extended to former colonies. 50 years ago roads, hospitals, dams and schools were 'development'. Today, the definition would probably be contested if it was given much thought. The Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2000) refer to increased primary education, gender equity, reduction in extremes of poverty, access to health care and achievement of basic human rights. National development agendas revolve around improving conditions in communities with least access to employment, services and infrastructure. In global priorities, development refers to wealthy nations' responsibility to divert a proportion of their GDP to low income nations, and to the poor communities of middle-income nations, towards addressing global inequities. In the poorest countries, development often refers to wealthy nations supplying the national treasury with a substantial portion of the funding it needs to manage its affairs. In middle-income countries such as South Africa, it refers to attempting to enable treasuries to open bottle-necks in their own spending in order to reach the poorest.

These are all mechanisms for development, and draw us to a common thread of redistribution of a wide range of resources from the wealthiest to the poorest. To be sustainable, however, this redistribution must take the form of creating access for the poorest to draw in resources and opportunities for their own upliftment and inclusion. Development is underpinned by equity, access and human rights.

1.7.5. Assessment, as compared with evaluation

Although the word 'assessment' is sometimes used as a close synonym to 'evaluation', it has quite a distinct definition in human resource management, training and individual performance circles. Here, assessment generally refers to describing the qualities, progress or needs of an individual (Cummings & Worley, 2005, p. 217). It is often closely aligned to psychological testing (Robbins, et al., 2001, p. 97). Assessment may relate to questionnaires or other standardised tools for testing knowledge and attitudes (Groesbeck & Van Aken, 2001). Assessment is often quantitative, comparative, and detailed.

This thesis is not about assessment in the sense of individual performance management. For this reason, the word assessment is not used in this thesis, and the use of 'evaluation' refers to the definition given above.

1.8 Underlying assumptions

Reflecting on assumptions at the end of the study, I have assumed that:

- Most CBOs, and those that participated in this study, have sincere intentions to contribute in their communities, and are not simply fronts for generating income for a group of friends. Organisations like this do exist, of course. Evaluation should be able to discern them.
- Conventional evaluation applied to larger organisations is also routinely applied to CBOs. The problem statement would be a non-issue if donors made exceptions from conventional evaluation for CBOs in any case. My observation has been that while expectations might be higher for CBOs than more established organisations for petty expenditure (e.g. receipts for informal transport costs), they might be somewhat lower for outcomes.
- The worst case described under conventional, linear, predictive evaluation below may therefore seldom be applied as rigorously to CBOs. M&E training, however, uses linear planning and indicators as the standard, and strategic and operational plans would routinely be expected to follow these guidelines. Furthermore PEPFAR⁴, in particular, as a funding agency which has worked most generously with civil society organisations has rigid expectations around quantitative reporting and the use of predicted indicators.
- This assumption is also answered by the importance of finding evaluation methods that are effective, even if the conventional methods are being applied less stringently to CBOs in some cases.
- My observations and interpretations are reasonable. Everyone sees the world differently. I sometimes find myself accused of seeing it more differently than most. This assumption refers to the discussions of subjectivity that arise in the methods, discussion and conclusions. Peer review, faithful reporting of peer viewpoints that differ from mine, iterative triangulation and the acknowledgement that there are no

⁴ United States Presidential Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, major HIV and AIDS funder, managed for the US government by USAID. It is renowned for substantial expenditure, but with onerous, time-consuming reporting requirements.

doubt various interpretations and missed observations that others will build on, serve to address this assumption.

1.9 Contribution of the study

We live in an age where the gulf between rich and poor, 'developed' and 'developing', has continued to widen despite being an age when awareness, debate and global engagement are at their richest. The development industry and the flow of development aid funding may have potential to be among the key global forces to a future which addresses some of these fundamental tensions. In South Africa, where these tensions are among the world's most extreme, the impacts of inequity are starkest. The challenge of elitist, exclusionary, minority interest, power distorted society, runs deep in South Africa's pathology. It remains an intractable challenge today, despite 20 years of democracy. The majority still have disproportionately little power, opportunity, social access and economic participation.

Community-based organisations, at the front-line of local level development in marginalised communities, are among our society's most valuable asset. In this fabric lies the vast potential for scaled engagement, facilitated upliftment and power taking, as opposed to attempts at power giving. This potential has been largely untapped. In fact, by dispelling the political and representative roles of these organisations, while co-opting them into low-cost service provision and ingratiating them to those seen to be more powerful and important than themselves, I wonder whether their potential is being undermined, rather than optimised.

This research is about finding ways of engaging with this critical social section that facilitates power taking, expresses reality from their context, and dilutes the extremes of power hierarchies. It addresses one of the core purveyors of might in the CBOs sector: that of evaluation and funding relationships, and calls on these disciplines to consider their rights, responsibilities and contribution. It aims to offer methodological alternatives to those disciplines. More importantly, however, it observes the principles of interactions and relationships that may contribute to upliftment, rather than servitude.

To the extent that the potential nascent in this social fabric can indeed stand up and lead, creating pathways out of poverty and exclusion from their own doorsteps, this would be a profound contribution. This research considers a few of the many barriers, and a little of the potential, lying in those pathways.

1.10 Brief chapter overview

The thesis is structured as advised by Hofstee (2006).

1.10.1. Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter is intended to provide the rationale for the research objectives, and justify the value and purpose of the study. It also gives broad delineations of the scope, and the ontological and epistemological perspective.

1.10.2. Chapter 2. Literature review: Situation context

The literature review provides two major thematic areas necessary to the context of the study. The civil society in the development milieu in South Africa, the position of CBOs in this context, and the various sources of interplay around funding agency relationships and approaches, roles, power and accountability are discussed from the literature.

In a second section, the methodological and theoretical underpinnings of the study are discussed. Conventional methods for evaluation to which this study reacts in many respects, are described. Principles of complexity, emergence and grounding which I argue define the nature of more developmental evaluation are explained and elaborated.

1.10.3. Chapter 3. Methods: Research approach in brief

The study is essentially a meta-evaluation: it is a continuous evaluation of several evaluations, towards distilling out principles and practice for evaluation approaches that meet the research objectives.

Some of the approaches to meta-evaluation are similar to those of the evaluations themselves, particularly the concept of grounded theory. The methods chapter attempts to delineate these and to remain clear in the face of potential confusion. Distinctions are outlined between the empirical study (evaluation in CBOs) and the non-empirical study (meta-evaluation for methods development).

The study has used exploratory methods development, through an action research framework, with a selection of case study CBOs. The meta-evaluation also used grounded theory, and a more thorough description is provided in the methods chapter than in the theoretical section of the literature review. I have explored practical, feasible, grounded evaluation process elements, while observing the principles for power-balanced evaluation that have emerged.

The methods chapter then describes sampling and data collection and analyses approaches. It concludes by discussing possible sources of error and the ethical considerations of the research.

1.10.4. Chapter 4. Results

The results chapter strongly reflects the iterative, cumulative nature of action research data collection and analysis. It demonstrates the building up of theory over the course of a series of case study experiences by showing the reflection and indicative conclusions as they emerged and were reinforced.

The study began with a series of six case study evaluations with participating organisations, using stories and metaphor in Gauteng. These produced practice and principles for inward-looking evaluation.

One of the key findings of the first research phase was the challenge of determining community perceptions from a method that focused on organisational reflection. The opportunity for a corollary to the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor phase was therefore warmly embraced. This phase involved the execution of Davies and Dart's (1995) Most Significant Change approaches to evaluation in a community in North West province. A second section in the results chapter gives the findings and conclusions of this more outward-looking evaluation approach.

1.10.5. Chapter 5. Discussion

This chapter covers three major areas for discussion

Firstly, some pragmatic guidelines for facilitating grounded, participatory, visual and verbal evaluation in CBOs and communities are described.

Secondly, the application of any method depends more on attitude and principles, than on method itself. In this section of the chapter, observations are drawn from the evaluations on the principles and dynamics of effective engagement with CBOs. The implications of this for conducting evaluation that is both organisationally constructive and accurate are discussed.

Finally, employing the lesson that metaphor is a powerful vehicle for learning and communication, the reflections from the study are captured through metaphors around the state of CBOs, and wider development society. The activism, service, internal interests and compliance characters of development organisations are characterised as knights, saints, snakes and sheep, and the implications of these qualities to development and evaluation are discussed. In conjunction with the recommendations

that are outlined in the conclusions chapter, I regard this metaphorical analysis as the essential contribution of this study.

1.10.6. Chapter 6. Conclusion

The conclusion chapter is largely devoted to presenting the main findings, and drawing out key recommendations from them. It provides distinctions between the theoretical, methodological and practical contribution of the study. The research objectives are reviewed, and the study's achievements and limitations against these objectives are discussed. Before closing, the chapter presents some suggestions for further research work highlighted by this study.

1.11 Ethics

Ethics are important to any social research design. In the case of research into development organisations working with HIV and AIDS, they become a central concern. Entry level ethical considerations make every effort to ensure confidentiality. They expect informed consent to participate with a standing option to withdraw at any time. To the extent that group activities permit these policies, they are integral to the study design.

In addition, the principle of utilisation-based evaluation states that evaluation should not only be safe for participants, it should be constructive. The study is designed to optimise organisational and participant benefit wherever opportune.

Despite due attention to ethics in the approach and approval of the design by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee, social research remains an ethically dangerous playing field. Most infringements are the result of ignorance or unintended consequences of well-intended engagement. Facilitator awareness, sensitivity and concern for the experiences and emotions of participants underpin ethical practice.

Ethics in the study design are elaborated in the methodology. The results and discussion reflect on the outcomes of ethics intentions in practice, and on the implications and principles for ethics in applying grounded, narrative, developmental approaches to CBO evaluation.

1.12 Additional institutional requirements

The PhD (Organisational Behaviour), of the Department of Human Resource Management in the University of Pretoria's School of Economics and Management Science requires a

two year programme of course work prior to completion of a doctoral dissertation. This course work has been completed.

The study proposal was presented to a post-graduate committee in May 2008, and approved. Approval by the University of Pretoria Ethics Committee was obtained in July 2008.

Integral to the submission process, the University conducts a plagiarism test on the text. It has been noted for the purposes of this online scan that sections of this thesis have been published as part of peer exposure. The articles by Konstant (2009a)⁵ and Konstant and Stanz (2009a)⁶ include portions of this thesis. These have been available on internet since March 2009.

The institutional requirement for a peer-reviewed journal article is also acknowledged and will be submitted during 2010.

⁵ http://issuu.com/oa-padare/docs/final_oxfam_msc_report__october_2009__padare_versi/1?mode=a_p

⁶ http://www.ideas-int.org/documents/file_list.cfm?DocsSubCatID=24

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 *Introduction*

The purpose of this literature review is twofold. Firstly, it describes the context of CBOs working in development in South Africa. This begins with the development situation in South Africa, in terms of likely scenarios for the future, and the particular role of civil society in those scenarios. The history and structure of civil society in South Africa is then outlined showing the position of CBOs, and particularly of CBOs working in the AIDS service industry, in that sector. The discussion then focuses on the relationship of those CBOs to funding agencies in terms of the impact and nature of these so-called partnerships.

The second purpose is to provide a methodological context of the starting point of this exploratory study. The aim of this research is to explore alternative forms of evaluation. Evaluation approaches are discussed as the second thematic area covered in this review.

The literature review is therefore divided into two major sections:

- The HIV/AIDS and development contexts in South Africa, and the position of civil society community organisations in that context, particularly with regard to accountability, evaluation and their relationships with funding agencies;
- A conceptual framework comprising the various methodological threads that applies to grounded research in general, with particular emphasis on their application in CBO evaluation.

2.2 *HIV, development, civil society and accountability*

In 1994 South Africans dreamed of a bright and empowered future as the country's first democratic government took over its reins. It could not have been expected to be an easy task. Socially deeply fragmented, administratively cumbersome and economically crumbling, the task of rebuilding the nation was not for the faint-hearted (Posel, 1999). In 2003 a scenario planning exercise was led by leaders from corporate, civil and public sectors to consider the state of progress in the nation, and the directions in which it might evolve given certain conditions (Government Communications, 2004). By 2010, by all appearances, the worst case scenario was being realised, and another scenario exercise was led by Old Mutual (Dinokeng, 1999). Both sets of scenarios highlight the

nature of development, and the position of civil society in development, and therefore offer useful, accessible and summarised snapshots of the context for our purposes.

2.2.1. South African scenarios for the future: The position of civil society in the institutional fabric

In a government-led scenario planning exercise in 2003 some of the country's visionaries, planners and strategists met, debated and identified the factors most likely to affect South Africa over the next 10 years (Government Communications, 2004). The work was based on the scenario planning concepts of Clem Sunter (1992). The scenario team identified two key variables that it considered to determine the likely possible futures at that time as: *i) global political and economic trends*; and *ii) social cohesion in South Africa*. The team developed storylines describing four different scenarios for South Africa in the medium-term (Figure 1), based on these dimensions for change.

		Global political and economic trends	
		Hostile	Enabling
Social Cohesion	Low	SKEDONK	S'GUDI S'NAIS
	High	DULISANANG	SHOSHOLOZA

Figure 1 Four Scenarios for South Africa's future

Source: 10 December 2003 - Issued on behalf of The Presidency by Government Communications

Skedonk: An unfriendly outside world with an internally divided and dispirited society, and deep social divisions. Growth in South Africa is low, the poor get poorer and AIDS has devastating effects on the population. By 2014 there is high unemployment and general social dislocation in the country.

S'gudi S'nais: A more accommodating and accepting world, but a nation characterised by conflicts between 'the haves' and the 'have nots'. Growth starts off high, but drops with the impact of social fragmentation. This is mainly because the rich ignore social inequalities and concentrate on selfish and often unethical amassing of wealth, and the state is indecisive in containing this.

Dulisanang: A hostile world, unfriendly to developing countries, but where South Africans none-the-less manage to create a more considerate and inclusive society. South Africa responds to heightened global insecurity and economic crisis by turning inwards to its own resources. Growth is low, but participation in the economy is high and compassionate values emerge strongly. Despite limited resources, the state delivers on its social obligations but is unable to sustain such social delivery in the long-term due to low growth.

*Shosholoz*a: An accommodating world and an inclusive, diverse and tolerant South African society. High economic growth has created millions of jobs and much greater participation in the robust economy. South Africa is well poised for a third decade of freedom, opportunity and prosperity.

Almost 10 years later, in a context of global recession, we see many of the signs of the 'skedonk' scenario. In a divided and dispirited society the poor are becoming poorer, AIDS is wreaking devastation and political leadership has been weak (Dinokeng, 2009).

In a follow-on scenario planning exercise in 2009 at Dinokeng, a team of contemporary thinkers and visionaries defined three scenarios for the next ten years (Figure 2). Somewhat more inward-looking, the new scenarios identify disengaged, complacent, depoliticised and state-dependent civil society as one major determining force, and a crippled and incompetent state at the other (Dinokeng, 2009). The analysts describe a situation where private, public and civil sectors all lack clarity of purpose, and are increasingly self-interested, unethical and unaccountable. They describe a present state in direct polarity with the foundations of moral integrity which underpinned the dreams of 'shosholoza' in the last decade. The keys to moving from 'skedonk' to 'dulisanang' continue to lie in the values of consideration and inclusiveness, wider participation in the economy and encouragement of the state to deliver on its social obligations.

The 2009 scenario planners saw democracy and development as depending on a "*healthy interface between the state and an alert and active citizenry*" (Dinokeng, 2009). In the tantalising 'walk together' scenario, the central role of civil society is acknowledged, together with a collaborative, effective and enabling state. The role of civil society most critical to moving forward and upward will be that of holding the state to account for delivering its mandate with courage and commitment. These are seen to be core forces for South Africa's emergence from 'skedonk', towards the elusive future of inclusion, prosperity and social cohesion.

In addition to promoting public accountability, Dinokeng saw citizenry as being responsible for proactively addressing the needs of society that lie within its own power. This duality of expectation and aspiration of advocating for public accountability, while providing development input, lies behind much of the dynamic tension and contradiction of civil society.

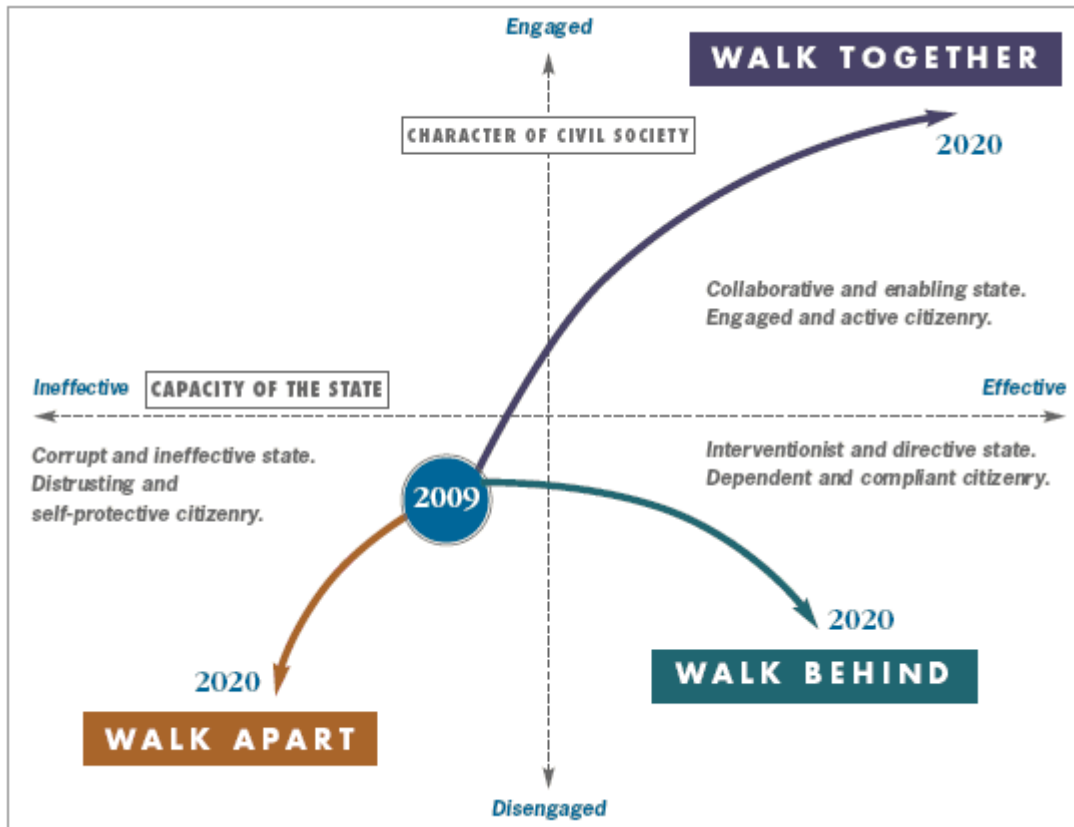


Figure 2 Three scenarios for a future of engaged civil society and effective state

Source: Dinokeng (2009)

2.2.2. History: Civil Society in post-apartheid South Africa

The civil society movement in South Africa emerged in the pro-democracy movements of the 1970s after a colonial history of indigenous social repression. It attracted the active support and encouragement of the international community as a legitimate vehicle for international contact. The opposition structures were seen as a valuable source of long-term stability in the region, and a democratic government in waiting (Bebbington, 1997; Hearn, 2000; Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Heinrich, 2001). It was essentially the civil society of the day, which orchestrated the struggle for democracy in South Africa (NDoSD, 2005).

Despite these roots, the advent of democracy in South Africa brought with it severe tests for civil society. By design, the cream of civil society leadership was absorbed into government (Heinrich, 2001). International donors shifted the focus of their funding to support establishment of the new government and institutionalisation of democracy in the country (Hearn, 2000; Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Heinrich, 2001). Simultaneously,

having achieved democracy, civil society seemed to have lost its relevance. The battle was won. Organisations found themselves faced with redefining their identity, role and their norms of practice to suit a new political environment (Bebbington, 1997; Jaime Joseph, 2000).

The actions of the new government also provided a mixed blessing. After a history of largely illegal and therefore strongly autonomous existence, civil society had to begin to conform to systems. The Non-Profit Organisations Act 71 of 1997 was passed, with the intent of creating an enabling, transparent and regulated environment for civil society (NDoSD, 2005). For the first time in history, civil society was acknowledged and formally sanctioned (Bebbington, 1997). Reforms to policy, registration, tax and funding were instated, providing legitimacy, formality and structure (Heinrich, 2001). Equally, they provided conditions for legitimacy and legality, including regulation of management, governance and auditing. A recent review of the NPO Act found that its impact has been weakest around intentions for enablement, governance, transparency, cooperation and accountability; and strongest in the area of regularisation (NDoSD, 2005). Smaller organisations continue to fail to comply with the complex and administratively demanding conditions of the Act (DoSD, 2009b). The Act is considered to have been more of a burden than a blessing thus far (NDoSD, 2005).

The early 1990s saw rapidly changing policy and regulations (Bebbington, 1997; Harvey & Peacock, 2001), a sudden loss of favour with funding agencies and crises of purpose and legitimacy for civil society. A great many organisations folded at that time. Official structures, legal constraints and formal processes continue to weigh heavily on the capacity and culture of civil organisations (Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001).

In a society in which political loyalty is embodied by uncritical support, party allegiance and 'quiet diplomacy', the role of critic is not endearing. Post-apartheid civil society has emerged as largely inhibited in voicing criticism, and government is defensive and sensitive (NDoSD, 2009a, 2005). Robust, healthy, encouraged confrontation is yet to find expression and a modern culture of South African activism has yet to be reawakened (Dinokeng, 2009).

2.2.3. The "third sector": Defining civil society

The concept of civil society is abstract and ambiguous. Civil society is notoriously difficult to define, and tends to be explicitly redefined to suit the purposes of different contexts. Heinrich (2004) calls it "*the space where citizen action takes place*", and "*the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market where people associate to*

advance common interests". Gray, et al., (2005) refer to "*all that lies between state, family and commerce*". Swilling & Russell (2002) describes civil society as being organised, private (although possibly state funded), self-governing, not for profit and voluntary. NDoSD (2005) considers a role in support to the disadvantaged, driven and moulded by community, to be essential to qualification as civil society. For the purposes of their work, Birdsall and Kelly (2007) include all non-government, non-commercial organisations, excluding parastatals, educational institutions, donor agencies and for-profit ventures. All of these definitions recognise the grey areas in their boundaries and exclusions.

It is important to note that there is no political, moral or legislative condition in qualifying as civil society. It is possible for a civil society organisation to espouse beliefs that are exclusionary, discriminatory or socially extremist if they so choose. "Bring Back the Death Penalty" is as likely a civil society organisation slogan as "Right to Life". It cannot, therefore, be assumed that civil society is uniformly in support of the South African constitution, human rights or progressive social development (NDoSD, 2005).

In fact, there is little or nothing that unites the sector. It is defined far more by its diversity than by any commonality. As an inconsistent, uncoordinated and erratic force in society, civil society does not necessarily target the poorest, is not well-shaped for consistency or scale, and has no central coordinating mechanism around the areas of greatest need (Howell 2000; Kilby, 2006). This is critical when considering the interface of civil society organisations with bureaucratic, standardised, 'best practice', services mentalities of the public and international development financing communities.

Civil society is not easily categorised (Heinrich, 2004; Gray, et al., 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). The civil society discourse is well populated with acronyms and subtly different, overlapping definitions. The following distinctions are useful for the purposes of this study:

CSO: Civil Society Organisation. An encompassing term which includes all non-state, non-profit organisations, including all those described below. The Boy Scouts, all churches, Alcoholics Anonymous and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature are examples of well-known CSOs.

In its broadest sense, civil society is sometimes used to refer to all non-public entities, including the private sector. For the purpose of this study, and in line with most definitions, we would regard civil society to be limited to the non-profit sector.

NPO: Non-Profit Organisation. In South Africa this refers to legal registration with the Department for Social Development, under the NPO Act, as an organisation not for profit. Many CBOs, most NGOs and various other not for profit CSOs have this registration.

A small proportion of non-profit organisations prefer to register with the Department of Trade and Industry, Companies and Intellectual Property Registration Office (CIPRO) as Section 21 Companies, which entails slightly different tax, governance and regulatory conditions. This registration is seldom used by social or community development CBOs.

NGO: Non-Government Organisations. By convention 'NGO' refers to a well-established non-profit organisation that is generally larger than a CBO. The Nelson Mandela Children's Fund and the Hospice Association are well known national NGOs. Many international NGOs have national and regional offices in South Africa. Oxfam, Care and Save the Children are examples of these. Established, registered CBOs may also refer to themselves as NGOs.

Although the terms are used loosely and interchangeably and the distinction is by no means formal or rigid, many of these larger organisations tend to be less closely connected to community. Their established institutional structures and non-voluntary professionalism confer looser connections to local level community development (Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Heinrich, 2001).

CBOs: Community-Based Organisations. Also known as Grassroots Organisations (GROs), CBOs are defined as non-profit organisations that respond to the development needs of their own communities from within those communities. These are usually smaller than any of the other forms. They are resident and active in the community in which they have emerged, and are lead and staffed by people from their immediate locality.

CBOs range in formality from informal groups of a few concerned individuals (voluntary associations) which have never been funded or registered; to substantial, established organisations with several sources of funding, dozens of staff and an annual budget that may run to a few million rands.

AIDS Service Organisations: The AIDS epidemic has created a vast, urgent and human resource hungry demand for health and social services. Virtually all social welfare and health NGOs and CBOs have a focus on AIDS-related services. Their services are specifically funded through government stipends to registered, trained volunteers

managed within these organisations, creating a sub-sector within the broader non-profit sector.

The CBOs that participated in this study fall into this category

Networks. Various umbrella or networking organisations have emerged in response to the organisational needs of the vast number of CBOs, many with particular attention to ASOs. Some examples include Children in Distress Network (CINDI); AIDS Foundation of South Africa; AIDS Consortium; Western Cape Networking AIDS Community of South Africa (WC-NACOSA). Networks provide a central source of support, shared experience and information to CBO members. They may offer a variety of services such as legal advice, advice on registration and tax, distribution of materials, access to online facilities, training courses, networking opportunities and mentorship. Along with yet another class of organisation, Grant-Making Organisations, some networks also act as conduits for funding for their member organisations.

These networks are often powerful players with potential to catalyse both influence upwards to national policy, and impact downwards in support of services to communities (Heinrich, 2004).

The AIDS Consortium has been the key partner in this study.

2.2.4. Tensions and interests: The roles of civil society

2.2.4.1. *The third sector*

Alongside the public and private sectors, civil society has been referred to as the third sector in the "*trinity of state, civil society and market*" (Howell, 2002). Civil society represents the interests of those excluded by the public and private sectors. Its position there is to protect human rights, strengthen local level participation and facilitate influence for those with least voice. Civil society is meant to be the agent of democracy (Biggs & Neame, 1995). Through their community connections CBOs are assumed to represent the marginalised (Heinrich, 2001; Kilby, 2006).

Having been largely neglected in unfolding development agenda design (OECD, 2005), the global position of civil society in development was formally recognised in the Accra High Level Forum for Effective Development in 2008. Article 20 of the Accra Declaration states that "*we [global development agenda] will deepen our engagement with civil society organisations, as independent development actors ... whose efforts compliment those of government and the private sector*" (OECD 2008). As a condition, no doubt, of their inclusion and influence, Accra considered evaluation to be a top global priority for

all sectors including “*enhancing CSO accountability for results*” and “*improving information on CSO activity*”. Recognition, influence and responsibility have come to be commensurate with playing by the rules of the global game, even where the rules themselves should be the subject of influence.

2.2.4.2. *The public-private-civil services niche*

In a global trend, governments have withdrawn from public service delivery, in favour of subcontracting services to the private sector (Miraftab, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Kilby, 2006; Albareda, 2008). Referred to as the “Thatcherite Revolution” of the 1980s, there has been a global trend in state disengagement from society (NDoSD, 2005). Under “neo-liberal imperialism”, market forces and capitalism have replaced human need as a driver of delivery, leaving a service gap to the poor. Lacking access to effective state support, and without the financial means of accessing commercial services, the poor have become steadily poorer (Salamon, 1994; Gray, et al., 2006; Lehman, 2007). Services for the poor have increasingly become the responsibility of non-government organisations, which are emerging in greater numbers throughout the world in response to this niche (Miraftab, 1997; Kilby 2006; Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 4).

2.2.4.3. *Agents of democracy?*

Even without the interference of outside interests, civil society’s legitimacy in representation, democracy and participation is variable, idealised, challenging and often questioned (Kilby, 2006; Gray, et al., 2004).

The South African NGO sector is largely depoliticised (Miraftab, 1997; Howell, 2000; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Dinokeng, 2009; NDoSD, 2009a), with few organisations attempting influence over the policies and causes of social problems (Robinson & Friedman, 2007). NGOs and CBOs tend to avoid becoming embroiled in political debate. Where they do, they easily fall prey to party politics, losing sight of their original community standpoint (Kilby, 2006).

Funding which requires bureaucracy and efficiency further reduces consultation and inclusion (Heinrich, 2001; Kilby, 2006). As service providers, few organisations pretend to represent their constituents, and are unlikely to be democratically managed in practice, even if they aspire to be.

2.2.4.4. *So aren’t NGOs and CBOs actually private sector?*

Instead the NGO sector stands accused of being co-opted or ‘consumed’ by government and international donor agencies (Kilby, 2006; Birdsall, 2007; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007;

NDoSD 2009b; Winkler, 2009). Organisations are funded for service delivery by state and donor agencies, in preference to advocacy or policy influence. In a world of market imperialism, it might be asked whether funder relationships strengthen civil society and address social inequity. Or, cynically, do they simply use organisations to further their externally motivated agendas, particularly those around the flow of funds through a lucrative industry (Kilby, 2006). The intangible goals of the development sector such as utopian vision, the capacity to question and oppose, radical criticism and political activism are compromised when organisations become financially dependent (Bebbington, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Miraftab, 1997).

Non-government organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) are conventionally defined as part of civil society. This definition has been contested, however, as they cast themselves as service providers to the state and donor agencies (Biggs & Neame, 1995). NGOs and CBOs, motivated by growth and expansion and responding to niches in the market, are not dissimilar to their commercial counterparts in the private sector.

These tensions between contractually funded service deliverers and advocacy-focused representatives penetrate the essence of the identities of these organisations. To the extent that NGOs and CBOs are paid to deliver services, they are essentially an extension of the private sector, rather than a member of civil society (Uphoff, 1995). As a player in the consumer pipeline, CBOs too become commodities, as do their clients (Fowler, 1995).

2.2.4.5. Service providers to the poor

Most organisations are satisfied with a safe, funding-friendly role limited to service provision, and the skills of an alert and active citizenry are not commonplace. This arrangement suits government well, with its preference for viewing NPOs as organisations and are “not for profit and service oriented” (NDoSD, 2009a). It also suits funding agencies well, with their preference for quantifiable output-based projects.

Provided they are recognised as such, and not dressed up as agents of social transformation or participatory governance, the role of most CBOs in providing services in this critical niche, is a valued one.

2.2.4.6. The role of CBOs

NGOs and CBOs are by no means a panacea to all situations. Reservations around them are largely based on theoretical, idealistic principles around democracy and equity, and

objections to legitimised 'values corruption'. If expectations are reasonable and correct, however, CBOs remain the organisations with the greatest potential to provide for both services to the needy, and some degree of local level representation of the causes behind marginalisation (Chaskin, 2009).

2.2.4.7. Sustained developmental impact?

In embracing an organisational purpose of service delivery, CBOs risk engendering dependency among their clients and becoming part of a system of patronage. In creating a sense of dependency, they may disempower as much as developing (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Mirafatab, 1997; Senge, 2006, p. 61). Mirafatab (1997) observes the distinction between new NGOs working *for the poor* as consultants, rather than *with the poor* as activists.

It would be a matter of debate and research, to understand if and how CBO services, similar to public welfare and grant systems, contribute to the genuine upliftment of people, communities and society. Perhaps, like social welfare, they are a poor substitute for deeper socio-economic solutions to underdevelopment.

As relationships between the major development structures are currently arranged, however, CBOs are severely limited in the extent of their impact. With a substantial, constructive, development-focused review of the principles and processes in the industry, they have potential to contribute far more substantially and meaningfully, to more situations. While the ideal is unlikely to be achieved, far more enabling relationships could at least partially address the concerns and frustrations of commentators.

2.2.4.8. CBOs in the HIV and AIDS response

NGOs and CBOs include organisations working in agriculture, water, economic development, youth, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, the elderly and HIV, and more (Figure 3). Most NGOs and CBOs limit themselves to a broad focus area and/or a specific group of target beneficiaries (e.g. youth, children, people living with HIV), on the basis of the passion of their leaders and the skills they offer. By definition, CBOs also have a clear geographic focus around 'community'. Although an ambiguous and contested concept, 'community' serves to focus CBOs within the area that is accessible by their staff, and the range within which their clients regard them as being accessible.

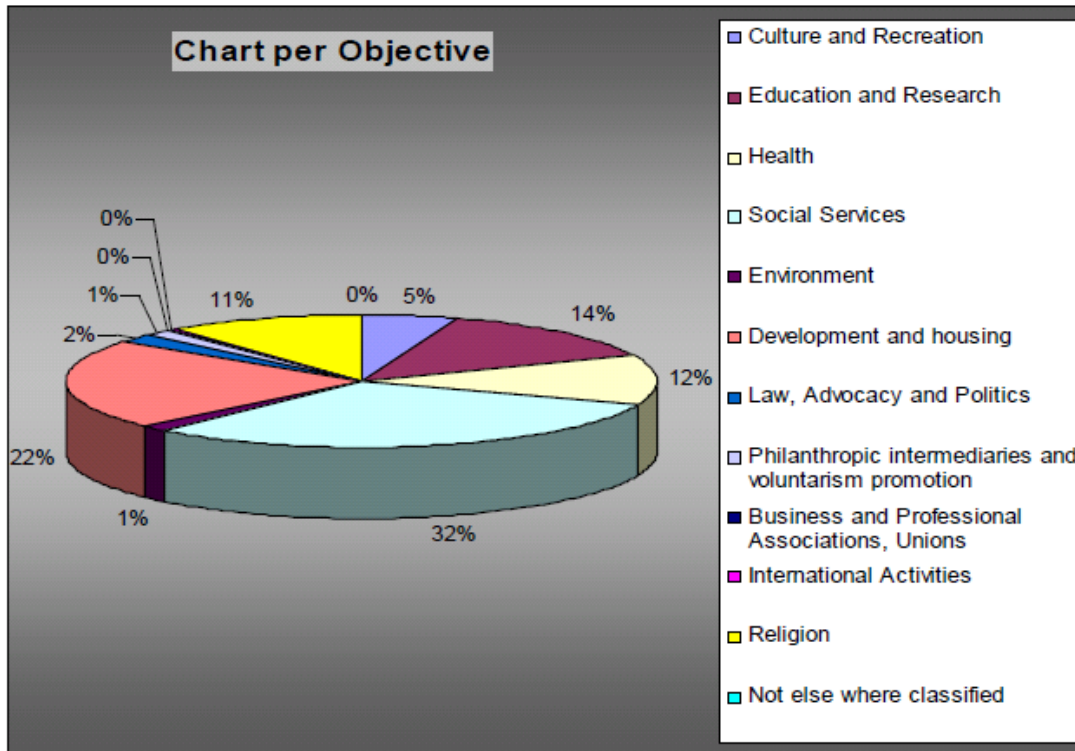


Figure 3 *NDoSD analysis of objectives of registered NPOs*

Source: NDoSD 2009b

As front-line service providers, CBOs have to be responsive to the integrated, holistic needs of their client base (Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). Although they are defined by thematic boundaries, these need to be far broader than the focused specialisations of organisations that are not community based.

One of the most demanding emergencies of the last decade has been the crisis of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. Southern Africa, and South Africa in particular, has been hardest struck, and is known as the epidemic's global epicentre. With around 5 million HIV+ people, 28% of those aged 15-49, South Africa has the world's largest epidemic. Despite also providing the world's largest anti-retroviral treatment programme, over 1000 people per day die from AIDS related diseases in South Africa (Dorrington et al., 2006).

Due to the cross-cutting impact of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in South Africa, many organisations, working in virtually all sectors, include HIV as one area to which they give attention (Russel & Schneider, 2000; White & Morton, 2005; Kelly, et al., 2006; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, et al., 2007). HIV has direct mutual impact with water, housing, food security, transport, economic development, education, recreation, children, youth, the elderly, all aspects of health, town planning, immigration, crime, rural and

urban development, legal services, the workplace and the private sector, and no doubt a myriad other areas of social action.

South Africa has found itself weakly equipped to face this state of emergency. The health system is virtually dysfunctional. The public sector does not have the organisational structures or the scale or strength of systems to effectively address AIDS (Birdsall, 2007). As government and international aid agencies grapple with attempts to contain the spread and impact of HIV, civil society organisations have been important, even central players in the response (Birdsall, 2007; Birdsall & Kelly 2007; Doyle & Patel, 2008). A substantial portion of the responsibility for delivery of HIV and AIDS services in South Africa has been delegated to CBOs and funded by government and aid agencies (National Department of Health (NDoH), 2006; NDoSD, 2006).

In response to these new opportunities and the trauma being experienced in communities, the number of AIDS support organisations has burgeoned, even beyond the international trend for expanding civil society. Many CBOs are launched by those who have had personal experiences of illness, stigma, discrimination and death in their families. Many CBOs are formed as groups of officially trained and state-registered Home and Community-based Carers (HCBC). They receive modest stipends, largely from the state, to provide HIV and AIDS care in their communities. Their role is to relieve the burden on clinic and hospital systems, while providing a potentially higher standard of comfort and care to patients in their homes. CBOs also support those who are HIV+, but not AIDS-sick, with counselling and healthy life-style advice. They support those on anti-retroviral treatment with adherence training and support (Friedman, 2002; NDoSD, 2002, 2003). Given the reluctance of the health sector to provide treatment, palliative care for the terminally ill and care for children made vulnerable in the process, is among the oldest, and once most frequent, roles of CBOs. Most organisations also lobby for food parcels, social grants and ID documents, improved housing and access to social workers.

Most of all, the advantage of CBO service providers lies in being sufficiently community-centred and locally conscious to meet the varied, integrated needs of their clients in a comprehensive manner (Chaskin, 2009). Only a community organisation can have the structure, access and capability of providing household-centred, integrated services in such a wide range and variety. It is this quality that makes the network of CBOs in South African a core resource in holistic social development and in the HIV response.

2.2.5. Size of the NGO / CBO sector

2.2.5.1. *In money*

Although precise figures are impossible to collate, INTRAC (1998) estimated a global annual spend through civil society of around US\$ 1 trillion, equivalent to some of the worlds largest national economies. The World Bank estimates that around 15% of all Official Development Assistance⁷ is channelled through NGOs (Lehman, 2007). The distribution of this financial flow, however, is concentrated into large, non-community based, established NGOs. Internationally, the spending is massively distorted towards large multi-national organisations, even more remote from the coalface of development.

Despite the size of the organisational and human capital in the NGO and CBO sectors, both state and aid funding through local level civil society is insignificant (NDoSD, 2005, 2009b). Although support to CBOs began to rise more steeply in 2001, community-based practitioners continue to receive least financial support (Kelly, et al., 2005). Many local organisations have no access whatsoever to any form of financial support (Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Birdsall, et al., 2007). Much of the effective cost of this sector is carried by the poorest themselves, in the form of contribution of time, volunteerism and payment-in-kind (Wolvaardt, 2008).

2.2.5.2. *In numbers*

The last 20 years have seen a worldwide explosion in the size of the civil society sector (Salamon, 1994; Fowler, 1995; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Lehman, 2007). This is largely due to the trend towards subcontracting public service provision for the poor through NGOs, rather than any indication of a particularly vibrant global civil society (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 4).

This increase in numbers has been dramatic in South Africa, and the voluntary sector constitutes a massive proportion of organised social activity in the country. A total of 57,633 organisations had been registered in South Africa under the NPO Act by NDoSD by June 2009. An estimated 54,000 additional non-registered voluntary associations also contribute to this workforce (Swilling & Russell, 2002), providing an overall total of around 111,600 structures. Kelly (2005) calculates a 108% increase in the total numbers of organisations between 1995 and 2004. In three communities studied by Kelly (2005),

⁷ Official Development Assistance refers to country to country aid from governments, or international agency support such as the UN or World Bank.

researchers reported a 29% increase in HIV work by government between 2000 and 2004, compared with a 61% increase in effort by NGOs and CBOs in the same time period.

One of the by-products of the AIDS epidemic that is least celebrated and least leveraged, and yet most powerful, is the changing face of social fabric. In numbers, community members have organised themselves and created focal points for the flow of information and resources. Clustered into networks of organisations, they have further created the national construct of a very different future style of citizen influence. Across Africa, we see the seeds of a new form of governance and engagement across Africa (Swidler, 2006).

2.2.5.3. In people

Using the health sector as an example, a comparison between the public and civil sectors provides some reflection of the relative scale of NGO and CBO human resources. NDoSD (2005) estimates an average of 14.3 members, employees or active volunteers per NGO or CBO. Approximately 12% of the 111,600 odd organisations work in health and/or HIV (Figure 3). On this basis we might estimate a workforce converging around health-related NGOs and CBOs alone, of over 200,000 people in around 13,000 organisations.

The public health sector employed a total of 136,985 health professionals of all types, across all disciplines in 2008 (HST, 2008). Ramkisson, et al., (2004), recorded a total of 3,435 formal public health facilities at all levels.

In terms of both warm bodies and institutional fabric, the NGO sector provides a shadow workforce, 2/3 more numerous, in almost four times as large and complex an institutional fabric, receiving a fraction of the financial investment (NDoSD, 2005, 2009b). This discrepancy of effort resides in the officially mandated, tax-supported, legal responsibility of public health provision.

With 32% and 22% of organisations working in social services and housing /development respectively, we might expect to see an even more pronounced civilian contribution to the broader development agenda.

It is important to note that while most professional medical skills (remaining with the health example), are not transferable to voluntary organisations, neither are the social mobilisation, holistic, household-centred services of community organisations easily transferable to public agents. Also, there are services that could be provided in the paramedical setting of HCBC, but have been excluded from delegated services, thereby

effectively denying these services to large numbers of patients. The workforces can only be effective together if they dovetail and compliment their respective strengths, and learn to work with mutual trust and respect.

2.2.6. Organisational behavior and organisational relationships:

2.2.6.1. *Power*

Power and politics lie at the heart of development (Quinn Patton, 2002, p 103; Miraftab, 1997). Self-perpetuating, power is distributed through norms constructed by the powerful in their own interest. The less powerful have become so through social systems that have evolved to meet the interests of the more powerful (Kaplan, 2002, p 93; Kilby, 2006).

Development practice is rooted in power dynamics. While the powerful may endeavour to 'empower' those who are less powerful, "*power being bestowed to those without power is itself a manifestation of power*" (Kilby, 2006). Development faces the conundrum of investment in the existing distribution of power, in systems designed not only by development agendas, but also by global economics and politics. Intentions of empowerment that confer dependency, either materially or emotionally run the risk of ultimately disempowering (Kilby, 2006; Senge 2006, p. 61).

Power is therefore complex and paradoxical. It is desirable and yet it corrupts. Power begets power, and yet it also undermines itself, as distance, ignorance and delusions grow in synchrony with the growth of power (Kaplan, 2002, p. 93). CBOs squarely straddle the cultures of capitalist market-forces (paying for service delivery) and socialist community contribution (voluntary community development). Power play and contradiction, each vested in different ways at the heart of these two global paradigms, are rife in this context.

NGOs and CBOs themselves are by no means immune from the siren of power. People and organisations that emerge as leaders with influence in poor communities are unlikely to relinquish their own hard-gained positions (Uphoff, 1995). These organisations themselves become intent on holding onto their own position of influence. This distorts their allegiances upwards to those more powerful, and away from those below them in the 'food chain' with least power (Eade, 2007).

Despite its great influence, power is essentially a perception (Sen, 1987; Bhana, 1999, p. 235; Kaplan, 2002; Ebrahim, 2003). Social conditioning, including perceptions of power, is constructed and embedded by society and culture, requiring the collusion of

both the powerful and the powerless (Kaplan, 2002; Kilby, 2006). In hierarchies, individuals at each level are far more likely to believe in their own relative powerlessness, than to imagine themselves elsewhere in the hierarchy of influence (Senge, 2006, p. 145).

Power becomes even more challenging to confront when we consider how little people are aware of their own power. More often than experiencing positions of power or powerlessness with awareness, people simply react as the system seems to dictate, feeling compelled to behave in certain patterned ways (Senge, 2006, p. 4).

Although contrary and fraught with the unanticipated, engaging constructively with power dynamics is key to exploring social potential. Power imbalance and tensions between disparate positions, have the potential to fuel great creativity and innovation, if these tensions are surfaced and engaged. Smoothing, denying, avoiding or fearing tensions, prevents learning and cripples relationships. To the extent that power is the problem, its forces are equally the solution.

2.2.6.2. Donor relationships

One of the problems most consistently cited by almost all CBOs is that of financial sustainability (Bebbington, 1997; Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002). As voluntary, non-profit organisations, CBOs, and particularly those in the service industries, have come to rely more on funding from government and aid agencies (Edwards, 1999; Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 5) than on the membership fees or unconditional charitable donations of historic civil society. For the great majority, neither funders nor CBOs have experience, skills, time or precedent for mutually powerful partnerships (Soal, 2001). They market themselves, submit project proposals and attempt to persuade funders of the value of their services in order to raise a regular flow of funding to sustain their organisation and its work.

Qualification for funding is determined by existing organisational capacity, such as banking, infrastructure, communication systems and an ability to write well in English (Kelly, et al., 2005). Organisations that meet such criteria are generally those that are most resourced. They seldom come from more deprived communities. Neither do these resources or capacities necessarily correlate with ability to work effectively for constituents, or understand their needs and concerns. Funded organisations are also more likely to be those offering services, than those which provide social mobilisation as representatives of the marginalised (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 7).

Most funding agencies regard support to core functions, such as office space, communication or salaries to be unsustainable, and expect these to be mysteriously provided from elsewhere (Kelly, et al., 2005). Organisations therefore design their programmes in terms of projects for different funding agencies, and siphon off percentages for core functions, using creative budget line items that fall within donor permissions.

Despite the vast numbers of available organisations, funding tends to be clustered among a few 'old favourites' or established recipients (Koch, 2009). At community level this often leads to well-funded organisations working adjacent to those doing the same work on an entirely voluntary basis (Kelly, et al., 2005). Many small organisations have never received financial support (Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

Constructive, respectful, aligned, locally owned and mutually accountable relationships are critical to effective development (OECD, 2008; Wheatley & Frieze, 2006). Given the vast gulf in organisational cultures, and the intensive, low-cost, high input work of CBOs, large donor agencies do not have the manpower, inclination or capacity to enter into funding agencies with community organisations (Birdsall, et al., 2007).

One solution to this has been the inclusion of mechanisms and intermediaries that recognise the different needs or local practitioners, into the organisational equation. These are intended to provide a supportive, direct, flexible interface between funders and CBOs (Birdsall, et al., 2007; NDoSD, 2009b). Even then, the role of intermediaries is a challenging one. It requires facilitating both reporting against funder requirements, and developmentally sound use of funding that compliments and supports CBOs (Kelly, et al., 2005).

Perhaps the most intractable challenge in manoeuvring towards more mutually constructive stakeholder dynamics is the size and weight of the global structures in which these challenges are hosted. *"... All of us are trapped in structures; structures embedded both in our ways of thinking and in the interpersonal and social milieus in which we live. ... Often the structures are of our own creation. But this has little meaning until the structures are seen"* (Senge, 2006, p. 160). Few of the structures of mindsets in this context are more intricate than those that define accountability.

2.2.6.3. *Downward accountability: Constituents*

The concept of accountability is central to funding relationships and evaluation. Who has legitimate rights and responsibilities to act in any particular context? How are their performance and commitment in those rights and responsibilities judged and upheld?

Accountability asks that each participant in a relationship fulfils its role (Gray, et al., 2006; Kilby, 2006; Soal, 2001). CBOs have multiple, often conflicting, sometimes mutually distracting, sources of accountability (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 9).

What gives an organisation the right to intervene when it has not been democratically elected? Should it not be answerable to its community for its actions? Whose interests does the organisation serve? What are its hidden self interests? Who is included, and who is not? Who holds it to account? How is this implemented or negotiated? How does it have impact? Impact on whom? Could it have negative impact? These questions apply equally to CBOs, as to the global organisations of which the CBOs themselves are beneficiaries. They are the concerns of downward accountability (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 9; Kilby, 2006).

Accepted wisdom assumes that CBOs are best placed to address issues at the local level, and have the closest understanding of the complexity of the underlying problems and needs in this context (Kaplan, 2002; Strode & Grant, 2004; NDoH, 2006). Despite their community origins and proximity, however, their legitimacy in this role is often questioned (Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001; Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006). These organisations are often self-appointed and self-regulating. Their decisions and approach are usually primarily hinged on their own perceptions of local needs. These decisions may be well-informed by their experience, but they are not necessarily taken with much democracy or participation (Edwards and Hulme, 1995:7; Kilby, 2006; Abrahams, 2008).

Power, including the power to demand accountability, increases up the organisational hierarchy, until donor agencies are held to ultimate account by their political leaders and employers (Kilby, 2006). With the weight of the hierarchy above them, CBOs claims to democracy, community participation and downward accountability are completely subsumed by accountability for funding. Despite having been commissioned as service providers to the poor by funding agencies, the rhetoric of community is merely lip service to a structurally impossible set of values where the power wielded from above far outweighs the power of beneficiaries to have their interests taken into account (Uphoff, 1995). In a decidedly patriarchal fashion, this lip service generally takes the form of international agencies imagining and defining the needs of community members.

Kilby (2006) provides insight from practice on options for more effective downward accountability. Legitimate downward accountability is possible in the form of

representation. This is where a community organisation is seen as an owned insider by sufficient community members, and where its clear, unambiguous purpose is defined and accepted by those it represents. Organisations in Kilby's study in India which had strongest solidarity with constituents, also achieved the great impact in terms of local empowerment. Collective, disinterested consensus on funding decisions and funder relations would require delicate balancing in this setting, balance which would be readily derailed by both local and external interests. Representation is seldom, therefore, the reality for communities or organisations.

Less convincing, and also rare, is accountability through participation. In this model, constituents are asked for input. Mechanisms or spaces for communication are made available. Input is taken into account by decision-makers (Kilby, 2006).

The vast majority of CBOs do not create formalised downward accountability at all (Gray, et al., 2006). CBO accountability to communities is informal and voluntary, based largely on good intentions and local relationships (Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Edwards, 1999; Ebrahim, 2003; Kilby, 2006). Although informal and inconsistent, NPO registration, public visibility, the media and peer pressure all provide for CBO accountability. Furthermore, community members tend to vote with their feet. After a while they may close their doors on CBOs that they do not consider likely to provide a positive change in their lives.

2.2.6.4. Inward accountability: Staff and volunteers

Inward accountability is critical to individual and organisational motivation, governance and performance (Hall, et al., 2007). CBOs are dependent on volunteers or low-salaried employees to staff their efforts. In a context of marginalisation and unemployment, volunteerism is a form of subsistence and a source of opportunity (Kelly, et al., 2005). Organisations are therefore particularly accountable to the needs of their workforce and to the motivation that inspires their staff to contribute (Swidler & Watkins, 2009).

Equally, an attitude of commitment, responsibility and accountability by members in the workplace is essential to individual and organisational effectiveness (Hall, et al., 2007). This is difficult to institutionalise in a voluntary setting. Motivation and volunteer discipline are a perennial challenge for CBO managers, and are nurtured most by an ethic of strong, personally relevant, internal accountability by leadership.

For most, weak human resource management systems, with little or no attention to the personal goals or career paths of staff and volunteers, are more common than 'happy

families' in CBOs. Organisations face regular internal conflict and management battles, and high staff and volunteer turnover is inevitable (Birdsall, et al., 2007).

2.2.6.5. Upward accountability: Funding sources

While questions of downward and internal accountability may challenge CBOs, few if any routine conventions facilitate accountability in these relationships (Eade, 2007). By contrast, upward accountability to funders is clear, structured, formal and enforced (Bornstein, 2006a). It is the subject of global interest and attention (O' Dwyer & Unerman, 2008; OECD, 2008).

Framed by funder:recipient power dynamics, the terms of accountability are defined by the donor (Ebrahim, 2003). These may be in direct conflict with downward and inward accountability (Kilby, 2006). Funding recipients are accountable to funders first for honest expenditure, and second, for achieving the goals against which they were contracted (Ebrahim, 2003, Kelly, et al., 2005). Accountability is generally concerned with policing short-term, rule-following behaviour (Gray, et al., 2006).

In practice, few funding agencies prioritise learning, constructive social process or organisational development (Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 9). The main reason for this is that funders find it difficult to sell the long time-frames and the unmeasurable, abstract qualities of all except simple outputs to the politicians and shareholders to whom they are accountable. Upward accountability invariably compromises recipient autonomy and authenticity (Abrahams, 2008).

Accountability for funding remains set in corporate concepts of cost:benefit (Gray, et al., 2006), despite these concepts being irrelevant to social settings. Profit is not a measure of success here, and a great deal of cost is carried in kind by volunteers. The benefits of social change are intangible, largely unquantifiable and priceless.

Ebrahim (2005) suggests that the current norm of 'the more accountability, the better' warrants reconsideration. Even financial reporting can be used to disguise irrelevance and ineffectiveness. Meaningful accountability depends more on relationship and integrity than bureaucratic systems. Accountability should serve development, as opposed to serving the developed, or being an end in itself. Binary donor:recipient relationship accountability should be replaced with the more holistic network of relationship and responsibility for all parties.

Organisational success has been found to be greater where accountability is informal, personal and founded in opportunistic feedback and ongoing discussion on norms and

values between members of funding agencies and practitioner organisations (Edwards, 1999; Kilby, 2006; Gray, et al., 2006).

Gray, et al., (2006) suggest that accountability should be rights-based, particularly with regard to supporting the rights of funding recipients to hold their power and dignity. Accountability should meet criteria of i) morality (*Do we have the right to hold to account?*); ii) performance (*Does this accountability improve effectiveness?*); iii) political space (*Does accountability support influence and credibility?*); and iv) democracy (*Does it represent the people?*). Scientific concerns around data trustworthiness, rigorous measurement, randomness and sampling, proofs and evidence, do not particularly feature in any of these criteria for successful accountability relationships.

2.2.6.6. *Holding the powerful to account*

The holding of the state to account should be a central function of civil society (Habib, 2008; Dinokeng, 2009). Advocacy is challenging when there is financial and regulatory dependency. The role of civil society in representing the interests of communities to the state is far simpler if not complicated by funding. Financial support is mildly suggestive of an underlying agenda of control, and the use of civil society to build citizen allegiance that is tolerant of public sector under-performance (Hearn, 2000; Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 14). Financial support becomes a source of power and a hold on loyalty, where holding to account is seen as a form of disloyalty.

While holding ones own government to account has its challenges, it is virtually impossible for local representation to hold international government agencies or independent charitable organisations to account. Despite their enthusiasm for accountability, these agencies themselves have virtually no responsibility to answer to constituents in their beneficiary countries. The fundamental mind shift necessary for mutual accountability to become conceivable is not a recent observation, but it does remain elusive and is a long way from resolution (Fowler, 1995).

2.2.7. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

Evaluating the achievements of organisations depends on the goals concerned. In commercial organisations, evaluation may focus on sales, profitability, shareholder satisfaction and staff retention. For non-profit development organisations, the measurement of organisational performance is more complex (Gasper, 2000; Gray, et al., 2006; Soal, 2001; Chaskin, 2009). The science (or art) of development M&E is the

focus of a rapidly growing collective body of knowledge and discourse⁸. This is largely motivated and financed by funding agencies to meet their needs for accountability.

M&E is well-established as a fundamental element of management by international development funding agencies (Gasper, 2000; Bornstein, 2006a; Kilby, 2006). The discipline of M&E has also recently emerged as increasingly important for the South African government. The current government has established a Department of M&E within the Presidency, as a further mechanism for establishing public sector M&E from the highest level. Positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy for both donor agencies and government, the demands for M&E from CBOs have been considerable.

In common with most organisations, CBOs are not naturally inclined towards M&E or reflection (Gasper, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Bornstein, 2006a). They are organisations that tend to be caught up in the urgency and action of their community work. In allocating their overcommitted human and financial resources, they are unlikely to prioritise either counting their productivity (monitoring) or reviewing its effectiveness (evaluation) (Birdsall, et al., 2007).

When CBOs find themselves obliged by government and/or external funders to meet M&E requirements, they tend to view these new concepts, practices and reporting requirements with little enthusiasm (Mebrahtu, 2002; Bornstein 2006a; Yachkaschi, 2006). Evaluation is experienced as expensive and wasteful (Ebrahim, 2003). Organisations feel that they are sufficiently knowledgeable of their situations and aware of their impacts. The time-consuming, tedious process of formal documentation has little relevance for their operations. Despite its potential for organisational value, the term 'M&E' causes many to quail and resist. This is likely to be largely due to the style, processes and power dynamics that surround M&E.

The form, frequency and methods for M&E tend to be donor dictated (Gasper, 2000). Its concepts and terminology are remote from the interests and vocabulary of CBO managers and field staff (Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, evaluation tends to require that information on a particular donor-funded intervention be reported in artificial isolation from the other integrated activities of the organisation. Furthermore, evaluation is invariably disinterested in the health and development of the organisation itself (Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a).

⁸ E.g. International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS); International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3iE), European; American Evaluation Association (AEA); African Evaluation Association (AfrEA); South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), all of which have websites, conferences and members.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that evaluation has minimal value to organisations outside of donor record-keeping. Organisations perform M&E functions dutifully, to meet the requirements of their funders. They seldom embrace the positive intent behind M&E or adopt evaluation practices for their own management purposes (Ebrahim, 2003; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Birdsall, et al., 2007).

Compliance M&E also tends to absorb any time and enthusiasm organisations might have had for structured, deliberate learning from experience. Set in M&E systems that are rife with irrational conventions, all of those involved in perpetuating it become entrenched in 'skilled incompetence'. They become expert at upholding sophisticated systems to protect themselves from learning (Senge 2006, p. 172).

The failure of conventional M&E to serve development through CBOs lies less in the principle of learning from practice, than in the processes and systems by which this is designed. Balance of power is profoundly affected by the processes through which organisations engage with each other (Miraftab, 1997; Kilby, 2006). Dictated, external systems, rigid reporting, intimidating terminology and complicated quantitative approaches are the epitome of power disparity. The standardised processes, checklists, templates, forms and complex ambiguous terminology tend to be meaningless in the peculiarities of an organisation's context. The experience of feeling uncertain and ignorant, but forced to comply, undermines power and creates unequal relationships (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). These are the characteristics of the entrenched, conventional systems of M&E training, funding conditionality and the funding environment.

2.2.7.1. Conventional, 'logical' evaluation methods for M&E

In the last several decades, development by international funding agencies has used predictive, linear models, or logical frameworks, for planning and evaluation (Table 1) (Norwegian Development Agency, 1999; World Bank, 2000; British Department for International Development, 2002; Australian Agency for International Development, 2005). This 'corporate-derived managerialism' remains entrenched despite decades of objection (Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 13; Biggs & Neame, 1995; Fowler, 1995; Gasper, 2000; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004).

Organisations designing the time-bound, output-oriented projects favoured by most funding agencies for the first time face an entirely new set of terminology (Clarke, 2006; Abrahams, 2008). Beyond bringing new vocabulary, however, the underpinning assumptions and concepts are foreign and ill-suited to a local development setting. Some of the core concepts include:

- Specific *activities* and *outputs* are described and quantified for the project time period in advance.
- The *outcomes*, *impacts* and *higher level impact* that will results from this must be predicted from project *objectives*, *purpose* and *goal*. This abundance of synonyms must all be used, and correctly distinguished according to the carefully regulated, but different, conventions of each funding agency.
- *Objectively verifiable indicators* must be defined in advance, which will show that the intended impacts, outcomes and outputs have been achieved.
- Each indicator requires a *mode of verification*, or a concrete performance audit trail, as documented evidence of achievements.

Table 1. *Abbreviated outline of a typical logical framework type matrix*

<i>The linear results chain</i>	<i>Programme commitments</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Means of Verification</i>
Goal	Collective impact: What are the high level problems that the programme will contribute to (e.g. inequality in society)	How will we measure progress against this goal (e.g. GINI Coefficient)	Evidence that proves that this indicator result is valid
↑	Does the purpose contribute to the goal		
Purpose	Impact: What immediate and tangible difference will the programme make in society (e.g. more effective CSI)	How will we measure (e.g. CSI index)	
↑	Does the outcome contribute to the purpose		
Outcome	Objectives: What do we expect the audience of this programme to experience (e.g. CSI awareness and strategy raised)	How will we measure this (e.g. CSI participating companies review strategies and increase budget allocations to CSI)	
↑	Do the outputs achieve the outcome?		
Input/ Output/ Activities	Activities: What direct resources, actions and overall projects the programme undertakes to achieve this outcome (e.g. workshops, documents, guidelines).	What will we count (Budgets, numbers of copies, numbers of participants, workshop evaluations)	

Rooted in positivism, these concepts make several assumptions which are open to interrogation:

- *Linear and simplistic:* What are the ripples and interwoven social impacts of an intervention? Does social development have linear influences along single dominant directions in a simplistic causal chain (Senge 2006, p. 73)? Can they be captured meaningfully in a simplistic, uni-dimensional framework (Gray et al.,

2006; Chaskin, 2009)? How does a narrow goal and purpose reflect a holistic system (Gasper, 2000; Soal, 2001)?

'Input > output > outcome > impact' is routinely dignified as social intervention (Bornstein, 2006a). Although possibly too simplistic for even the most basic activity, frameworks of this nature are used from complex local social settings, right up to multifaceted national strategies (Gasper, 2000).

The results chain is also the standard core content of planning and M&E training courses. It can be helpful in planning rationale, although even in this application it is far more restrictive than 'Theory of Change' thinking. In evaluation, however, the results chain stifles common sense.

- **Short-term:** Projects, milestones, predefined indicators and outputs *prevent* permanent, sustained development.
- **Predictability - Predefined criteria for success:** Can we predict the outcomes and impacts of what we do in a complex social setting (Bornstein, 2006a)? Can we predict the evidence and indications of outcomes and impacts?

To the extent that social change is emergent, it is also unpredictable and uncontrollable (Fowler, 1995; Seel, 2006). Evaluation priorities, issues and questions emerge from organisations and interactions as they unfold, and the impressions, assumptions and imaginations during conception are little more than crystal ball gazing (Bhana, 1999:228; Potter, 1999, p. 220). If viewed correctly, as the rationale for decisions and a step in a learning process, the crystal ball is powerful. Regarding these statements as fact, however, is delusion.

To the extent that we restrict our attention to our predictions during evaluation, we then exclude and undermine far more powerful and sustainable emergent and unpredictable impacts (Uphoff, 1995).

- **Denominators:** How do we rationally define the denominators for any social outcome? What are proportions of our efforts relative to the total need?
- **Tangibility:** Most funders focus on measurable, demonstrable, tangible achievement in short-term, project-styled interventions (Gasper, 2000; Conlin & Stirrat, 2008). How often are these the most powerful opportunities for impact (FAHAMU & CAE, 2004)?

Focusing only on the tangible is in direct opposition to sustained, meaningful development. It is the follow-through, value and appreciation beyond the intervention that confers its permanence and meaning (Uphoff, 1995). The process of an intervention, as opposed to outcome, is seldom reflected in M&E, although how things are done can have far more powerful, and lasting, social implications than what is done (Gasper, 2000).

- *Economics*: What are the cost:benefits of social interactions? How do we know whether a person or a community has received a good, cheap programme, or a weak, expensive one? How do we assign a monetary value to dignity, hope, relief of anxiety, or community participation in politics or the socio-economy?
- *Density*: The meanings of the terminology used with these models and frameworks tend to be overlapping and ambiguous.
- *Top-down*: Dictated from a position of financial authority, insistence on standardised bureaucratic methods epitomises donor power and control. At the same time, it absolves the powerful themselves from being held accountable (Gasper, 2000).
- *Standardised*: The various illogical concepts of predictability, tangibility and social economics are obstructive to effective process. But even logical, sound processes would be doomed, if based on the assumption that a bureaucratic, detailed, prescriptive and homogenous structure can capture the vast array of situations, contexts and organisations participating in the development milieu (FAHAMU & CAE, 2004). Is any standardised, externally contrived planning and management system justified (Gasper, 2000)?

2.2.7.2. *The impact of funding and evaluation on organisations*

While many CBOs aspire to lucrative sponsorship they seldom appreciate the organisational sacrifice implied. Donor agencies do not ask, and are not told by their ever-respectful recipients, of the impacts of their relationship style and methods (Gasper, 2000). Despite the rhetoric of accountability, there are a great many sacred cows in the development industry that are excused from exercises in self-evaluation. The principles and practice of standardised, linear evaluation are among these.

Rather than being guided by community

“Our work is being dictated from abroad, and communications with the funding agency becomes defining moments in the life of the centre

Interview with local NGO (Birdsall 2007)

development, priorities tend to follow funder opinion which has a propensity for faddishness and is informed a long way from reality (Howell, 2000; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004). Organisational goals, culture and values are often influenced, if not replaced, by those of the funder or the current funding fashion (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, pg. 5; Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab 1997; Lewis, 1998; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001; Birdsall and Kelly 2007). Organisations tend to feel pressurised to align their activities to meet the conditions, preferences and changing fashions of donor thinking, towards tailoring their organisation fundability (Edwards, 1999; Gasper, 2000; Kilby, 2006). Funding may well also carry donor-defined moral imperatives and value-based conditions, particularly in the fields of sexual health and HIV (Kelly, et al., 2005).

Another major challenge to organisation is the preference for donors to fund projects with specific, measurable outputs. These may be planned over a defined time period, often even in prescribed location, and perhaps for a donor-selected target groups (Edwards, 1999; Bornstein 2006a; Birdsall, et al., 2007; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). In many cases these conditionalities bear little relation to local development agendas, or even national priorities (Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Heinrich, 2001). Beyond their content, the concept of measurable outputs is in conflict with CBO culture. Many of the achievements of community organisations are relationship-based, abstract and unmeasurable. Those that are most relevant cannot be captured quantitatively.

Funding also brings stringent demands for accountability and demonstrable impact (Bornstein, 2006a). Many donors dictate formal, linear, standardised methods and approaches, especially around planning, monitoring, evaluation, financial management and reporting (Biggs & Neame, 1995). The ability to spend rapidly according to the associated budgets is then seen as an essential organisational competency (Chambers, 1995). These approaches are not aligned with competencies that are available, desired or needed in the organisation's core functioning.

The systems needed in order to manage funding tend to place extraordinary, conflicting demands on CBO systems. CBO systems tend to be informal, sometimes subconscious, and apparently simplistic. They have evolved, however, with the organisation to meet its ordinary needs. Community participation and membership involvement, for example, may be central to an organisations' culture. These operate at the slow and apparently unproductive pace of collective activities and lengthy consultation (Chambers, 1995). Slow pace and invisible productivity are generally scorned by funding agencies.

Caught in the funding chase, organisations can find themselves at a loss for an organisational identity of their own (Kilby, 2006). This is exacerbated by the penchant of certain donors to have branding as conditions of their support. Local initiative, lead, motivated and managed by members of a community, emblazoned with “from the American people”, is sure to create identity, credibility and associational confusion.

Unless well-managed, relationships between NGOs and their funders can threaten the essence of the CBOs existence. The core competencies that make NGOs competitive in terms of their contribution to society, from society, and by society, are in danger of being lost in the urgency for professionalism, sustainability and measurable impact (Heinrich, 2001). In addition to the distraction from advocacy and influence work (Dinokeng, 2009) donor relationships tend to neglect internal attention to organisation development, in favour of focusing on providing increased volume and range of services (Kilby, 2006). Development organisations risk being caught up by the economic logic of maximum output for minimum cost (Lehman, 2007).

Funder systems may require that an entire raft of new systems be superimposed on existing ways of doing things, potentially to the detriment of the established order (INTRAC, 1998). The highly technical production of M&E reporting and funding proposals tends to be allocated to leaders, and excludes field staff. It draws leaders from their critical roles, and marginalises the influence and input of field staff (Bornstein, 2006a; Clarke, 2006; Abrahams, 2008). Leaders in organisations become preoccupied with fulfilling requirements that are neither understood nor embraced, replacing their own original, pragmatic and relevant thought and communication processes (Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein 2006a). Frameworks or rules are intended to help people think. Used in excess or inappropriately, however, they prevent thinking, ‘freeze thought’ and reduce peoples’ faith in their ability to think without these rules (Gasper, 2000).

In a survey by Bornstein (2006a), more than half of interviewed NGO managers’ time was devoted to meeting donor reporting requirements. Excessive reporting detracts from the real work of organisations. It causes a distortion in planning and activities towards attempting to force reportable achievements into set timeframes (quarterly reports, for example).

In sum, funding has profound structural and institutional impact. These may be seen to be desirable at the outset, but they can prove disastrous in the longer term. Staff may be increased, systems created, activities and expectations expanded and connections multiplied. Staff members begin to be selected for professional skills, where they were

previously attracted for their social commitment and ideology. Funding is bound to increase the scale and scope of small organisations (Miraftab, 1997), particularly where it is attached to projects and activities that have not been part of established organisational functions. All of these growth areas create funding dependency, and carry the associated risk (Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall, et al., 2007; Kilby, 2006). If funding ends, professional staff lose their jobs, voluntary staff are disenchanted, programme beneficiaries are no longer served, infrastructure cannot be supported, and there is every possibility of the organisation regressing to a state far weaker than before it was funded. Chasing funds on the treadmill of donor flattery therefore becomes fundamental to survival, and each 'successful' relationship continues to raise the stakes and the risks.

In the light of this pressure, among the most disempowering impacts of donor funding, and the associated M&E requirements is the encouragement of deception as "*the only sensible way out of an irrational and semi-coherent situation*" (Bornstein, 2006a; Chambers, 1995). Massaging of results for the purposes of donor relationship may be justified as 'doing no harm' and 'a fair means to an honourable end'. How, however, does this mindset impact on organisations founded in moral integrity and values? The costs of selective reporting include self humiliation; time to master the rules of winning the game; fear and anxiety distracting from focus; a loss of realness and seriousness; and self-deception (Bornstein, 2006a). Critically, also, the market spin in reporting that exaggerates success and downplays failure, constitutes a loss of learning opportunity (Ebrahim, 2003; Kelly, et al., 2005; Kilby, 2006). Deceit and manipulation are the weapons of the powerless. Their use reinforces a self-perception of powerlessness.

In some cases intermediaries, managing agencies or consultants are tasked, and paid, to report and show accountability on behalf of those who are '*not good at writing*' (Kelly, et al., 2005). Subcontracting M&E, reporting or planning creates a consultancy niche and a cost to development which adds little value to the delivery of development outcomes. Indeed the loss of ownership and power are detrimental (Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Gasper, 2000; Bornstein, 2006a). The use of consultants in this role reinforces dependency, dramatically dilutes autonomy and self-representation, diverts funding and precludes learning. Organisations subcontract their thinking, and give away their right to intuition and trust in their own perspectives (Soal, 2001). The loss of intuition is a further injury to power. Intuition, more than rationality, constitutes most a manager's skill in guiding complex systems (Senge, 2006, p. 157). Trusting intuition is part of the essence of power.

Where independent, external evaluation is deemed valuable, it should always be commissioned by the organisation through its own procurement processes. It is non-negotiable that it should also be framed as a learning tool, rather than an exercise in judgement. Financial audits, as a normal legislated requirement of registration, are intended for the purpose of honesty. Every other evaluation is ultimately about learning, organisational support and programme development. These evaluations should also include strong two-way accountability, where the parts played by both funder and recipient are a subject for mutual reflection and communication (Bornstein, 2006a).

In their passion for funding, few organisations would thank us for dismissing its value altogether. It would also be a profound loss of opportunity to 'throw out the baby with the bathwater'. For funding relationships to be constructive either in organisational or community development, however, the approach, philosophy and ground rules need to be revolutionised. Constructive funding relationships need to be built on partnership, learning and transparency. These depend on long-term, trust-based, communicative, personally connected, committed inter-organisational relationships (Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Kilby, 2006). Relationships need to be based on open dialogue and evolving understanding of the situation being addressed. The typical short-term, evidence-based, uncommunicative and disconnected relationships have little potential for serious contribution. Specified outputs, systematised communication and a 'contract culture' have little place in mutually respectful relationships.

2.2.8. Capacity building

CBOs are widely regarded as lacking "capacity to manage their affairs and delivery services" (NDoSD, 2005). A great many CBO contracts therefore include a weighty capacity building element. Organisation can take different paths to achieve the same learning or capacity outcomes (Birdsall, et al., 2007). The term 'capacity building' refers to a spectrum of support and training interventions. It ranges from training on donor compliance and funder language (most M&E courses); to individualised, personal support which responds to the needs of the CBO (Kelly, et al., 2005).

The impact of training, ownership of learning and application of context vary along this scale. At the lowest end of the scale, value is generally minimal in compliance training. Besides, capacity can hardly be regarded as enhanced, when the purpose of training is to overcome obstacles constructed by the 'capacity builders' themselves (NDoSD, 2005). Responsive, dynamic mentorship approaches can, by contrast, be transformative.

Offset against the differences in impact, however, standardised, packaged training is far cheaper and can reach far larger audiences than personalised interventions. Larger, established organisations can derive useful tools and procedural compliance information from mass training, making it cost-effective and efficient where this is its purpose.

2.3 Towards alternative principles and practice in evaluation for CBOs

2.3.1. Organisational Learning: Moulding organisational behaviour

Organisations, groups and individuals only deeply embrace change when they have actively seen, felt or experienced a new truth. Peter Senge (2006) considers the achievement of a learning organisation as a culmination in organisational sophistication. A learning organisation is one that *"proactively creates, acquires and transmits knowledge and that changes its behaviour on the basis of new knowledge and insights"* (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1997, p. 628). It is a continual state of learning which defines such an organisation. Learning is not an achievement, or an endpoint, it is a state of being (Senge 2006, p. 132).

A learning organisation is characterised by strong leadership, a willingness to experiment and fail, realistic and broad-minded interpretations of success, and an enthusiasm for reflecting on all experiences (Chambers, 1995. Birdsall, et al., 2007). Self-awareness and self-evaluation are essential competencies (Kreitner & Kinicki 1997, p. 631). Skills, tools and communication for learning do not necessarily come naturally to organisations. The behaviour of a learning organisation needs to be nurtured and institutionalised. The ability to learn needs to be learnt (Robbins, et al., 2003, p. 416).

The encouragement of a learning culture in the CBO sector would be an opportunity for stronger, more legitimate and more relevant development practice (Sen, 1987; Hailey & James, 2002). Organisational evaluation and organisational learning are not necessarily mutually inclusive (McClintock, 2004). Learning needs to grow to be viewed by both funders and organisations as an essential, valuable organisational competency. It is learning which underpins developmental evaluation, not bureaucratic requirements for accounting for funds (Ebrahim, 2005).

2.3.2. Principles of developmental M&E

Everyone shares responsibility for problems generated by the system (Senge, 2006, p. 78). How then do CBOs and funder agencies each contribute to resolving the woeful inadequacies of correct funding relationship and M&E conventions?

Evaluation serves two main purposes (Cummings & Worley, 2005, p. 89). Firstly, it guides the organisation towards better performance and productivity. Secondly, it enables the organisation to communicate this to external stakeholders. Evaluation, for the purposes of this study, constitutes performance management, learning and change at the organisational level (Figure 4) primarily, although necessarily supported by learning at group and individual levels. Learning is defined by H.M. Weiss as “any relatively permanent change in behaviour that occurs as a result of experience” (Robbins, et al., 2003, p. 49). Evaluation is the process by which organisations understand themselves, communicate and change their practice.

Evaluation is about *value*. Far from being used to criticise or judge, it should be used to examine the good and the lessons that have emerged from experience. It asks how the unfolding reality is an improvement. The criteria for improvement depend on the lens of values through which we evaluate (McNiff, 2002). The perspective of the evaluator, as organisation member, funder, beneficiary or independent facilitator profoundly impacts on the criteria and definitions for improvement

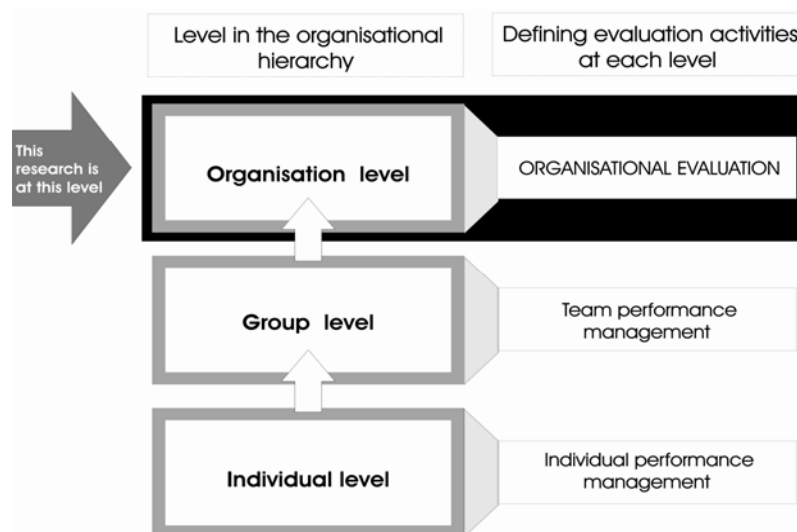


Figure 4 Evaluation and learning from experience in relation to the organisational hierarchy. For the purposes of this research, the term “evaluation” refers to performance assessment at the organisational level.

The approaches discussed above for conventional, linear, quantitative, tangible evaluation are based on the scientific disciplines or philosophies of empiricism and positivism. Empirical research assumes that there is a truth and that a final answer exists towards which to strive. It is the close cousin of positivism, which seeks the

causes and effects of phenomena (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 69). Positivism elevates simplicity, objectivity and precision over social outcome (Conlin & Stirrat, 2008). In being determined to ascertain objective, verifiable, demonstrable, quantifiable fact, it is argued that positivist evaluation promotes research that reinforces the power distribution of inequitable social orders (Gasper, 2000; Bornstein, 2006a).

In the complex, dynamic systems of development organisations, the integrated principles of action research, grounded theory and process-use provide the polar opposite of positivist research (Potter, 1999, p. 219, Bhana, 1999, p. 228). Action research claims that an assumption of the existence of truth is not always valid (McNiff, 2002). The next moment does not exist until it is created by the entity that lives it. Truth is therefore an unfolding reality. Truth is not yet there to be tested.

Organisations and development practitioners themselves should be those most interested in the results of evaluation (Dierolf, et al., 2002). Learning organisations emerge where a sincere curiosity about our own performance guides our planning and action (Bloch & Borges, 2002; Dierolf, et al., 2002; Padaki, 2002; Clarke, 2006). In practical terms, this means organisations having far more control over their own M&E. M&E needs to become cast as thinking and organisation development, rather than administration and compliance (McClintock, 2004).

Even based on grounded, rational, realistic principles, it is not easy to conduct M&E that has programmatic and organisation value, while remaining cost-efficient (Kelly, et al., 2005). The selection, collection, collation, analysis, interpretation and application of even a single, basic monitoring variable can be expensive and systems intensive. It can only succeed if virtually all M&E is built into an organisation's normal operations, and is appreciated in guiding the day-to-day decisions of all responsible staff members.

Methodology alone, cannot transform society. Narrative methods, participatory processes and grounded approaches may be essential in redressing the power imbalances of local level development. They do not, however, guarantee it. Qualitative, systems-oriented approaches, wielded in a context of authoritarianism, are no more likely to produce trustworthy data or effective process-use (Rhodes, 1996).

Beyond its use in management, evaluation for communication with funders carries the corollary of 'showing' as well as 'knowing' about programme performance. Powerful evaluation therefore depends on a constructive, empowered funder:recipient relationship. Gray, et al., (2006) observe how closeness is inverse to formality. Distant, formal, protocol-intensive, simple relationships are juxtaposed against close, personal,

complex relationships. In the context of highly complex social change, the simplicity of formal, distant relationships do not permit effective communication.

People are complex and unpredictable. Human-centered processes, which involve an absolute minimum of specifications and accept unpredictability as a normal feature of programme process, are essential to effective outcomes (Dick, 2007). Partnerships are strongest where funders have little influence over recipient organisations' administration but have frequent, substantial personal communication (Lewis & Sobhan 1999; Soal, 2004).

A radical transformation in the development industry would be needed to achieve this (FAHAMU & CAE, 2004). Intangible impacts, such as shifting power relations, should be both goal and substance of development interventions. The tangible, pragmatic elements of work and activities need to draw their relevance and meaning from systemic, abstractly described shifts in human and social psyche (FAHAMU & CAE, 2004).

These concepts have been on the table or twenty years, and have had little impact on accepted, mainstream practice. A system can only be turned from its familiar self-destructive ruts by acknowledging the underlying forces at play (Senge, 2006, p. 65). Once these complex forces are seen, small changes can have massive leverage in shifting system momentum.

It is the role of development practitioners and of students of organisational behaviour and relationships in this setting, to be awake and sensitive to understanding the forces of inertia that hold us in under-achievement, and to seeking out the small changes that might inspire a deeply 'stuck' industry.

2.3.3. Complex dynamic emergent systems

Development is set in an increasingly complex global environment (McPhee, 2002). CBOs in this environment, indeed most organisations in most environments, are open, complex adaptive systems (Fowler, 1995; Olney, 2004; Senge 2006, p. 72). They are based more in the connections between and within different entities, than in their autonomous, independent identities (Gray, et al., 2006; Wheatley & Frieze, 2006). They are created in the image of the structures and patterns in which they have evolved, many of which have been destructive reactions in self-perpetuating feedback cycles (Senge, 2006, p. 59). These are the underlying patterns, forces and systemic feedbacks that need to be understood before the system can be consciously shifted.

Complex systems have certain qualities, some of which are relevant to thinking about their evaluation (Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). In complex systems causes and effects are not linear. Glaser and Strauss in the 1967 work on grounded theory rejected the concept of single cause hypothesis testing in social research (Dey, 2004). Across both business and social organisations, the value of cause and effect rationale has been questioned (McAdam, et al., 2008). Philosophies such as conventional Total Quality Management tend to neglect *meaning* in complex socio-political situations. Conceptual frameworks that reflect the dynamism and complexity of organisational process are called for.

Over-mechanising and over-planning are symptoms of imagining complex systems to be complicated systems (Rogers, 2009). Even the simplest machine is complicated. 'Machine-thinking' requires that design is exhaustively detailed, thorough and well-quantified. This is necessary for machines, because machines cannot think. Complex systems differ fundamentally from complicated systems. Good complex processes allow human and social interactions to form their own systems.

2.3.4. Emergence

Complex systems are defined as being emergent by nature (Beeson & Davies, 2000; Seel, 2006). In defining 'emergence', Stacey (1996 quoted in Seel, 2006) offers: "*emergence is the production of global patterns of behaviour by agents in a complex system interacting according to their own local rules of behaviour, without intending the global patterns of behaviour that come about. In emergence, global patterns cannot be predicted from the local rules of behaviour that produce them. To put it another way, global patterns cannot be reduced to individual behaviour*". Grounded theory asks that understanding emerges from data. Action research is the process by which decisions and management emerge from that understanding. The principle of emergence asks that we trust process, and embrace what the path provides.

Dey (2004) points out how meaning is not discovered. Meaning is attached, created and attributed. This 'demolishes the pretensions' of indicators, which create armchair meaning in isolation from experience (Dey, 2004).

2.4 *Conclusions of the literature review*

The literature reviewed has revealed a context in which civil society, in all its convolutions, is central to the South African socio-economic agenda. Among these actors are NGOs and CBOs – pseudo-civil, semi-commercial, abundant and contested. They create a fine mist of human and organisational resources across virtually every disadvantaged community in the country.

Their role in practice, although it is not without tensions, is to provide services for vulnerable individuals, households and communities, for which either the public sector is not the appropriate vehicle, or in which the public sector fails to deliver. This role is financially supported by relationships between organisations and government, charities and aid agencies.

In entering into these relationships, CBOs accept a further mantle of complex power dynamics. In accepting financial support from one party, with responsibility for delivering relevant services to another party, CBOs find themselves at the centre of a sticky web of accountability relationships.

In reality, money talks loudest. Power over accountability, purpose, process and systems is determined by funding. The associated systems are conventionally not conducive to either relevant community development, or to sustained organisational development. Among the most burdensome of these systems, are those used for M&E. The M&E approach of choice for the last 20-30 years has remained at the behest and convenience of offices in the north.

In attempting to understand the recalcitrance of entrenched systems for improvement, this study explores alternative methods, approaches and principles for evaluation. While acknowledging that method cannot change paradigm, the study uses an exploration of method to uncover principles and contradictions from practical experience.

Several central theoretical concepts underpin more developmental methods for evaluation. Approaches to evaluation need to acknowledge community-based development organisations as complex, dynamic systems. In working with these systems, approaches need to be strongly utilisation-based, and set in an action research paradigm. These are approaches that are grounded primarily in reality, and not vested in prediction or narrow, externally-derived conditionalities.

In exploring these dynamics in the context of CBOs in particular, I hope to deepen the practical and conceptual implications of evaluation in this particular setting, toward CBO:funder:government partnerships that begin to take socio-economic equity in South Africa a little more seriously. This exploration of method takes the form of an action research process of evaluation and meta-evaluation, conducted from a perspective of grounding and emergence in the context of CBOs.



CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the conceptual framework, methods and operational plan by which the research question has been addressed. The study is essentially concerned with method. In order to provide a set of practical guidelines to evaluators, it explores alternatives to conventional linear evaluation. In conjunction with this, and more widely generalisable, it highlights the principles of developmental process that emerge from a set of experiences with CBOs. These were achieved using a grounded action research approach, which is described in detail in this chapter.

The chapter begins with an overarching theoretical framework, elucidating the application of grounded theory, process use and critical change in this study. I then outline the research structure, explaining the nature of the nested layers of content, method and meta-method.

The research approach is then divided into two themes; each discussed in terms key epistemological concepts, as follows:

Meta-evaluation: towards alternative methods -

- Exploratory research
- The use of action research in developing methodology

Evaluation: concepts for alternative approaches to evaluation -

- The methodological implications of action learning as an iterative, cumulative learning process
- Narrative in evaluation
- The Most Significant Change approach
- Qualitative evaluation

This completes the theoretical and conceptual background.

The practical description of the participant engagement and data recording processes then covers the research setting, sampling and recording of data. The two major components of the study are outlined: the inward-looking, Stories and Metaphor Process in Gauteng; and the outward-looking Most Significant Change (MSC) approach taken in North West. A brief overview is given of the nature of the evaluation methods applied

for each. Data analysis is then outlined, describing the interpretation of data, the reasoning used to reach conclusions and the peer review mechanisms used in interrogating those conclusions. The chapter ends with discussions on research trustworthiness and ethics.

3.2 Overarching theoretical framework: evaluation and meta-evaluation

Based in a constructionist ontology, the study will use grounded theory and concepts of theory emergence to surface the practice and principles of more developmental approaches to CBO evaluation.

3.2.1. Grounded theory

3.2.1.1. Grounded theory in brief

Grounded theory provides the central, fundamental concept underpinning this study. Founded in theories of complexity, dynamism, and emergence, grounded theory states that trends, experiences, events and outcomes are more realistically recorded as they emerge from reality (Kopainsky & Luna-Reyes, 2008; Dey, 2004). Grounded theory allows conclusions to emerge from data and participants, rather than beginning with a preconception or a prediction (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pg. 32-33; Fouché, 2005, pg. 170, Creswell, 2007, pg. 62; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007; Dey, 2007; Hood, 2007). Social theories should emerge from '*the action, interactions and social processes of people*' (Creswell, 2007. p. 63). Grounded theory asks us to begin with an area of enquiry or a question, and to try to approach it with an open mind (de Vos, 2005, p. 265). Questions rather than theories or predictions form the driving force (Soal, 2004; de Vos, 2005, p. 265; Fouché, 2005, p. 270; Punch, 2005, p. 155). Grounded evaluation asks for sincere curiosity.

Although it explicitly sets preconceptions aside, grounded theory and emergence are not without bias (de Vos, 2005, p. 5). On the contrary, they are often set in a critical change paradigm where political intent and an active bias are acknowledged (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Experiences and grounded data are drawn through a lens of ideology, such as a social development, grassroots, rights-based paradigm. Without a lens, or a reason for asking questions, grounded research becomes an exercise in random data gathering (Mouton & Marais, 1990).

Writers on grounded theory describe its application as being pulled up on 'bootstraps' (Kelly, 1999). A general area of study is defined at the outset. As data are analysed to formulate conclusions, these conclusions influence the interpretation and subsequent

refocusing of data collection. This iterative uncovering of new theory is the essence of action research (McNiff, 2002). Grounded approaches, particularly in a context of applied research, use action research principles, and vice versa.

Grounded theory is explicitly designed for the formulation of new theory, rather than theory testing, although the process of theory generation invariably also integrates iterative theory testing. As such, it is highly relevant to this study's exploratory research into new alternatives for evaluation.

Although experience forms the basis and the core of theory, the use of those observations is influenced by interpretation, reflection, peer review and other data and analysis sources (Heath & Cowley, 2004). Grounded theory therefore begins with and draws substantially on experience, but does not expect to exclude interpretive, intellectual or documented insight from the range of relevant sources.

Grounded theory applies to both the evaluation and the meta-evaluation in this research.

3.2.1.2. The grounded theory debate

The field of grounded theory was conceived in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). They reached considerable disagreement as they each developed their thinking over the next three decades (Charmaz, 2006, p. 134). By the time of Strauss and Corbin's writing on structured processes for grounded analysis in the 1990s (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 487; Punch, 2005, p. 156; Dey, 2004; Creswell, 2007, p. 63), the Strauss and Glaser schools had taken opposing stands (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The schools of thought have since drawn richly on the debate, and Bryant and Charmaz (2007) regard the ongoing development of method and approach to have provided a valuable maturity. They see grounded theory to have evolved into a 'family of methods' from which researchers may draw in terms of their own epistemology, ontology and needs.

While with regard to the importance of structure and method opinions might be divided, many of the fundamental concepts remained uncontested. Pattern, data, the context or situation, and constant comparison with data remain established elements of grounded approaches (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

3.2.1.3. Grounded theory

In one respect, grounded theory refers to a strategy for research, and flexible principles of theory generation. This study draws strongly on the application of grounded theory in

terms of a principle for rooting theory in data and the emergence of meaning from reality, rather than comparing reality with a preconceived hypothesis: “Grounded theory *is what is*, not what should, could, or ought to be” (Glaser, 1999). Glaser (1999) speaks of grounded theory being most widely applied in post-graduate research because of the imperative of contributing to new theory.

This application of the principles of grounded theory, where data feeds into theory, rather than theory driving data, is regarded as a legitimate and mature interpretation of grounding (Henning, 2004, p. 47; Punch, 2005, p. 155). Original grounded theory was drafted in a context when research legitimacy demanded the extremes of positivist, objective hypothesis testing. Contemporary qualitative methods have long since moved beyond this positivism, and the rigid application of grounded theory structures is accused of being rather conservative form of post-positivism (Charmaz 2006, p. 132; Creswell, 2007, p. 64).

The use of structured, rigid axial coding has been criticized as being prescriptive and mechanistic (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). On the contrary, grounded researchers need the ability to “conceptualize data, an ability to tolerate some confusion, and an ability to tolerate confusion’s attendant regression” Glaser, 1999. We are cautioned against deifying methodology, over principles.

3.2.1.4. Grounded theory method

In the other respect, grounded theory refers to a structured methodology for analysing data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Coding is regarded as fundamental to analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). While the principles of grounding are upheld in much of qualitative research, there is considerable disagreement in the scientific community around the legitimacy of its rigid application in an analytical method (Dey, 2004; Creswell, 2007, p. 63).

Another deviation between Glaser and Strauss relates to Strauss’s emphasis on verifying and proving the theories emerging from axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Glaser remains skeptical of such certainty, talking about ‘worrisome accuracy’ (Glaser, 1999).

Strauss and Corbin’s version of grounded theory devised detailed and systematic methods for extracting and triangulating theory from data. They attempt to design qualitative mechanisms for ensuring objectivity (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 487; Punch, 2005, p. 156; Dey, 2004; Creswell, 2007, p. 63). Their method provides a prescriptively structured, strongly methodical approach by which they consider theory to be extracted from data (Fouché, 2005; Dey, 2004; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The process progresses

from open coding of raw data to extract emergent themes, to axial coding to arrange the themes in relation to each other and into clusters or families of concepts, through to selective coding where explanations of these relationships are generated as new theory (de Vos, 2005).

These analytical concepts have stimulated and informed the design of software tools for qualitative data analysis (Dey, 2004), such as Atlas-ti, which has been used for part of the data analysis for this research. I draw to a limited, and somewhat adapted extent on grounded analysis approaches.

3.2.1.5. *Constructivist grounded theory*

In reaction to the rigidly structured analytic approach of Strauss and Corbin, Charmaz entered the grounded theory debate with the concept of 'constructivist grounded theory' (Creswell, 2007, p. 65). She contrasts constructivist grounded theory with objectivist grounded theory. Grounded constructivists are cautious of positivist analysis, and view the world as an ever-changing, complexity of multiple realities (Charmaz 2006, p. 132). Objectivist grounded theory, however, regards data as separate from participants and researchers, and considers the careful application of rigorous method to provide theoretical understanding.

3.2.2. *Critical change theory and process use*

A theme for ongoing discussion in the evaluation community is the impact and purposeful use of the research *process* and its opportunities for interaction, as well as the information or *content* it elicits (Edwards, 1999; Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 159). The *findings* of organisational research should be useful, but constructive evaluation should, centrally, provide organisations with the skills and opportunity to reflect of their own practice, to learn self-evaluation skills and to communicate better internally (McClintock, 2004; Birdsall, et al., 2007).

The *processes* which stakeholders engage with during research invariably have impact. Evaluation itself is an intervention (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 405). Evaluation in development settings should be designed to ensure that this impact is constructive. The basis of this research lies in the risks of negligent process being destructive to organisations (Gaspar, 2000; Bornstein, 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006). Evaluation processes and indeed, meta-evaluation research such as this study, must support development with integrity.

Grounded theory is immersed in a critical change paradigm to the extent that its origins lie in giving participants' voice, or data, precedence (Gibson, 2007). This lies in the

responsibility of researchers to fairly represent research subjects. Grounded theory also points us to the dangers of a critical change paradigm. In approaching research with intent and purpose, we risk pre-interpreting situations and purveying bias. This would be in direct conflict with the openness and data-honesty of grounded theory. In this sense, grounded theory brings valuable realism and integrity into critical change, which otherwise risks being used as rhetoric, rather than learning.

The methods in this study and their application are designed in terms of utilisation-based evaluation principles (Quinn-Patton, 2002). Charmaz (2006, p. 134) regards grounded approaches as being well-suited to critical change research. Just as the recommendations on methods and principles support investment in organisations, so too, the methodological study should be clearly educational, reflective and valuable to the organisations that participate in methods development.

3.3 Research structure: Three worlds and two legs

This is a study on researching the practice and principles of alternative methodology. As such, its methodology must describe a meta-methodology, or a study of methodology (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 211). In action research, evaluation design and development must run concurrently with, and will partially overlap, evaluation itself (Thomas, 1994, p. 285). In a study which aims to explore improved methodological principles and practice, methodology is itself the research object. The research methods are those by which the new or explored methodological principles and practice are developed. In a further nesting, the content of the conversation, or the sociology or business of the organisations to which emerging methods and principles are applied, are simply the grist for the methodological work.

Mouton's (2001) Three Worlds framework) describes this nesting particularly clearly. We need to distinguish between:

- World 1 - the content and practice of CBOs;
- World 2 - the processes and principles of evaluating and learning in that context; and
- World 3 - the science of exploring optimal ways of conducting evaluation that meet ethical and ontological standpoints.

These "Worlds" are connected by the distinction between empirical and non-empirical research. Empirical research is World 2's investigations into the World 1 of an

evaluation participant. Non-empirical research is World 3's investigations into designing good methodology for World 2 (Figure 5).

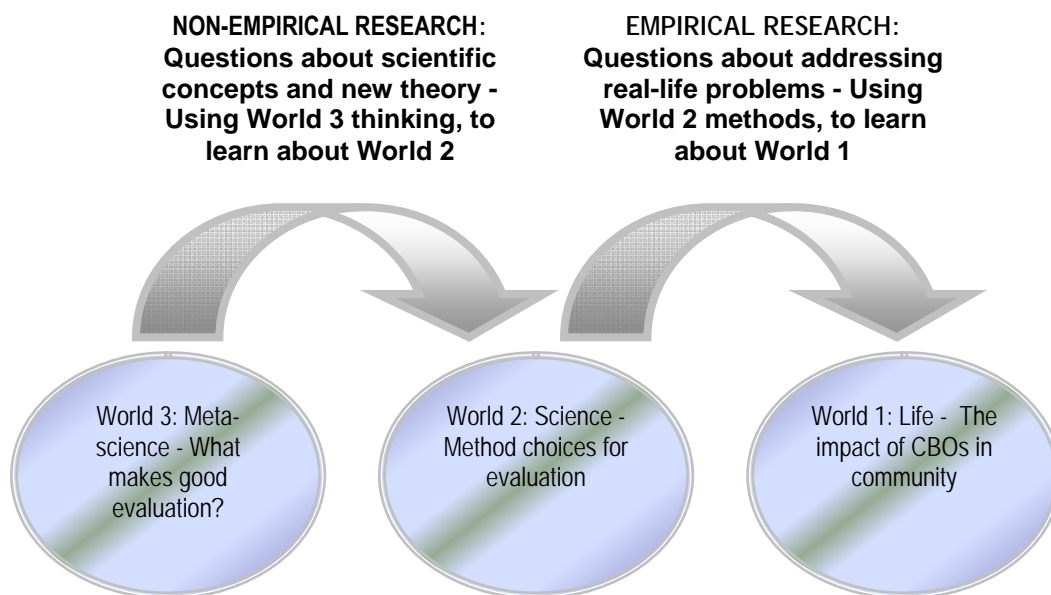


Figure 5 *Distinctions between the non-empirical and empirical elements relevant to this study, in terms of the Three Worlds Framework*

Source: Mouton, 2001, pp. 5

As research into evaluation methodology, this study is classified as a hybrid between a non-empirical and an empirical study (Table 2). Empirical study: understanding real world problems, such as evaluating the impact of CBOs in communities. Non-empirical study: understanding the science, theory and principles of how best we evaluate and developing the concept of developmental evaluation. This classification is particularly helpful in clearly defining and bounding the study. Although the empirical and non-empirical components are integrated into a single research process, they need to be conceptualised, analysed and presented differently.

There are therefore three nested conceptual layers, which need to be carefully separated in our thoughts. Table 2 and Figure 5 offer elaborations of the relationships between three worlds in this study, and non-empirical and empirical research into them.

Table 2. *Empirical and non-empirical conceptual layers of meta-method, methodology research and business content*

	Conceptual layer	Description	Where in the thesis?
NON-EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	Methods for studying methods	<i>The meta-methodology (World 3)</i> How does one best design new methodology? What is the process for exploring better processes?	This is the layer with which the Methods Section below is most concerned
	Alternative methods for evaluating CBOs and their programmes	<i>The research question (World 2)</i> In reaction to limitations of linear, predictive models, what are the principles of stronger alternative methods? How might the development industry perform better in this regard, especially with regard to CBOs?	This is the layer with which the Results, Discussion and Conclusions Sections are most concerned. The Literature Review was also primarily concerned with this layer.
EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	Evaluation data	<i>The organisations' content (World 1)</i> What do CBOs achieve? How do they impact on people's lives? In what ways can they improve their programmes? This layer is the context of development CBOs. It is significant to the extent that the methods support CBO learning.	The content itself is not central to this study. Any CBOs and any content would have supported exploring alternative methods. Examples of this content appear under the Exhibits in the Results Section as demonstrations of the methodological processes.

3.4 Research approach

The research approach is discussed in terms of the major research components: the non-empirical investigation of alternative evaluation method and principles; and the empirical evaluation processes for understanding CBO impact in a user-centred participatory approach.

3.4.1. Meta-methodology : Key concepts in reality-based methods development

3.4.1.1. Exploratory research

An exploratory approach is used to develop guidelines for an evaluation system which attempts to address the weaknesses of traditional 'logical' systems, particularly with regard to prediction, positivism and linear arguments. Exploratory studies, or 'discovery', produce grounded theory, and share the principles of grounded theory (Babbie, 2005, p. 90; Dey, 2004). They are used to break new ground, yield new insights and wrangle with intractable challenges, including the development of new methodologies (Mouton & Marais 1990, p. 59; Stebbins, 2001; Babbie, 2005, p. 89; Quinn

Patton, 2002, p. 193). Alternative methodology and the impacts of process in organisations require that we carve at the cutting edge of new concepts.

Exploratory research may produce approximate answers to research questions to which definitive, conclusive answers are inappropriate or unrealistic. It may also provide further questions rather than concrete answers (Babbie, 2005, p. 89; Kelly, 1999, p. 412). This openness to emergence and serendipity is part of a research approach in exploratory, grounded epistemology (Charmaz 2006, p. 180; Dick, 2007).

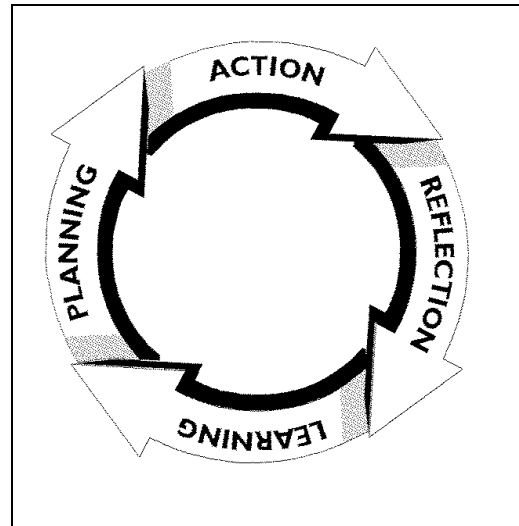


Figure 6 *The Action Learning Cycle*

Source: Taylor, et al., (1997)

3.4.1.2. *Action Research for methods development*

Action research is an accepted approach for meta-methodology (Dick, 2007). Although action research tends to be strongly grounded, the explicit integration of grounded theory into an action research based meta-methods process is unusual. Dick (2007) encourages research that works with the connections between grounding and action research, cross-pollinating between their methods, skills and techniques.

In an action research process, conclusions are accumulated, with each data item building the richness of the picture and certainty in the conclusions. There is no real replication in an action research design - each event is a learning point in its own right. Theory therefore accumulates from data, grounded in experience, with iterative cycles of induction and deduction. There are strong complimentary threads between grounded theory and action learning (Dick, 2007). This cumulative building of theory through successive iterations of qualitative research termed 'theoretical sampling' in the grounded theory discourse, was used, for example, by Ian Dey in his trade union studies in 1979 (Dey, 2004). In a sense, this is regarded as a form of cumulative coding, as codes firm up with supporting experience to create patterns.

Although based on principles of responsiveness, action research is not unstructured. It follows a simple iterative cycle of action, reflection, learning and planning (Figure 6) (Dick, 2007). The formal documentation of both process and outcome is key to grounded and action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1991, p. 185, Bhana, 1999, p. 231;

Taylor, et al., 1997; Dey, 2007). Simplicity of method is essential to understanding complexity (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Grounded theory should not lead to complicated processes. Their power lies in the skilful application of simple methods to understand complex situations.

Practice informs new theory, and theory informs new practice (McNiff, 2002). Iterative, reflective processes of systematic testing and meta-evaluation, progress towards an effective method (Thomas, 1994, p. 289).

3.4.2. Evaluation: Key concepts in alternative, participatory, developmental processes

The evaluation design is based on stories and metaphor. It uses these processes, hinged around collective action learning, integrated with organisation development. Evaluation of this nature is primarily qualitative. Each of these facets of the research process is discussed below.

3.4.2.1. *Action Learning or Participatory Action Research*

Action learning is founded in principles of critical change research and concepts of utilisation-based evaluation (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 173). It acknowledges that the process of research is inseparable from the outcomes of change.

Action research asks that participants and researchers learn together, rather than researchers extracting information and learning about participants as outsiders. Knowledge, insight and understanding are seen as bonds that connect people, rather than barriers that separate them (Bhana, 1999, p. 230).

Ideally, evaluation methods should be embraced and institutionalised into the everyday practice of an organisation, for its own benefit, and with intrinsic motivation. This would describe evaluation that is a genuine contributor to development outcomes (Gaspar, 2000). To the extent that the alternative approach achieves this goal, we can regard them as 'developmental'.

3.4.2.2. *Narrative in evaluation*

Success stories are among the most valuable evaluation sources (Rhodes, 1996; Taylor, et al., 1997; Edwards, 1999; Barter & Renold, 2004; Reeler, 2005). They tell us in detail about the type of impact that is possible. Stories elucidate the relevance and meaning behind quantitative data. They also direct us to those quantitative data that have relevance and meaning (Davies & Dart, 2005). Stories form the foundation of grounded

evaluation. Once we have the stories, it becomes possible to rationally define criteria for impact.

Stories also elicit sophisticated and complex self-awareness and organisational awareness. This provides contextualised, holistic and exchanged understanding towards more informed and responsive management (Wilder & Walpole, 2008; Dart & Davies, 2003; McClintock, 2004; Seel, 2006).

Gasper (2000), however, urges caution in the use of stories and anecdotes as research data. Stories are generally selected to illustrate a point, whether from the personal interests of the teller or in response to the interests of the researcher. They can be used to manipulate. They are a form of rhetoric (Gibson, 2007). They risk simplifying complex situations to a superficial, quick-fix analysis. Data are not neutral.

Bryant and Cox (2004) acknowledge the subjectivity of narratives but regard this subjectivity itself as an asset. Stories are a valuable vehicle for understanding the underlying significance of social processes. All stories, whether supposedly factual or not, are essentially fiction told through the selective lens of the story teller (Gibson, 2007). Many accounts in an evaluation setting follow habitual paths and ritualised anecdotes towards cultivating an unfolding 'urban mythology'. Myths in themselves, whether ancient or modern, are the window to understanding norms, expectations and social benchmarks (Quinn Patton, 1999; Dart & Davies, 2003).

These risks are reduced when many different stories are gathered, shared and analysed together representing the complexity that enables the situation to be understood (Bryant & Cox, 2004). The collective analysis of narratives requires additional facilitation (Dart & Davies, 2003). This may involve i) highlighting and interpreting the peculiar and complex, ii) drawing out themes and generalisation, or iii) understanding sequences of events and causal links in a particular account. Any of these forms of interpretation can be used in facilitating organisational evaluation and drawing conclusions with relevance to practice.

3.4.2.3. Metaphor

Metaphors describe one concept in terms of another (Bornstein 2006b). They provide a means of capturing difficult, abstract and perhaps elusive concepts into the concrete and familiar.

Metaphors are powerful, complex and layered opportunities for creating meaning (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 505). In this study, metaphor is used in the inward-looking

organisational evaluation as a grounded, emergent container and structure for self-analysis and self-evaluation. People interpret the world through metaphor (Grisham, 2006). They are used not only to describe an organisation, but also to construct new theories about how that organisation might grow (Bornstein, 2006b; Chettiparamb, 2006). In the outward-looking MSC process, this analysis was attempted using discussion on stories of most significance, with only a cursory incursion into metaphor.

Metaphor is a form of language, integrated with characterisation, and all the inherent meaning of that character to a community of people. More powerful than language itself, metaphor supports communication, but also represents and attaches meaning and associations (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 504, Chettiparamb, 2006). The intuitive, non-language connotations of a metaphor convey far more meaning than can be captured in words (Bornstein, 2006b; Grisham, 2006). Metaphors enable a shared understanding and a common language for the concepts within a conversation.

Dey (2007) describes metaphor as 'cognitive models that open up new ways of thinking'. Where discussion tends to ramble and leave clear conclusions elusive, metaphor provides a personalised road down which thinking may be lead into fresh areas and new insights.

Metaphor is richly used in methods research in support of thinking about our observations and their meaning (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 123; Charmaz 2006, p. 172; Grisham, 2006). Chaos in complexity is compared with physics and human systems with natural biological systems.

Subtle, detailed, verbal communication needs a degree of facilitated direction. Checklists and predefined criteria might provide a direction in a positivist context. Collectively chosen and described metaphors can provide this direction and flow in emergent, grounded processes. They offer a window into the institutional, structural and normative qualities of an organisation (Bornstein, 2006b).

Metaphors used to communicate between different communities of people risk losing their original meaning, and perhaps even offending, because of the strong attachments and associations that images have for us (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 505). This, using a sort of converse logic, connects those *in the club* more closely to a metaphor that they devise and share, and to their collective associations (Bornstein, 2006b).

The main risk associated with the use of metaphor in interpretation is that it loses touch with groundedness. Data may be arranged to suit the metaphor, rather than the metaphor being adapted to accommodate reality (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 505). Alluring

as the perfect metaphor might be, researchers and participants needs to remain grounded enough to also contrast their experiences with the metaphor. A metaphor is not real. Many metaphors may suit a situation, and none will provide a complete, uncontradictory description (Chettiparamb, 2006; Grisham, 2006). Indeed, the power of metaphor lies in the tension between the similarities and the differences (Oswick & Montgomery, 1999). If the metaphor is too similar to the comparator the concept is no longer metaphorical; too different and it has no meaning. As with all methods, moderation and pragmatism are crucial to relevance.

More insidiously, as metaphors can transform the complex and the abstract into the comfortable and familiar, so too can they be used to either dilute or intensify meaning (Bornstein, 2006b). An intolerable situation may become merely interesting when captured in metaphor, and an irritant can be conveyed in the rhetoric of revolution. In given a concept the meaning of association, we risk creating more or less than we originally had.

Metaphor is used in this study as a vehicle for interpreting the qualities of an organisation, and its merits. Far from being an approach for low literacy settings, similar work has been published on the use of this approach in multi-national corporations (Oswick & Montgomery, 1999).

The results of the meta-methods study include the strong evaluation of an approach around the use of metaphor, its application, value and limitations. Metaphor is selected as a methodological starting point in order to compliment the verbal communication of stories, with a visual medium.

3.4.2.4. Stories of Most Significant Change

MSC provides a formalised process for the collection, analysis and application of stories (Dart & Davies, 2003; Willets & Crawford, 2007; Wilder & Walpole, 2008). The approach, sometimes referred to as 'monitoring without indicators', uses narrative as the primary source of data (Dart, *et al.*, 2000).

MSC has been developed by Rick Davies and Jessica Dart, mainly in the agriculture sector of developed settings (Dart, 2000; Dart & Davies, 2003; Davies & Dart 2005). It is a grounded methodology, asking us to develop theory from an open inquiry into the perspectives and situation of community clients. MSC uses stories drawn from community members, followed by a process of story analysis, also by community members. It is intended to identify changes that have been most significant, and present the reason for their greater importance.

The method is designed to reflect complex adaptive systems. It acknowledges the holistic nature of community and individuals' situations. Development programmes are not received in isolation from the wider life, ambitions and challenges of individuals who participate. MSC uses stories, narratives and images in all their complexity, told by those most closely involved, to help an agency understand itself and its role. When we ask for a story, we ask for the whole story, as it surrounds the development intervention.

The approach stands in direct contrast to approaches which attempt to predict the outcomes of development interventions, and then view the intervention through the blinkers of a development agency's predefined perspective. It is a reaction from the same source of concern as the origins of this study: that of the undevelopmental, illogical, positivist assumptions that dominate conventional evaluation thinking.

The content (World 1) of the MSC study has been published through Oxfam America (Konstant, 2009a). This thesis is concerned with an analysis of the methodological implications of applying MSC in this context (World 2).

3.4.2.5. Qualitative evaluation

This study aims to develop guidelines for a qualitative evaluation system, in a context where quantitative, positivist evaluation is traditionally applied (Table 3). Development studies and organisations are better suited to theories of chaos than to structure, hypothesis or prediction (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 169). Qualitative methods in the context of social development need to be subtle enough to capture the evolutionary, transformational forces of development and organisational behaviour (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 2). Applied research and organisational management ask not only for information, but also for wisdom.

Creswell (2007, p. 38) raises several relevant generalisations on the use of qualitative research. Qualitative data are generally shared in the participants' own environment, take various forms, and may come from a number of sources. Observations, words, images, impressions, metaphors and stories may all combine in a qualitative description.

Table 3. *Characteristics and application of qualitative and quantitative research sort out font etc*

QUALITATIVE EVALUATION	QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION
CONCEPTS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts can be interpreted in a number of ways • Concepts sensitise or have abstract meaning • Labelled through intuitive experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concepts are unambiguous • Terms are precisely identified • Employs a measuring instrument
HYPOTHESIS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undeclared or stated as a broad research goal • Emerges through the investigation • Can often not be rejected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stated explicitly, at least as a research question • Formulated beforehand • Can be rejected
DESIGN	
<i>Fouché, 2005, p. 269; Creswell, 2007, p. 38)</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researchers' choices and actions determine the design or strategy • Inductive, recursive, interactive analysis • Holistic view of social phenomena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research design determines the researcher's choices and actions. • Primarily deductive analysis • Reductionist view of social phenomena
OBSERVATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personally experienced • Researcher involved in events • Spontaneity and serendipity contribute • Semi-structured • Unexpected events can be recorded • The context is taken into account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject is objectified • Researcher remains aloof • Pre-planned research schedule followed • Structured • Structure pre-defines observations • The context is controlled
APPROPRIATE CONTEXT	
PURSUIT OF DEPTH : GOAL- To understand	PURSUIT OF HEIGHT : GOAL: To explain PURSUIT OF BREADTH : GOAL: To describe
REQUIRES OF THE RESEARCHER	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher involvement • Placing the research in context • Use comparison • Sensitivity to concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justified structure and process • Controlled • Reliable

Source: Unless otherwise indicated, adapted from Mouton & Marais (1990, p. 176-186)

While bias is present in both quantitative and qualitative research it has profound implication for qualitative research (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 62). Interpretation, intent, assumptions and ideology all fundamentally mould qualitative results. Participants' perspectives, interpretations and subjective views all contribute to data. Qualitative research acknowledges the complexity and dynamic social, political and historical context of human and organisational behaviour.

Researchers need to understand the implications of qualitative research bias and subjectivity. Qualitative research must be reflexive (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 64). The

subjective lenses of both participants and facilitators need to be raised for scrutiny as an inherent part to the research process. Action research and action learning provide mechanisms for this reflection and self-evaluation.

Insight into the qualitative:quantitative debate in evaluation arose at length in the result of this study. For the purposes of methodology, the evaluations use qualitative research, while remaining sensitive to learning around quantitative data issues.

In summary, principles of action research will be applied to development of alternative methods and principles for applying those methods. Since objectivity and subjectivity are tensions in using qualitative approaches, iteration, peer review and participant reflection will all be used to debate the conclusions, and to support data trustworthiness.

3.5 Research setting

This research has been conducted in close collaboration with the AIDS Consortium⁹. Founded in Gauteng Province, the AIDS Consortium is a CBO and NGO membership organisation. It has recently expanded its services to Limpopo and North West provinces. The majority of its member CBOs are in Gauteng, and many have been part of its capacity building programme. This is the membership base from which participating CBOs volunteered.

Selection criteria included completion of capacity building training. Organisations will be those that are established and active and registered as NPOs or in the process of doing so. Criteria did not select or stratify for the organisations' settings. Several different settings were therefore represented in the sample. These are most simply defined as informal settlement and low-income suburbs for the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor process, and a rural village for the MSC process. Within and between these settings, organisations also ranged in size and sophistication.

3.5.1. Informal settlements

Two of the organisations that participated in the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor study were based in the informal settlements of Orange Farm and Lawley in the Vaal area, south of Soweto. This is an extremely difficult environment. Most people house themselves in corrugated iron shacks. Unemployment is the norm, with few households having any form of earned income. Families depend on child-support grants, pensions

⁹ www.aidsconsortium.org.za

and disability allowances to support all the members of the household. The nearest clinic is an expensive taxi ride away. The nearest hospital is a prohibitively expensive distance, and there is no ambulance or patient transport system at all. Whether poor, ill or disabled, minibuses¹⁰ are the only means of reaching medical services, or any other facility. Residents spoke of sharing two social workers across a distance around 50 km across. Many had never seen a social worker. Food is by no means assured and social welfare's food parcel and supplement systems do not reach these remote areas. The social welfare allowances are meagre, and the cost of transport to buy food adds greatly to the cost. Even donated food from supermarkets costs too much to transport on a regular basis to these areas. Most households attempt to grow food and maintain fruit trees, but these relatively recently settled areas have no history, skill, equipment or culture for subsistence farming.

Schools, municipal water, pit latrines and electricity are provided. The Orange Farm organisation was part of an RDP¹¹ housing scheme, and a permanent structure was being constructed on its premises and those of other residents in the area. While this constitutes an improvement to fire safety, hygiene and shelter, these homes do not resolve the challenges of income insecurity and basic livelihood. These peri-urban slums are the most deprived possible setting. There is considerable dependency on *ubuntu*¹², distributing coping mechanisms among several households (Bahre, 2007).

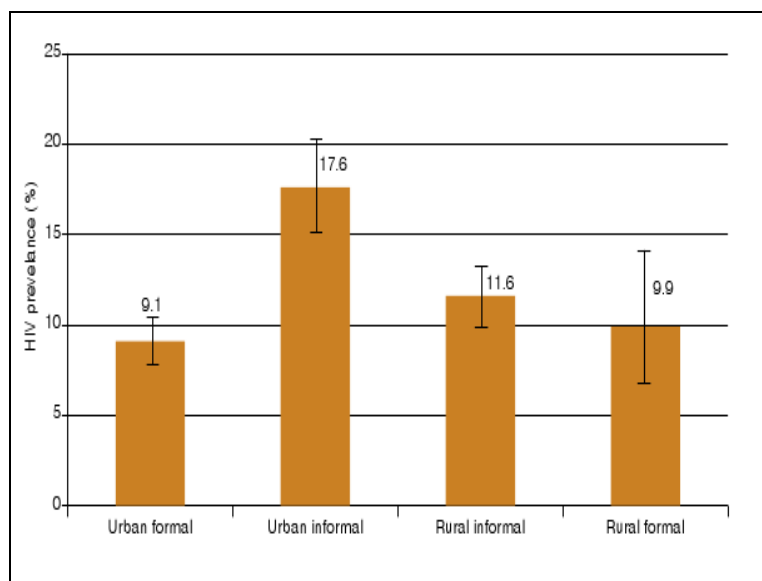


Figure 7 HIV prevalence rates in relation to setting

Source: Booth, 2008

These are also the settings where HIV prevalence is

¹⁰ The African standard public transport system of informal sector 9–14 seater “buses”.

¹¹ State Reconstruction and Development Programme – a low cost or free housing and tenure system for resource-poor settings

¹² The ethic of humanity: “*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” Zulu for the widely translated maxim, “a person is a person through other persons”, is often translated into sharing resources when they are available, and expecting reciprocation when the opportunities arise.

highest (Figure 7). HIV is essentially a social disease, with severe health implications. It is driven by social fragmentation, deprivation, denialism and hopelessness.

Organisations working with HIV, or any other chronic disease, in this setting are faced with intractable problems. People in life-threatening need of medication are unable to reach it, despite the health system offering its services free of charge. Where medication is obtained, it usually needs to be taken with food, which cannot be consistently supplied. Conditions in informal housing with scant protection from the elements are not conducive to their recovery.

In the face of these challenges, CBOs have little to offer. They do not have the means to provide the basic needs of transport and food. Their role tends to revolve around basic home-based hygiene, care and counselling, while they remain largely helpless to meet their clients' real and urgent needs.

The emotional stresses, legitimacy and strategies of these organisations are all inextricable from the challenges of their environment.

3.5.2. Low-income suburbs

The city of Soweto is large, varied and long-established. Suburbs range from some of the poorest urban settings, to the wealthy areas of the homes of Sowetan celebrities. Soweto has a history steeped in the South African anti-apartheid struggle. Under the apartheid system of racial separation, Soweto was a black township at the heart of the political opposition. It has a long history of civil society activism and collective conscience. Although racial separation has been abolished for two decades, the population remains an ethnically varied, cosmopolitan mix of Johannesburg-commuting, predominantly black South Africans, many of whom are descended from generations rooted in Soweto.

This study was conducted in the relatively low income areas of Pimville and Meadowlands. These are densely populated, vast residential areas, with little local industry or business. Based on impressions, unemployment is far less severe than in either rural areas or in informal settlements, and access to basic services is far greater. Clinics, social services and hospital are walking distance for many, and organisations have both the access and the contact to refer their clients. As well as local supermarkets donating food to CBOs, there are opportunities for CBOs to form relationships and operate referral networks that allow them to meet their clients' needs far better than in informal settlements.

This may contribute to a vibrant and active NGO community, with a great many NGOs and CBOs operating in these areas. Those that participated in this study varied in their origin, style and purpose (Table 4).

3.5.3. Rural village

The MSC process was conducted in the small, rural village of Mabeskraal in Bojanala District of North West Province, around 70km north of Rustenburg. North West is a rural agricultural and mining province, with a spread of small urban centres and country towns, such as Mabeskraal. In common with much of rural South Africa, poor education outcomes, unemployment and lack of access to services combine to create a setting of pervasive poverty and limited progress.

North West Province has an active and engaged system of hereditary traditional authorities, providing traditional leadership with far more significant than in many urban areas. Mabekraal traditional leadership and local CBOs had been partners in a programme funded by Oxfam America and coordinated by the AIDS Consortium, focusing on communication around gender, culture and HIV. One of the distinguishing features of the programme was the enthusiasm, motivation, support and leadership of Kgosi Mabe, King of Mabeskraal, and his wife, Kgosigadi Mabe.

In other respects the village was not dissimilar to those in similar settings. The village has a basic health centre, a number of high schools and primary schools, an abundance of churches, the Kgosi's administrative centre, a somewhat competing municipal cluster of Ward Councillors, and virtually no jobs or local industry. Small livestock, rare kitchen gardens, shebeens¹³ and work outside the village seemed to be the main sources of livelihood. While female unemployment across North West is around 50%, a higher proportion of men work in neighbouring towns or mines. Nevertheless, many were unemployed, particularly young adults and the elderly.

Several CBOs provide a variety of services in Mabeskraal. Far less deprived than informal urban areas, these generally have premises, a functional referral system, access to medical and social services, a functional local municipality and traditional leadership.

This work was conducted with three local CBOs, and three national NGOs, as well as a CBO based in a neighbouring area.

¹³ South African local bar or tavern

3.6 *Sampling*

3.6.1. Sampling strategy

In theory the study was to use theoretical sampling (people who can help to build a theory) combined with purposive sampling (people who meet selection criteria) (Henning, 2004, p. 71). Theoretical sampling is typical of grounded theory work (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). It assumes that interactions are selected for their contribution to enriching the grounded theory, rather than for offering broad, random, representative cases (Dey, 2004). What was required for this study, were organisations willing to participate in an action learning process, and enthusiastic about being the subjects for experimental methods development. The sample was less a sample of organisations or individuals, than of the experience or event of a collective evaluation process (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

In practice, participants were selected using volunteer sampling, in that only six organisations requested inclusion at the outset of the Stories and Metaphor process. Neither selection nor exclusion was therefore necessary. All those who volunteered at the outset met the entry requirements, and all were included in the study. Several more were interested later, but the data saturation point had been reached. The saturation of learning is regarded as a trademark of grounded approaches (Hood, 2007).

The need for a different approach emerged from the Stories and Metaphor process. Oxfam America and its partners were introduced by the AIDS Consortium with an interest in collaborating on an MSC process in Mabeskraal. The single case of the Most Significant Change process might therefore be described as a snowball, convenience, volunteer sample.

A consequence of volunteer sampling was that another inclusion criterion was organisations being willing to invest time in reflection, unthreatened by talking about themselves, and unlikely to have anything to hide. A selector like this is likely to have had direct impact on the results. The experiences related in this study must be regarded as a best case scenario for CBOs. CBOs that are asked to participate, rather than volunteering, may agree to an evaluation but may be less forthcoming as participants. Organisations that are obliged to participate will be even more difficult to facilitate. This observation relates to concerns around ownership of evaluation raised in the discussion chapter.

3.6.2. Sample population

A sample is drawn from a defined sub-population, according to certain criteria for inclusion (Mouton & Marais, 1990, p. 41). The AIDS Consortium's members are individuals, groups or organisations that have an interest in accessing its services or participating in its events. The sample was drawn from those AIDS Consortium members that meet a set of entry requirements.

Around 160 Gauteng organisations that have participated in the AC's capacity building training courses were potential research participants for the Stories and Metaphor process. While overall membership of the AC is very open, there are selection criteria for these training courses, which were therefore also enjoyed by the research study. These include: active existence for at least one year, being registered or in the process of registration as an NPO, full-time organisational activity in community, and a relatively stable staff and leadership.

It was the alumni of this training programme who constituted the population for this study.

The AC's trainees were invited to participate in the research study as a learning and reflection opportunity. The invitation was extended through a brief announcement and description of the study at the training venue, and through distribution of a leaflet (Figure 8). The invitation offered the opportunity for a facilitated day of organisational reflection. Organisations were asked to provide their time and the engaged participation of senior management and staff, up to a maximum of approximately 15 participants.

They were also asked to provide the use of their work site for the process. This is assumed to confer ownership and an atmosphere of organisation-centredness and



Figure 8 *Flier distributed to AIDS Consortium trainee organisations to recruit volunteers into the study.*

respect. It also made me, as facilitator, less dependent on participant travel and punctuality arrangements, giving me slightly greater control over start and end times, and encouraging organisation members to attend.

The AIDS Consortium provided valuable support in gathering the contact details and names of those organisations that wished to participate.

The MSC phase in North West Province emanated from the Stories and Metaphor process. Participating organisations were predefined by virtue of having been members of the partnership in the Mabeskraal Gender, Culture and HIV Programme. Their attendance was coordinated by the AIDS Consortium, and funded by Oxfam America. The Mabeskraal CBOs involved were AC members which had also completed its capacity building curriculum, and met the same criteria as those in the Gauteng study.

3.6.3. Sample size

Qualitative sample size is more meaningfully visualised as volume, than number. This is because a qualitative sample is a product of both breadth and depth of study (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 227). There are no rules, statistical or otherwise, in deciding on qualitative sample size. Quinn-Patton (2002, p. 244) describes sample size decisions as depending on "*what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources*". Sample fullness is reached with a complete and satisfactory answer to the research problem and/or a *cul de sac*. For the purposes of this study, the sample size refers to the number of iterations of the process required until a plateau of learning or a natural concluding point is achieved.

3.6.3.1. *Gauteng Stories and Metaphor process*

Six organisations volunteered for the Gauteng phase (Table 4). The iterations of the method with these organisations yielded insights and principles, and tested the method to the point of saturation. Although there was interest from additional organisations, the process was deemed sufficient. Due to the sensitive nature of these inward-looking evaluations, the identities of these organisations are not disclosed.

Table 4. *Demographics of the sample of 6 methods iterations with Gauteng CBOs for the Stories and Metaphor phase*

Identifier	Core business	Location	Description	Participants	
				Women	Men
Case Study 1 (TT)	Home-Based Care and Vulnerable Children	Orange Farm (informal settlement)	Organisation housed in a shack. Lead by 5 managers. Staffed by 40 carers. All unpaid volunteers. Evidence of basic systems following training at AC, e.g. mission and vision, organogram and strategy displayed. Filing system exists.	8	1
Case Study 2 (DC) and (JJ) Two organisations	Home-Based Care	Meadowlands (low income suburb of Soweto)	Offices shared on premises managed by JJ. Staff of 4 stipended or salaried members.	1	3
	Vulnerable Children		Large, established offices. More than 15 paid staff, some on market-related salaries. Volunteers on stipends. Several sources of funding and a budget exceeding R1 million. The Director's participation was interrupted.	4	1
Case Study 3 (QN)	Home-Based Care	Pimville (low income suburb of Soweto)	Access to premises at the church. 25 Volunteers and 5 managers. All on stipends.	4	1
Case Study 4 (DG)	Hospice, shelter and Home-Based Care	Pimville (low income suburb of Soweto)	Premises provided by a primary school. 25 volunteers and 8 managers. Several staff resident on premises. Salaries and stipends provided. Participants included Director, a Board Member, and most of the nursing staff.	11	2
Case Study 5 (BN)	gender awareness	Meadowlands (low income, Soweto)	Premises provided by municipality, shared with various NGOs. 5 Staff, all unpaid volunteers.	1	2
Case Study 6 (DM)	Counseling chronically ill	Lawley (informal settlement)	Housed in a shack, with access to the shade clothed gathering area of the church. 3 managers and 8 carers, all unpaid volunteers.	10	1
TOTAL				39	11

3.6.3.2. North West MSC

In the North West MSC phase, the organisations and participants were publicly engaged, and are acknowledged by name (Table 5). Three local CBOs from the programme partnership in Mabeskraal participated. Another CBO from a neighbouring community also provided team members. In addition, participants included members of Oxfam America, the AIDS Consortium and another two national NGOs.

Table 5. *Sample demographics of the North West Most Significant Change phase*

Representing	Participating organisations or individuals	Core Business	Description of role in the research	Participants	
				Women	Men
Local CBOs	Bacha ba Kopane**	Youth and substance abuse	Fieldworkers and local coordination	2	1
	Botho Jwa Rona Home Base Care**	Home-based care CBO from Mabeskraal	Fieldworker	1	0
	Botho Jwa Rona OVC**	CBO from Mabeskraal working with vulnerable children	Fieldworker	1	0
Neighbouring CBO	Pholo Modi wa Sechaba	CBO working with vulnerable children and home-based care	Fieldworkers	1	1
Local Authority	The office of the local traditional authority	Support to the office of Kgosi Mabe	Fieldworker and local coordination	1	0
4 CBOs, OF WHICH 3 LOCAL, PROVIDED 7 RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS, WITH ACTIVE SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT BY A STAFF MEMBER OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY'S OFFICE					
National and international NGOs	Oxfam America	International NGO on human rights	Funding agency and coordination	2	0
	AIDS Consortium	National NGO and CBO umbrella agency.	Fieldworker and coordinators	3	1
	Sonke Gender Justice	National NGO Gender and human rights awareness and advocacy	Fieldworker	0	1
	Lovellife	National youth NGO	Fieldworker	1	0
1 INTERNATIONAL NGO FUNDING AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT, A TOTAL OF 8 FIELD TEAM MEMBERS FROM NATIONAL NGOS.					
TOTAL FIELD TEAM				12	4
Community interview respondents	Community members	Many representing interest groups such as CBOs, teachers, traditional leaders, religious leaders, ward councillors, health professionals	Stories of change interviews	57 stories	
			Story analysis focus groups	5 FGDs ±35 participants	
			Community feedback	±50 participants	
APPROXIMATE TOTAL PARTICIPANTS				158	

3.6.4. Case Studies

Mouton (2001) provides a brief and useful overview of the characteristics of Case Study research:

- It is useful for exploratory and descriptive questions
- It is inductive, without a pre-formed hypothesis, but with the guidance for boundaries of interest
- Data are analysed using induction and a grounded theory approach
- Its strengths include high construct validity, in-depth insight and strong rapport
- The main source of error is researcher bias
- Its main limitation is that results are non-generalisable and non-standardised¹⁴.

The outline supports the application of a Case Study approach for this study.

A case is a unit of analysis. It has clear and specific boundaries. These are defined in the research approach and become the basis for purposeful sampling (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 447; Creswell, 2007, p. 73). The case parameters for the first phase of the study are defined as constituting a one-day evaluation process with the leaders and staff of an organisation. This phase of the study was considered complete when learning reached a natural conclusion.

The seventh case emerged from the action research analysis and learning from the first six, and took on a very different form. It constituted a far larger, extended MSC process, with 3 Mabeskraal CBOs, 3 supporting NGOs and a sample of community members. This seventh case was intended to test a different approach, contrasting methods, and a different set of respondents, towards answering the challenges of evaluating community impact that had arisen in the research by that point. Case study sampling acknowledges the purposeful selection of contrasting cases to show different perspectives in an issue (Creswell, 2007, p. 74).

¹⁴ With respect to the last of these points, however, evaluation is not, and need not be, generalisable between organisations. Its primary purpose is learning and developing effectiveness for each organisation. Where generalisation is important in this study is in terms of drawing out evaluation practice and principles that support uniqueness and learning in other organisations to which these might be applied.

As cases accumulate in an action research process, grounded data contributes to reasoning and analysis. This culminates in complimentary inductive and deductive reasoning. Using multiple sources of information, the cases are described against a set of themes as they emerged from the data. This sequence of events and the accumulation of learning are represented in Figure 9

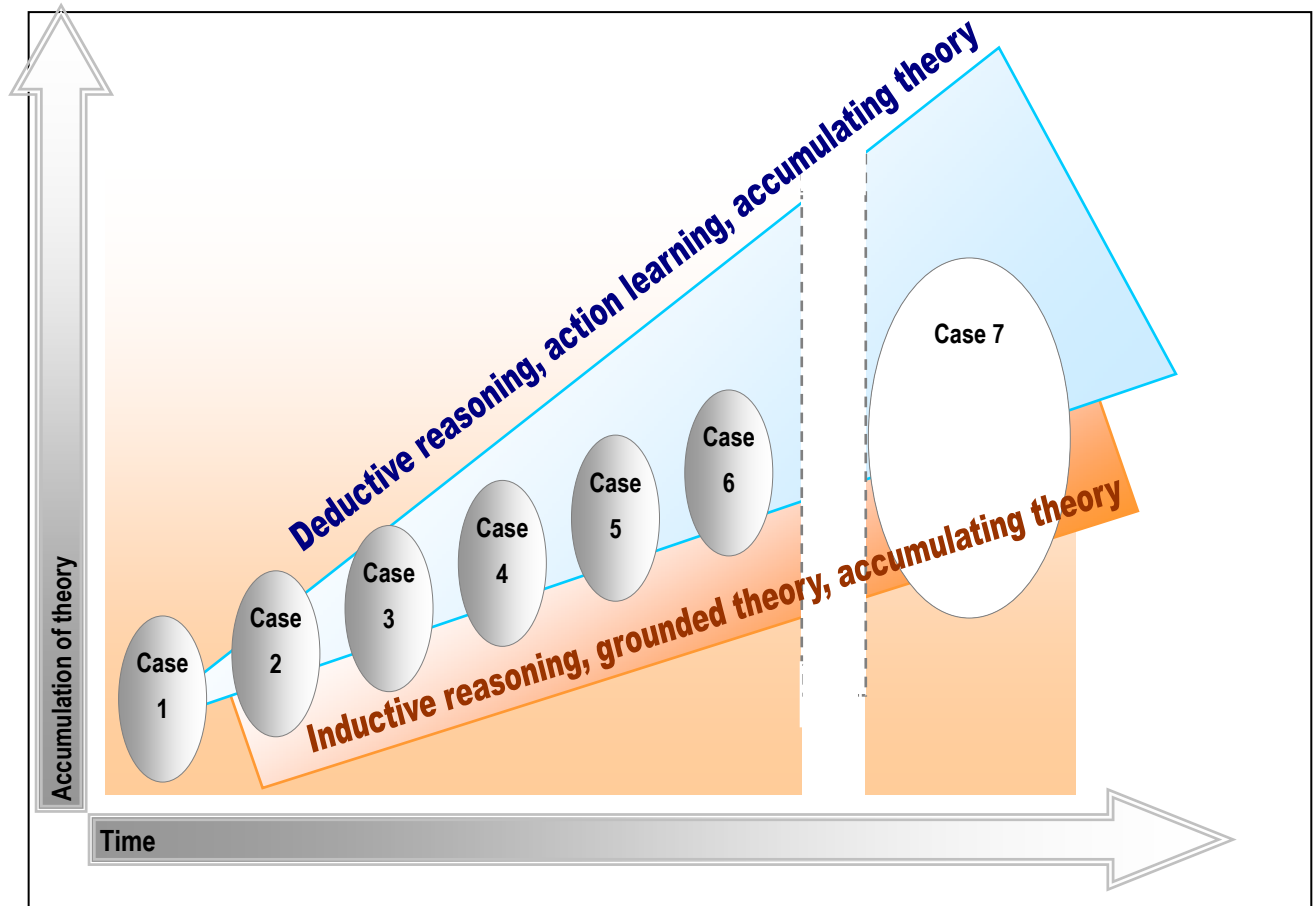


Figure 9 Case studies in an iterative action learning process, drawing new grounded data into theory accumulation

3.7 Research process

Data collection methods were based on principles of emergence, grounding, narrative study and utilisation-based evaluation. These began with a starting point of a basic methodology as an exploratory attempt at an alternative. This inception structure is briefly described below. The results chapter captures the evolution and learning that begin with this inception process.

The process steps themselves are loosely structured. They are all grounded and emergent, with latitude of interpretation and responsiveness to the needs of their client organisations.

Two styles of evaluation were applied for comparison and complement:

- **Gauteng Stories and Metaphor process.** Organisation-based and internally-focused, a narrative and metaphor facilitated processes. An iterative action learning approach with six participating organisations, each entailing a one-day facilitated learning process.
- **North West MSC process.** Community-based, externally focused, narrative research processes in a single, larger Case Study.

3.7.1. Gauteng: Stories and Metaphor

The base process included the following steps:

- i) **Preparation of a grounded emergent evaluation process** and logistics communication with participant organisation.
- ii) **Facilitation of an evaluation and organisational learning process with participants.** A learning and evaluation process was conducted using a loose outline. This took the form of a one-day organisation-centred learning and team reflection session, the exact format of which evolved between iterations. It is this methodological evolution, as well as the principles emanating from each organisation, that constitutes the main output.
- iii) **Data recording.** Data, including process observations, were recorded using notes, flipchart exercises, photography and voice recording of sessions.
- iv) **Participant reflection** and feedback during the closing session for each Case Study offered participants' impressions of the process.
- v) **Personal reflection.** My own critical reflection on the process followed immediately after each interaction. This was captured through voice recorded reflection and systematic journaling.

In addition to reflecting on process and seeking out improvements to a facilitation design, there was the more important matter of reflecting on principles. Each iteration was a unique community experience, and each provided food for thought on the principles for developmental practice. These principles provide a more

broadly generalisable output on effective development practice captured in the results and discussion chapters.

- vi) **Mentorship.** Action research, captured in the results and discussion chapters, is a team activity, and cannot be effectively conducted in isolation. The use of participant feedback was important in this regard. Also essential were a series of reflective conversations with peer mentors who were all experienced development practitioners, facilitators and CBO organisation development specialists (Appendix 1). A total of four mentorship sessions were provided, with four different mentors. Peer discussion and review was also provided through participation in seven development evaluation conference engagements during the course of study, both as presenter and attendee.
- vii) **Learning and preparation of the next evaluation process** for application in the next iteration of the cycle. Together participant review, reflection and mentorship informed the redesigning of the evaluation system between each action learning cycle repetition.
- viii) **Iterations (Returned to i for six cycles).** The process from inception to learning was repeated until it reached a natural conclusion.
- ix) **Closure.** In the 6th iteration of the Gauteng phase the flow of method and principles met a natural end point, and the lessons could then be drawn together for discussion and conclusions.

One of the major outcomes of the Gauteng phase was that the Story and Metaphor process had not satisfactorily addressed evaluation of outward-looking impact, although it had very effectively addressed the neglected area of inward-looking organisational responsibility. This led into the MSC process in North West

- x) **Stories of Most Significant Change.** The opportunity to partner with Oxfam America and the AC team in North West Province was gratefully accepted. The MSC process was implemented and analysed using a similar action research reflective process, to determine the process and principles for outward-looking evaluation.

3.7.2. North West: Stories of Most Significant Change

One of the key challenges in the Stories and Metaphor process was capturing service impacts and outcomes, as opposed to organisation development and learning outcomes. The principles of grounded, story-based, participatory methods had been upheld during

the first phase of fieldwork, and had been effective for inward-looking evaluation. The Case Studies thus far had not convincingly answered questions of community impact evaluation.

The Mabekraal partners were interested in understanding early outcomes of their efforts in stimulating communication of gender, culture and HIV. The team was interested in a communicative, participatory evaluation process.

In valuable synergy, I was interested in a comparative method for a more outward-looking process that was grounded, emergent and systems oriented. The MSC approach was identified as achieving both sets of objectives.

The evaluation was conducted by community and staff members from the programmes' local and national partner organisations (Table 5). My role was that of trainer, mentor, facilitator and report collator. It was also, from the perspective of this PhD, that of process observer and action researcher. Oxfam America funded the process, and partner organisations released their staff for three weeks of intensive fieldwork.

While MSC is an established, published, acknowledged method, the approach has not been tested or adapted to the setting of rural development in Africa with CBOs, or around issues as sensitive as HIV and AIDS support. It is used in this study to engage the community perspective, enriching processes of Stories and Metaphor which focus on the organisations perspective.

The guidelines offered by Davies and Dart (2005) were adapted in a three week exercise in the North West Province village of Mabeskraal. The process on which the study was based included the following elements:

- i) **Field team preparation.** One of the principles of MSC is that it should be implemented by community members themselves (Davies & Dart, 2005). With the leadership of Oxfam America and the AIDS Consortium, all of the organisations that had been participating in the North

DAVIES AND DART (2005) STEPS
<i>STEP 1. Starting and raising interest</i>
<i>STEP 2. Defining the domains of change, and</i>
<i>STEP 3. Defining the reporting period</i>
<i>STEP 4. Collecting Significant Change stories</i>
<i>STEP 5. Selecting the most significant of the stories</i>
<i>STEP 6. Feeding back results of story selection</i>
<i>STEP 7. Verification of stories</i>
<i>STEP 10. Revising the system: recommendations</i>
<i>STEP 9. Secondary analysis and meta-monitoring</i>
<i>STEP 8. Quantification</i>

West Gender, Culture and HIV programme were invited to participate in the evaluation process as a field team. Each organisation allocated one or more of its staff to an intensive three week training evaluation process.

- ii) **Community preparation and sensitisation.** Kgosi Mabe, traditional leader of Mabeskraal, and firm supporter of the Gender, Culture and HIV Programme was consulted. He gave permission for the evaluation, and alerted community members to the upcoming interviews.
- iii) **Training, learning and process design.** In two training sessions over 4 days, the field team of 14 was introduced to MSC and the required skills.
- iv) **Field interviews.** The team was deployed in Mabeskraal with regular facilitated debriefing sessions, to collect Stories of Most Significant Change. A total of around 57 stories was collected.
- v) **Community story analysis.** Through a process of attrition and discussion in focus groups, 10 stories of Most Significant Change were selected.

The focus group results were discussed among the research team, and conclusions of impact and themes were drawn. Four themes and several major areas of recommendation were highlighted
- vi) **Community feedback and analysis.** Four stories were selected as being most significant within the thematic areas. These were related to a community meeting of around 50 participants. Responses from the audience elaborated on the significance of these accounts. The process provided a discussion around confirming and disconfirming stories and themes.
- vii) **Closure and recommendations.** I drew the recommendations from the team discussion, analysis and community session into a project evaluation report (Konstant, 2009a).
- viii) **Secondary analysis.** The purpose of this thesis is methodological review and meta-evaluation. My own reflection provided a final review of the appropriateness and potential of MSC in a CBO and community development context.
- ix) **Steps not conducted in this process.** The Davies and Dart (2005) method allows for quantification of relevant criteria for impact that arise from the process. This step would be achievable for some of the themes and variables that arose, but was not implemented in this study.

The *content* results of the MSC process have been published and distributed, and are available online (Konstant, 2009a). My purpose here is to analyse the *method* as it was applied and adapted, and reflect on its strengths, weaknesses and potential as a contribution to alternative approaches to understanding impact in communities. This analysis has not been disseminated as yet.

3.8 Data recording

Data, reflection and collective conclusions were captured in several formats:

- Notes taken by the researcher
- Flipcharts prepared by participants and facilitator
- Notes from stories captured by the MSC field team during interviews
- Mind maps generated during analysis with MSC field team and organisation members
- Photographs and DVD
- Voice recorded interviews and facilitated sessions
- Voice recording of post-session personal reflection
- Notes from mentorship meetings
- Excel capture of the responses to the emailed questionnaire on emerging conclusions sent out to peer reviewers. This was part of the analytical reflective process, and is described below.

3.9 Data analysis

3.9.1. Analysis in action research and constructivist grounded theory

While the distinction between data collection and analysis may be very clear in surveys or standardised tests, this separation is far less absolute in 'naturalistic inquiry' (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 436).

Data collection and analysis are continuous and synchronised (Fawcett, et al., 1994), such that the intervention evolves to produce the intended design. Patterns, themes and possibilities arise continuously in qualitative research. Emergence is a central force (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Analysis therefore may begin during fieldwork, and continue throughout the process of reporting, and into the pursuit of the threads that emanate after completion of the thesis and publications.

In addition to being unbounded by time and order, analytical insight is also drawn from many different sources, some of which may be unplanned and serendipitous. Insights are drawn into the core theme of grounded, data-centred analysis (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 436).

Analysis of these data followed the action learning cycle of reflecting on the process, extracting lessons, and designing and justifying an adjusted repetition of the action learning cycle (0). In this study, a great deal of the analysis took place in conversations with peers at conferences and workshops for development evaluators. Action research analysis is more about interrogating and making sense of the data, than the data itself revealing new 'truths' on a platter.

Reflexivity is essential to grounded analysis (Dey, 2007). This refers to documenting the critical steps towards reaching an (interim) conclusion.

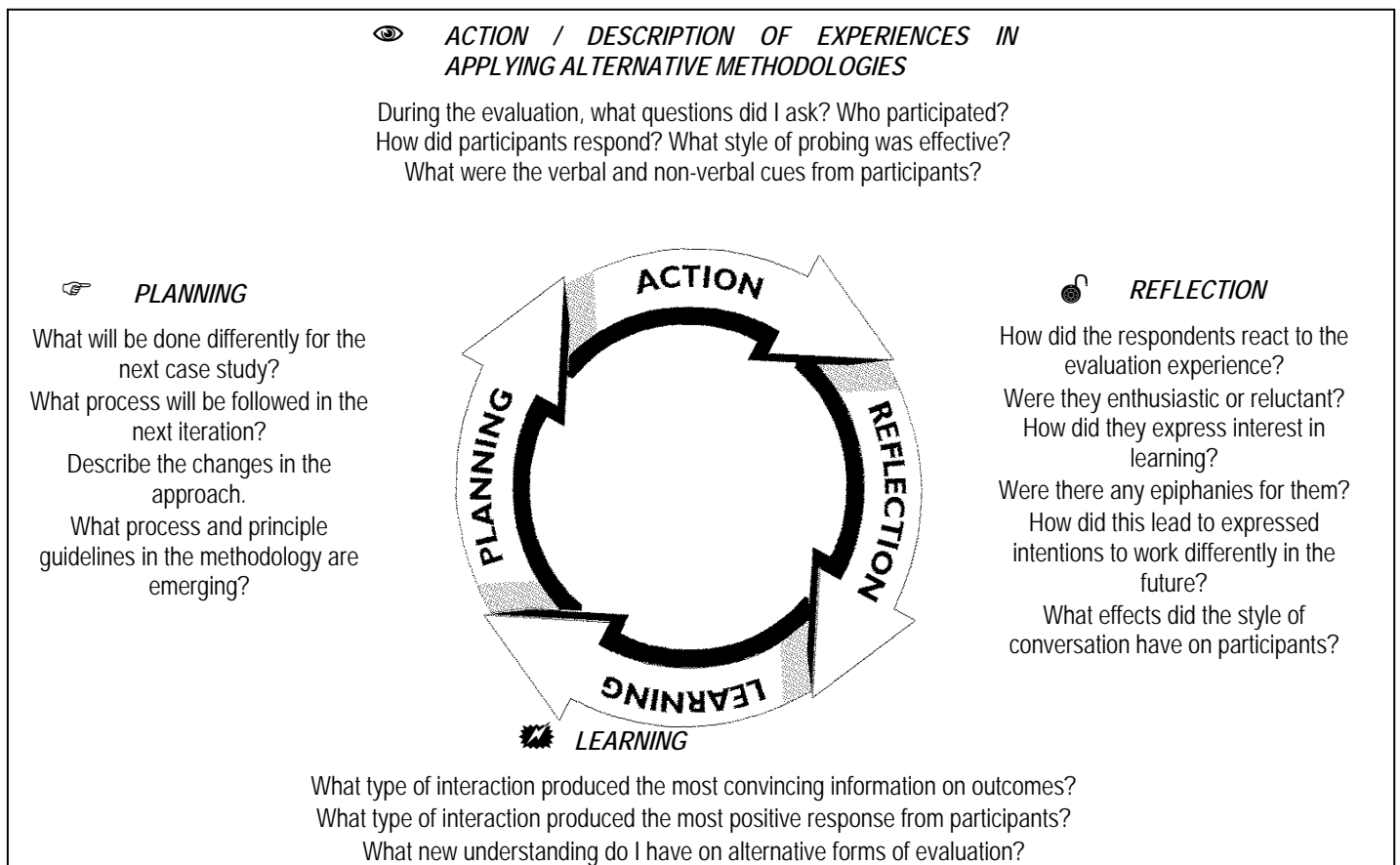


Figure 10 *The Action Learning Cycle as applied in the non-empirical analysis for developing guidelines and principles for a more developmental evaluation approach.*

Source: Adapted from Taylor, et al., (1997)

Mentorship, participatory analysis and peer exchange are core sources of data interrogation and analysis. In order to achieve this independent interrogation emerging conclusions were sent to 50 professional working in M&E, facilitation and development, of whom 18 responded (Table 6, Appendix 1). The questionnaire template can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 6. *Mentor and peer review demographics for action learning reflective data analysis*

	Where is the person employed in the industry					Primary interests with respect to this thesis			Gender		TOTAL
	Consultant	Donor sector	NGO sector	Public sector	Private Sector	Evaluation	Civil Society	Other	Female	Male	
Mentors	2	1	3			3	3		6		6
Questionnaire respondents	7		5	1	5	7	5	6	10	8	18
Conferences¹⁵	n/a					5	2		n/a		7

3.9.2. Participant analysis

Action research assumes and requires that analysis and conclusions be drawn out through the research process with participant input supported by facilitation (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 224, 269). In both the Stories and Metaphor iterations and the MSC study, story and self-analysis by participants were central to the participatory process.

3.9.3. Mentorship and peer review as collective analysis

Action research depends on and assumes a collective learning process. For an individual research student, this requires conscious manoeuvring. Sessions ended with participants' reflection and feedback. Additional perspectives were important, however, since I generally drew conclusion during personal reflection after each session (Table 6).

¹⁵ Details of contributions listed in the reference under Konstant or Konstant and Stanz; and in Appendix 1.

Mentorship - Conclusions and advice were exchanged for coffee with professionals associated with evaluation or civil society at regular intervals during the analysis process. They provided insight, questioning and interrogation of my emerging conclusions.

Questionnaire - As a concrete perspective began to emerge in my mind from the data, this was captured into a questionnaire which gave a series of logic steps and scenarios for experts in the field to comment on (Appendix 2). Participants were explicitly chosen to represent a range of perspectives, as anticipated, some that would hold divergent and sometimes directly opposing views from my own. Dey (2007) raises the value of divergent voices and rich presentation of debate.

Their input was coded using Atlas-ti, and served to enrich the thematic areas (axial codes) that emerged from the results. Together these themes are structured into the discussion chapter. Given that this questionnaire was essentially a discussion tool, rather than data per sé, their comments are integrated into the discussion chapter of this thesis in a series of discussion boxes. I agreed with some and not with others. All viewpoints are presented as a source of reflective material for the reader, and reminders of the perspectives in the debate for myself.

Conferencing and online publishing - The national and international evaluation and civil society development communities have a vibrant and active circuit of professional sharing, learning and debate (Appendix 1). I attended as many of these events as was feasible during the data inception, collection and analysis phases of this study. I presented emergent thinking at each of these events, and received the questions and feedback from audiences. The content of parallel research and thinking of colleagues in the field was also highly informative at these events.

In addition, the content of the MSC study (Konstant, 2009a) and emerging conclusions on CBO systems and participation (Konstant and Stanz, 2009a) were published online for exposure to debate. These lead to various conversations with other professionals engaged in similar work.

3.9.4. Case Study analysis

Case studies are encapsulated into case records. These are thorough, detailed and faithful condensations of the case data (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 449). The structuring of these case records depends on the purpose of the study. In this study case records are structured to reflect the iterative action research process of observing, reflecting, learning and intent in order to guide the reader through the accumulation of learning

and analysis which lead to the study's conclusions. The results are presented as an opportunity for the reader to accompany the researcher in an unfolding learning and reflection process.

3.9.5. Criteria for analysis

"It all depends on the criteria. Judging quality requires criteria." (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 542; Mullen, 1994). A process may be analysed in terms of cost-benefit, consistency, risk, negative or positive impacts, participant experience, or a possibly endless list of lenses. The first step in the analysis process is therefore to isolate the basic criteria against which data are to be synthesised.

For action research and grounded methods this is an iterative process, and a series of evolving criteria enables the data to be viewed from increasingly relevant perspectives, similar to zooming in and focusing a photograph.

3.9.6. Deductive and inductive analysis

Deductive analysis involves the testing of a predefined concept or hypothesis. Inductive analysis begins from a loosely structured framework and considers conclusions from data as they emerge (Mouton & Marais, 1990, p. 119). Researchers in a deductive approach select their variables in advance. Inductive research requires that we identify variables as they arise from the data (Babbie, 2005, p. 90). In their purest forms, hypothesis testing is an example of deductive analysis, while pure grounded theory is inductive (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

In the case of methodological design the initial point of departure is a practical problem or methodological concern, rather than a theory or hypothesis for testing (Thomas & Rothman, 1994). In a process of grounded theory development induction and deduction alternate in an action research cycle (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 67). New applications are attempted with a minimum of preconceptions (induction). The lessons from this process are applied in order to test some of the emerging ideas (deduction). The next iteration, although it is in part a test, also requires conscious openness to unconceived theory emanating from experience (induction) Kelly (1999, p. 414) (Figure 9).

3.9.7. Coding, themes and patterns

Repetition is the essence of pattern (Kelly, 1999, p. 414). We identify a structure when we see it occurring in slightly different forms, from different perspectives, through different data collection experiences. By describing a theme as we see it repeated, the pattern becomes more concrete and more strongly defined. This can be achieved

through a series of defined steps focusing on codes and groups of codes, in an attempt to categorise and simplify the data, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (Dey, 2004). Alternatively, where Glaser remained a proponent, data can continue to enrich and broaden our understanding in increasing complexity and reality. Most broadly, Dey (2007) describes codes or categories as theoretical, explanatory and metaphorical rather than rule-bound.

The analysis in this research draws on both styles. Several parallel themes (or codes), are identified and elaborated through repetition of a learning cycle in a form of sequential triangulation. Every line of data or every interchange in a process is analysed for new meaning and fresh themes (Dey, 2004). This analysis process is clearly reflected by the use of icons in the results chapter.

It is probably artificial to attempt to describe the process of cumulatively building a Theory of Change using grounded theory coding terminology, although certain parallels are possible. Cumulative open coding forms the essence of analysis, and looks at the unfolding experience line-by-line, or exchange-by-exchange. Axial coding accumulates in the progression of ideas along the research timeline, rather than during a single analytical event of a critical mass of data, at one point in time. Selective coding might be regarded as the process by which the emerging theories from the data meet the ontology of the study, to produce a compatible philosophy for change. This cumulative nature of emergent, action research findings is clearly illustrated in the analysis shown in the results chapters below. While I loosely refer to coding as a form of simple action analysis, the narrative of exploration is far more meaningful as a lens for analysis (Dey, 2007).

As a methodological study the analysis of this study was an unfolding and incremental process, in which each iteration contributed to a slightly different incarnation of method. As such, repetitions were not seen as equivalent members of a sample. There were successive points in the crystallisation of ideas, insights and conclusions.

While the content could, and may yet, be analysed using qualitative data analysis software, the methodology development process was not conducive to software-based analysis. Each observation contributed to testing, confirming and disconfirming the process.

Codes and themes did emerge in the elucidation of principles. These evaluation principle themes are highlighted in the results chapter as they emerge from observation, and form the core content of the discussion chapter that follows.

In an action research process, the patterns are the basis of an evolving theory. Interpretation and pattern interrogation follow a documented, disciplined action learning cycle of description, reflection, learning and adjustment. These data types are presented in a loosely followed structure that reflects the action research cycle for method development (0). Icons are given to each of the phases of this action learning cycle, with the following icon interpretation:

- 👁 ***Action or description:** the process that was followed, observations on the events and interactions.*
- 🌀 ***Reflection:** The implications and interpretation of the experience.*
- 🌟 ***Learning:** Where relevant, the new insights and conclusions that emerged from this particular interaction.*
- 👉 ***Planning** of 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*

Another icon used in the results chapter highlights major themes that are carried into the discussion and conclusions chapters that follow. This icon is used to indicate where the action, reflection, learning and planning sequence culminates in conclusions or issues for deeper interpretation.



3.10 Dissemination and Proceduralisation

The final step in methods design and development is that of institutionalising or proceduralising new methods and principles into mainstream practice (Thomas, 1994, p. 289). This is the social, sectoral or political confrontation stage of critical change research. It is essential to achieving critical change outcomes. In the course of this study, the problem statements and emerging results were placed into the public evaluation and development domain through six conference presentations (Konstant, 2007, 2008, 2009b; Konstant & Stanz 2009a, 2009b, 2009c) and a training workshop on action learning. The presentations and supporting material to these events, as well as the written publication for Konstant (2009a) are provided on a CD attached to this thesis (Appendix).

In addition, parts of this thesis that support a piece on the Paris Declaration on AID effectiveness in relation to CBO evaluation were placed into the public domain as an invitation for comment (Konstant & Stanz 2009a). The MSC booklet was distributed and

placed online by Oxfam America (Konstant 2009a). All of these have led to opportunities for ongoing discussions with colleagues in contribution to a community of practice around these themes, which has had great value in forming my own ideas.

During these exchanges it was particularly interesting to observe other practitioners responding similarly to concerns around non-development evaluation. The groundswell of concern since the 1990s (Chambers, 1995), continues to confront the inadequacies of convention (Dart, 2009; Rogers, 2009). Despite this collective effort, proceduralisation of change, like all advocacy work is slow, largely unrewarding, but ultimately, with perseverance, transformative.

3.11 Ensuring quality

3.11.1. Rigour and trustworthiness

Rigour asks that any 'truth claim or knowledge claim' be substantiated: "If I say that this is true, how do I know it is true?" Academia holds itself responsible for truth claims that are fair and for its role in society as influencing social transformation through such claims (McNiff, 2002). It also acknowledges however, that truth is an elusive state, which is never reached but which we attempt to approach more closely with each claim (Quinn Patton 2002, p. 542).

Qualitative data analysis is based on principles, consciousness and approach. Structures, methods and rigid guidelines are less relevant. An important principle in qualitative analysis is that the researcher resists seeking out the conclusions she has imagined in the data, either biasing the analysis, or excluding other reasonable conclusions (Kelly, 1999, p. 411). A related principle is that the researcher may ask questions, but the data should provide the answers. However obvious this may seem, the temptation exists to imagine answers into the data which seem elegant and logical. Rigorous interrogation of conclusions must be sensitive to this temptation.

Trustworthiness in grounded theory has been raised as a concern, since Case Studies are selected rather than randomly sampled, and each informs the data from a unique, evolving perspective. Although divided into several stages, with representation by a variety of participants, the sample size for an action research process is actually only 'one' (Dey, 2004). It is one evolving, unreplicated unfolding process of method development.

Although it is not replicated, or perhaps even replicable, it is not untriangulated or non-rigorous. Action research uses iterative cycles of testing and triangulating emerging

claims, and of observing knowledge and theory in different contexts to provide this rigour. It asks that claims also be reflected with a circle of peers and mentors and that the trustworthiness of the logical arguments be tested.

Important in all research, including grounded and exploratory research, is the rigour of interrogating data for disconfirming evidence, as well as confirming evidence (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 239). It is important to stand back from assumptions in each action learning iteration, and consider the evidence that disconfirms our emerging suspicions.

Table 7 outlines the strategies for optimising trustworthiness in this study.

Table 7. *Measures in this study for optimising Internal and external trustworthiness.*

INTERNAL TRUSTWORTHINESS		
Conceptual / Theoretical trustworthiness	Do we trust the research framework?	This study is concerned with applying grounded theory into a context where positivist theory tends to dominate. Theories of grounded research, action learning and process-use are well documented, and accepted as being scientifically trustworthy.
Operational / Measurement trustworthiness	Do the chosen measures reflect reality?	Several different processes of triangulation have been applied. Action research is designed as a process of repeated confirmation and theory interrogation. It also acknowledges, however, that truth claims are hemmed by context, approach and human variables. <i>"Truth? ... Truth is like the Buddha. When met on the road it should be killed. ... Your confusion is simple. To 'interpret' and to 'state truths' are two quite different things." ... Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 542</i>
Data-Collection / Reliability	Will research participants say what they really believe to be true?	Every attempt was made to prevent participants from feeling encouraged to manipulate their participation. Participation in the study held only the advantages of organisation learning and reflection. Other motivations were perhaps the natural politeness and warmth of community members. The MSC team and I had to be sensitive to influencing what respondents said by conveying our own views. This was challenging for para-researchers, and is discussed in the results chapter.
Analysis and interpretation / inferential trustworthiness	Does my conclusion emerge with trustworthiness from the data?	Researcher preconception, bias and imagination can draw a great deal from the data that might not, in reality, be there. In exploratory research the development of theory requires leaps of interpretation and experimentation, which the data bear out. Insights, principles and method were drawn from the data, and were tested for fantasy with mentors and peer reviewers, as well as through the iterations of the action learning cycle. It is likely, even inevitable, that another researcher might have drawn different conclusion from similar experiences. In terms of distilling insights, principles and method I don't doubt that there is far more to learn from these experiences than I have learned, and that other different conclusions are also legitimate. Equally, the conclusions drawn are based on an interpretation that could well be contested and debated by those who approach these matters from different perspectives or with different values or assumptions. Ontology meets interpretation to create the debate and tensions which range across development evaluation circles.



EXTERNAL TRUSTWORTHINESS		
Are my findings representative outside of my sample, and generalisable in a broader population?		<p>The outcome of this study includes a well-reasoned principle and method contribution to the international debate on evaluation, especially for CBOs, but also for the general development context. As critical change research, it is intended that the principles, particularly, and the methods where relevant, be applied in situations where they would constitute an improvement to practice.</p> <p>Exploratory studies are concerned with stimulating debate, offering fresh perspectives, and contributing insights that the broader population may or may not draw on.</p>

Source: Adapted from Mouton & Marais (1990, p. 67)

3.11.2. Boundaries, challenges and possible sources of error

Several sources of limitation, bias and error were identified for awareness at the outset of this study:

BIAS - The risk that the researcher’s preconceptions influence the results. Exploratory research, grounded theory and critical change research ask the researcher to be open, aware and sensitive to new ideas and new interpretations. Preconceptions must be questioned, and the process must be porous to insights that might not be obvious, or even palatable. Every research process emerges in response to an observed perspective or situation, about which the researcher is likely to have opinions, impressions and beliefs. In exploratory, qualitative research, objectivity is defined by confronting these assumptions as opposed to denying their existence.

ASSUMPTIONS - The risk that a new evaluation method may be no more effective if the basic assumptions of funders and CBOs do not change. The root differences between traditional predictive evaluation system and grounded evaluation lie in assumptions about development and power. A new methodology applied with the old power mindset is likely to be equally flawed. For this reason, the principles provided in this study, and emerging in the wider development debate, are even more relevant than method and process.

EFFECTIVE EVALUATION - The risk that the emerging method will not be able to attribute a causal link between the efforts of CBOs and the outcomes of community development. All evaluation studies face the challenge of establishing causal links: to what extent did *this* CBO help, in the context of other interventions, negative and positive forces, and the life situations of individual clients? Beyond direct and clear links drawn by the respondents where a causal link might be obvious, an approach around “probable partial cause” is assumed. The methodology is based on the principle that efforts of CBOs make a contribution to outcomes, rather than causal attribution, where

this seems reasonable. In complex dynamic systems, assumptions of direct cause and effect are likely to be delusional (McAdam, 2008).

DETERMINISTIC - The risk that applying evaluation as intervention (utilisation-based) produces biased and deterministic results. Do we get the results we plan for? It is accepted in critical theory and process-use thinking that the intent behind research impacts on the results. Awareness of these assumptions and conscious reflection is needed in confronting these biases and qualifying conclusions. Peer review adds greatly to running a gauntlet of proving oneself right, and the inclusion of divergent views in the discussion chapter keeps the debate purposefully unresolved.

PARTICIPATORY - The chicken and egg of participatory method development. Ironically, apart from relatively little reflective input from the organisations sampled as participants, the process of developing new participatory methodology is not particularly participatory in this approach. Other relevant stakeholders in methods development include donor agencies and CBO networks (Fawcett, 1994). Consultation with these groups is limited to exposure through various conference engagements, which are attended by all stakeholders and selection of a range of stakeholders as questionnaire participants (Table 6). These conversations should continue to be part of the dissemination and proceduralisation of improving approaches.

LANGUAGE - As a consequence of my own linguistic limits, the risk of loss of content and meaning through interpretation into English, or communication in English by non-native speakers - Unfortunately I do not speak the mother tongues of the great majority of the respondents. In my experience of using interpreters, the loss of information has been considerable, and the deviation between the original question and the final answer has been frustrating. Furthermore, ethics and confidentiality become an issue where an additional external person participates in these conversations.

This was a weakness in the Stories and Metaphor process, where a strongly verbal experience would have been far more powerful had participants been communicating in their mother tongue. They generously agreed to the sessions being conducted in English, which was no doubt detrimental to the content, but effectively supported the process.

Language was also a challenge in the MSC process, but for different reasons. Many of the field team offered the advantage of being fluent in Setswana. For some, however, their fluency and literacy for translation into written English was limited, although they were all excellent English speakers. Again a lack of linguistic ability on my part meant that a great deal of content data was lost in the capture and translation process.

3.11.3. Ethics

The matter of ethics permeates every aspect of this research. It is set in a critical change paradigm, levelling criticism at conventional evaluation approaches with regard to their developmental ethics. Ethical considerations are at the heart of the ontology of this study.

The research problem asserts that conventional, linear, predictive, highly structured, outsider-driven, power imbalanced evaluation needs to be revised. The reasons: that these practices dilute power, distort development, undermine self realisation and intensify inequitable power distribution (Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Kilby, 2006). The essence of this argument is that conventional practices are not only ineffective from a data quality perspective, but unethical from a development perspective.

A critical change paradigm recognises evaluation as intervention (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 405). In acknowledging this we also need to recognise the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of that situation, and our own limitations. The discussion below talks about the ethical imperative of an evaluator to be a constructive organisational development practitioner. This does not, however, imply that a facilitator is a counsellor, an industrial relations broker or a lawyer (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 405). The judgement of boundaries, rights and responsibilities in an evaluation intervention is a central component to ethics.

In attempting to find alternatives, participatory community-based research was undertaken. This has compelling ethical considerations, which are outlined in detail in Table 8. These ethical guidelines were discussed and agreed by the research team members for the MSC process.



Table 8. *Ethics Issues Checklist*

Ethics issue	Approach in the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor process	Approach in the North West MSC process
Explain the purpose	The volunteer flier (Figure 8) outlined the purpose of the process, although this was usually limited to the Director. Session opening and contracting provided the purpose to all participants.	Field workers were trained to explain the purpose of interviews.
Promises and reciprocity	<p>Apart from a learning day itself, no other incentives were offered. It was made clear during contracting at the opening of each session that the issues of the organisation remain theirs to resolve. Even notes from the process were the responsibility of the organisations.</p> <p>The AIDS Consortium will receive a copy of the thesis, and is branded in all except the most controversial conference presentations.</p>	<p>In explaining the purpose it was clear that learning about gender, culture and HIV was for communal good, and that there should be no individual expectations.</p> <p>The participants received copies of the booklet printed from this process through Oxfam America.</p>
Risk Assessment	The organisational risk in self-evaluation is considerable. There is potential for escalation of conflict or internal fracture. A facilitator is responsible for holding this risk well, and constructively managing the process. (See the results and discussion chapters for experiences in this regard.)	Risks to breaches of confidentiality in public interviews, using amateur researchers, with community connections were considerable. Field workers were trained and mentored in mitigation of this concern. (See the results and discussion chapters for experiences in this regard.)
Confidentiality	<p>The identities of individuals and organisations are concealed in this thesis, given the sensitivity of organisational development engagement. Group process, however, are not locally confidential. This was clear to participants, and they were encouraged to share only where they felt comfortable.</p> <p>Where there was engagement with the public, all respondents were anonymous. (See the results and discussion chapters for experiences in this regard.)</p>	The identities of all community respondents were kept anonymous. (See the results and discussion chapters for experiences in this regard.)
Data access and ownership	The thesis will be provided to the AIDS Consortium, as well as any articles and presentations emanating from this study. All original work has been left with the CBOs, and recorded digitally for my purposes.	The Oxfam America publication is in the public domain. Copies of the booklet have been distributed in Mableskraal. It is nevertheless unlikely that many of those who participate as interviewees or focus group members will see the product.
Interviewer mental health	I will engage with mentors at intervals during the process for regular debriefing.	It was my role as team leader to hold the emotional state of the team. (Interviewers found the process difficult in many respects, not least in terms of team relations. Several coaching sessions were held with individual team members, and the final session was an organisational and team debrief.)



Ethics issue	Approach in the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor process	Approach in the North West MSC process
Informed consent	Organisations were sampled through voluntary <i>opt-in</i> . CBOs were invited to contact me if they were interested in participating. Organisations and staff were volunteered by their Directors. Permission for the evaluation, and a description of process was then repeated for all participants at the start of each session, with assurance that they were not obliged to participate in any process with which they felt uncomfortable. (In one organisation where participants expressed dissatisfaction at having been volunteered, the option to cancel the session was offered without hard feelings or obligation).	Participants were approached and invited to be interviewed, Respondents were given the clear choice to be interviewed or not. At any point they had the option of halting the process. (Given sensitivities around HIV, interview consent was not universal. Several of those approached firmly declined. Focus groups also dispersed at their own convenience.)
Advice for the evaluator	Regular mentorship, conference exchange and the peer review questionnaire provided external perspectives and advice	Oxfam America, the AIDS Consortium and a personal mentor were available to provide advice. (Their coaching was greatly appreciated particularly around team management issues).
Data collection boundaries (How hard will)	I probably don't push hard enough. My normal limits are very participant-led, and rely more on reflective, rolling questions than on anything resembling interrogation.	Interviewers were trained in a series of "stepping stone" questions to reach a story of change. (The relatively low proportion of interviews that produced a concrete story of change suggests that they did not push hard at all).
Children	n/a	Children under 18 were not interviewed through group discussion or confidential essay writing, in the formal setting of school or after school educational facilities.

Checklist drawn from Quinn-Patton (2002, p. 408)

Despite these policies and precautions, ethical issues in evaluation, HIV and qualitative research are difficult to predict and control (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 407). Experiences around ethics are raised in the results, discussion and conclusion chapters below.

3.12 Conclusion to the methods chapter

The methods chapter has outlined a grounded, action learning based approach. It has clarified the nested layers of data and experience that constitute this study. It has then outlined the setting and samples for two major research processes: Gauteng Stories and Metaphor and North West MSC. A brief overview of the starting point for these two

evaluation interventions is applied. The evolution of the two approaches in practice, and the lessons that arose from them, are the subject for the results chapter that follows. These are presented as a narrative account of the action research process of experience, analysis and conclusion.



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 CBOs¹⁶ 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).

¹⁶Most Case Studies involve individual organisations. One of the Case Studies involves two organisations.

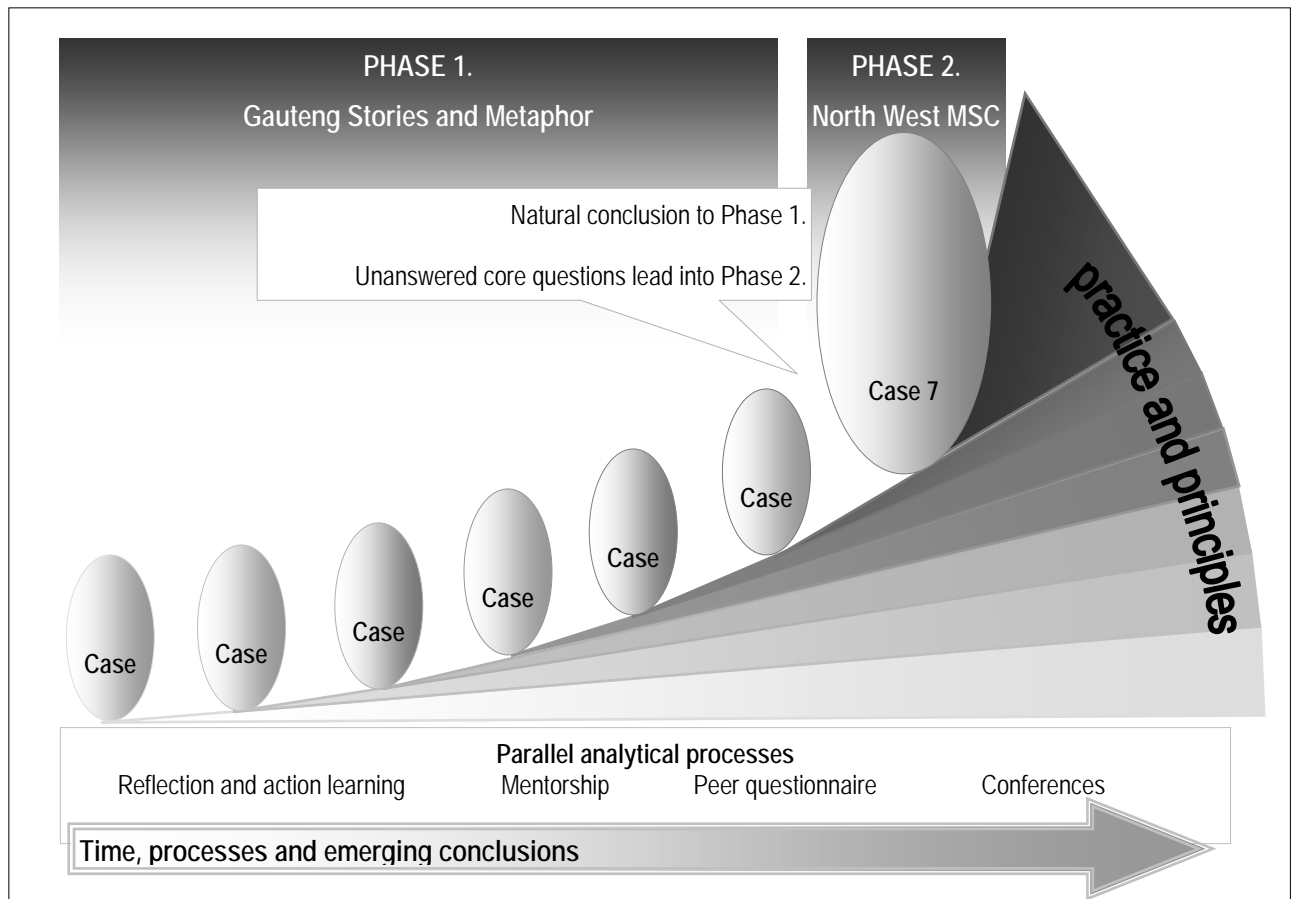


Figure 11 *Diagram of the unfolding crystallisation of principles and practice, through Case Studies building on successive reflection.*

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



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
<p>👁️ Action or description: the process that is followed, observations on the events and interactions.</p>	<p><i>Data: This refers to what transpired in the session. It is a factual description of what is said, seen and done.</i></p>
<p>🌀 Reflection: The implications and interpretation of the experience.</p>	<p><i>Analysis: Integrated analysis into the unfolding story, as reflection lead to insights and conclusions.</i></p>




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.

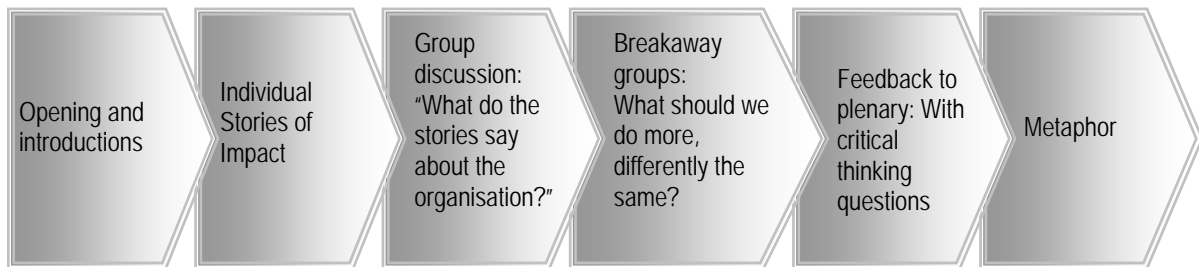
4.3.1. Case Study 1: TT

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*



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.

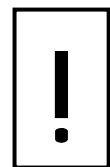
- 👁️ The top priority outcomes and activities of the organisation are identified. They include housing, facilitating access to treatment and child care. Relevant outcomes of these interventions include averted premature death and the return of ill children to school.

- 🗣️ 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.

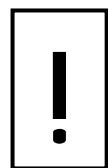
Metaphor

- 👁 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
<p><i>“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.”</i></p>
<p><i>“When I arrived here I was an OVC¹⁷ 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.”</i></p>
<p><i>“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.”</i></p>
<p>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.</p>
<p><i>“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</i></p>

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



Stories of impact
<p><i>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."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">INTERNAL IMPACTS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"We are passionate about our work.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Rain or storm, 'dry season'¹⁸ or not, we are here."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Our leader is very democratic. We participate in decisions and she listens. She has a big mind."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">COMMUNITY IMPACTS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"People have 4/5 roomed houses after living a one-roomed shack."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"There are people on treatment who have gone from level 5 and 4 to level 1¹⁹."</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"Children who we thought would die in a few months are back at school"</i></p>

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
<p><i>"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."</i></p>	<p><i>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.</i></p>

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.

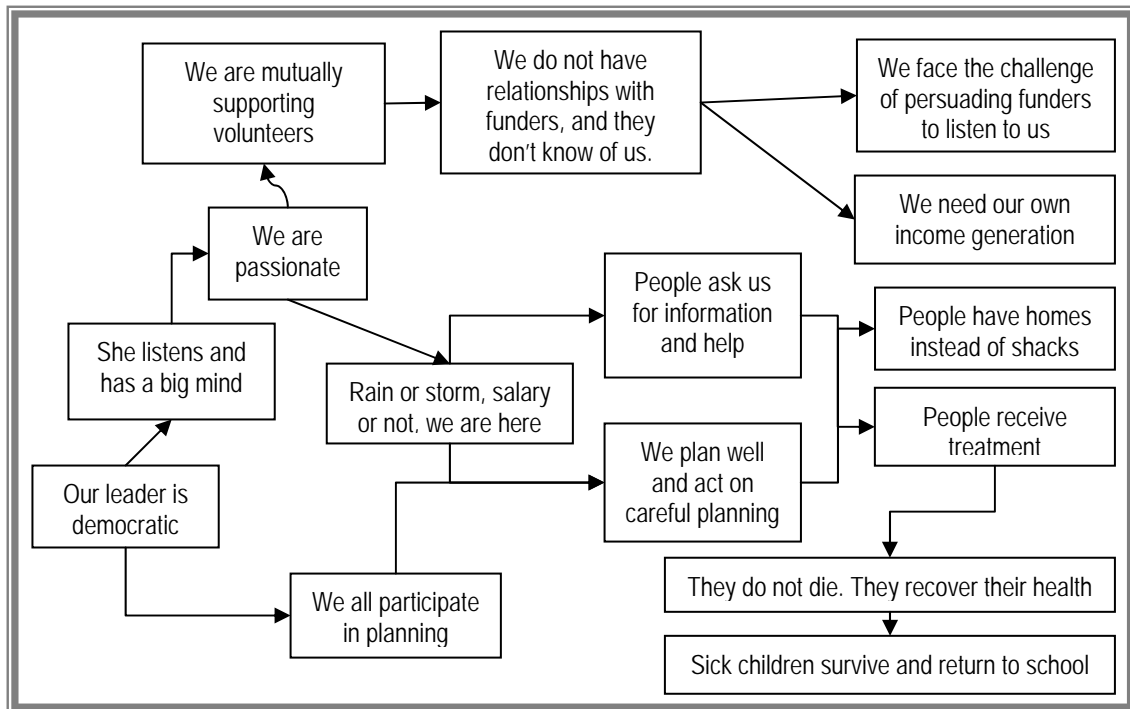


Exhibit TT4. *The first attempt at metaphor. The standard of my art work was a source of great mirth.*



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.

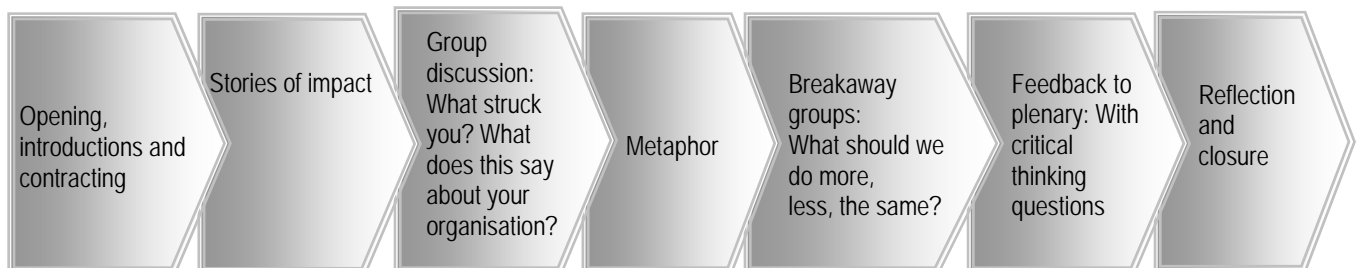
One of the organisations is large with approximately 15 staff and 1000 clients. It works in children’s care. The other is smaller, with 4 staff members, working in home-based care for the chronically or terminally ill.

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



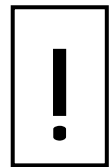
4.3.2.2. Description, reflection, learning and conclusions

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).

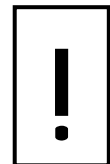
One story relates of an elderly lady caring for her ill son, unaware that he has AIDS. The carers come to find that he has died, and have to break this news to his

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 Affairs²⁰ 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

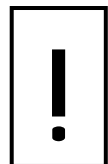
- Stories reflect organisations' values and challenges. Some examples include the importance of retaining human responsiveness to individuals, rather than treating clients as a production line. Values also embraced an ethic for remaining responsive to reality, rather than bureaucratising service into 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 se*. 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
<p>COMMUNITY IMPACTS</p> <p><i>"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."</i></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p>

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.

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

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

River=The organisation

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

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 or 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

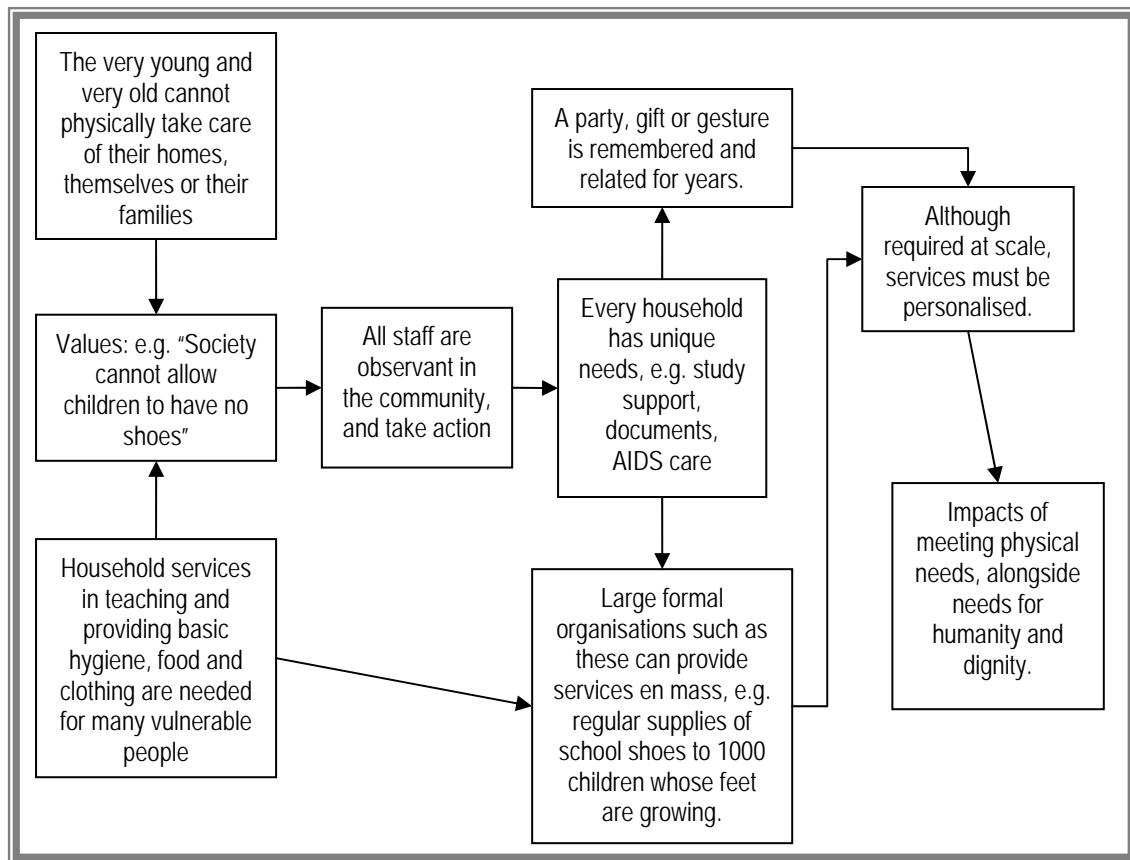
The metaphor speaks of an organisation that sees itself as integral to the community, its membership being in and of the people it serves. The importance of clients gaining independence and separating from the organisation is a key outcome for them. Although the metaphor verges on the ridiculous, it 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.

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



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.”

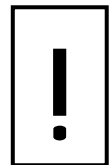
I then ask “What does success mean in this organisation?” This produces the far more profound responses captured in Exhibit QN3.

- 🗣️ 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
<p>COMMUNITY IMPACTS</p> <p><i>"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".</i></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p> <p><i>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."</i></p> <p><i>"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."</i></p>

Exhibit QN2. *The Theory of Change provides an interpretation of the organisation's logic*

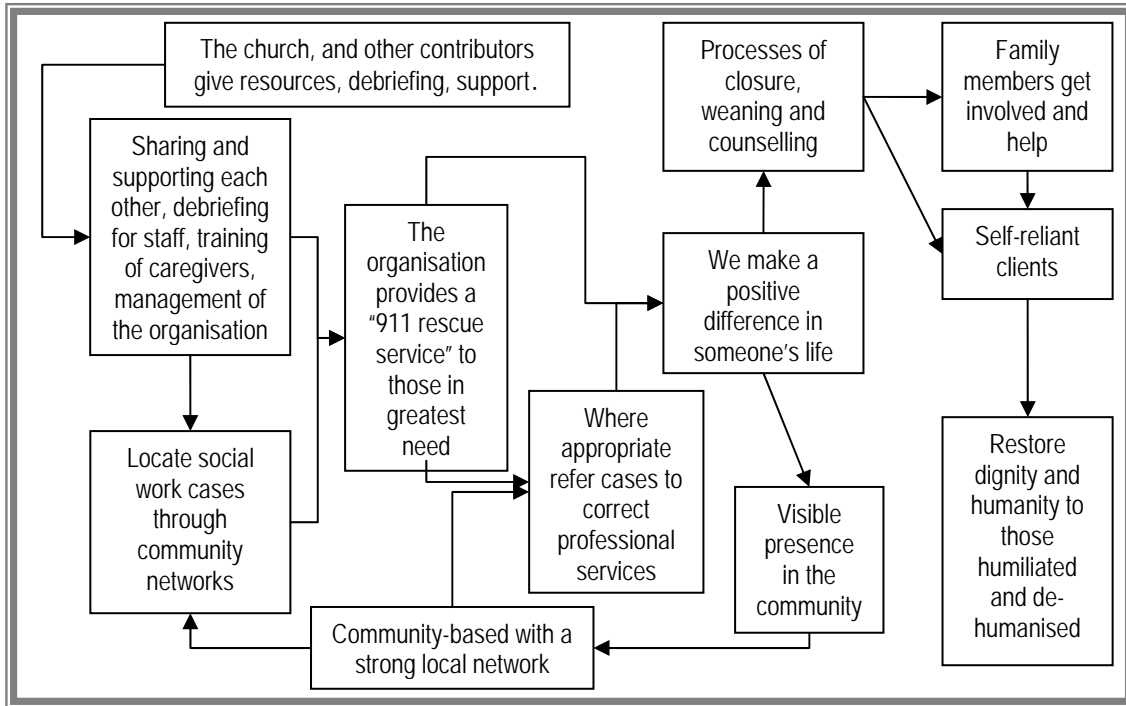
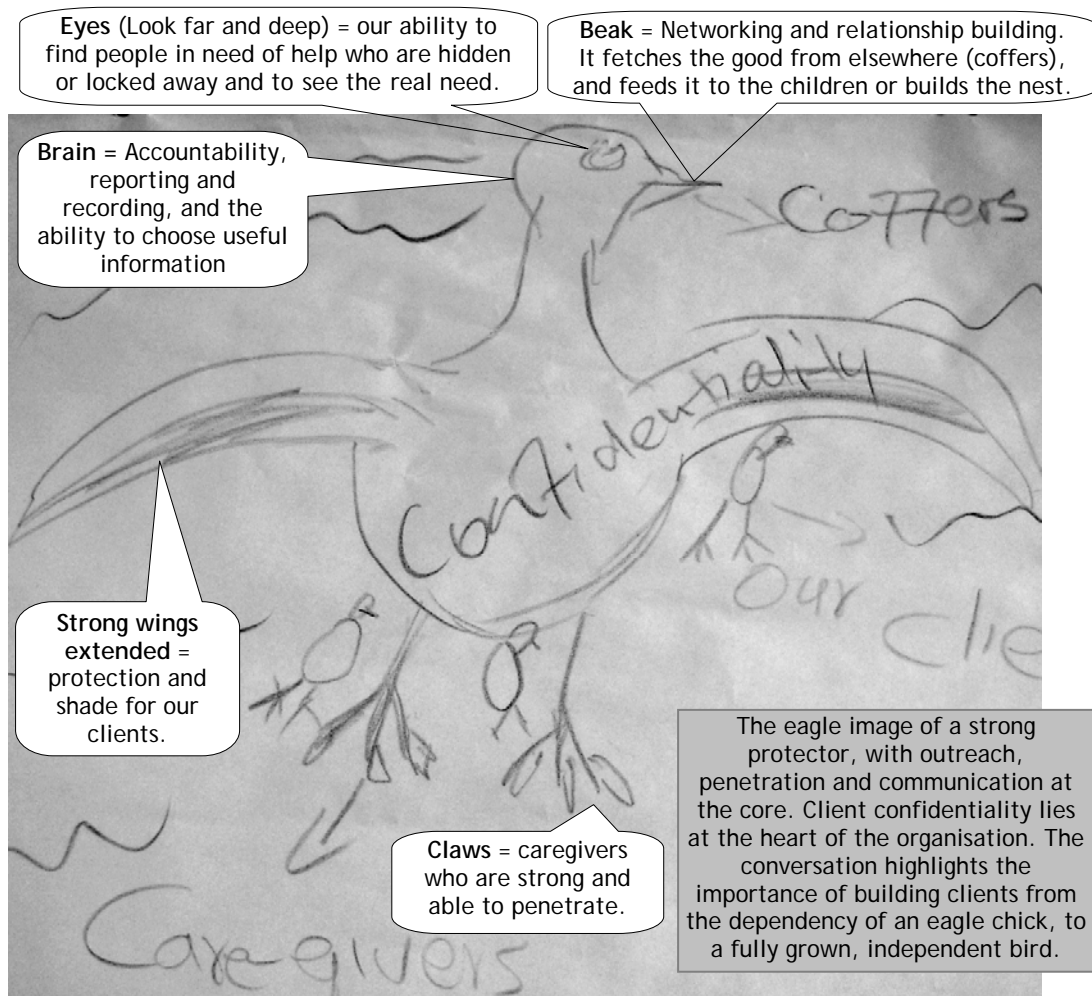


Exhibit QN3. *Comparing the responses to two different reflection questions*

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

Exhibit QN4. *Metaphor*



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: 1) 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.

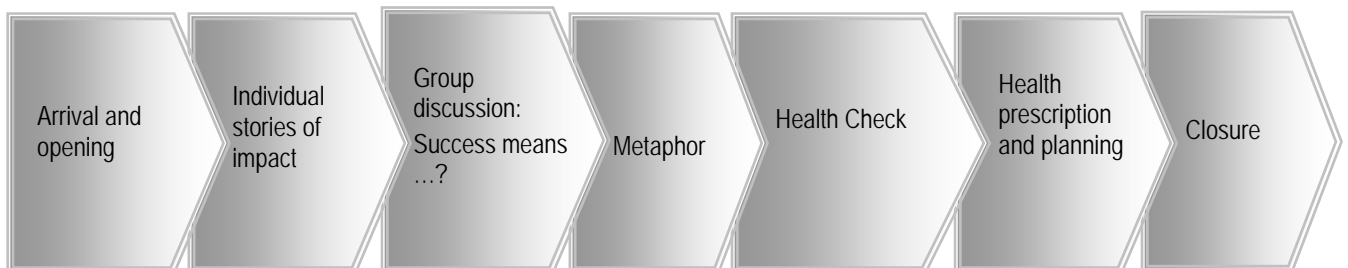
4.3.4. Case Study 4: DG

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*



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 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?"

LEFT BRAIN
ADMINISTRATIVE
LEADERSHIP
1/5

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 led 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
<p>COMMUNITY IMPACTS</p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p> <p><i>“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></p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p> <p>INTERNAL IMPACTS</p> <p><i>“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></p> <p><i>“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></p> <p><i>“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.”</i></p>

Exhibit DG2. *The Theory of Change provides the logic for the organisation's existence and contribution.*

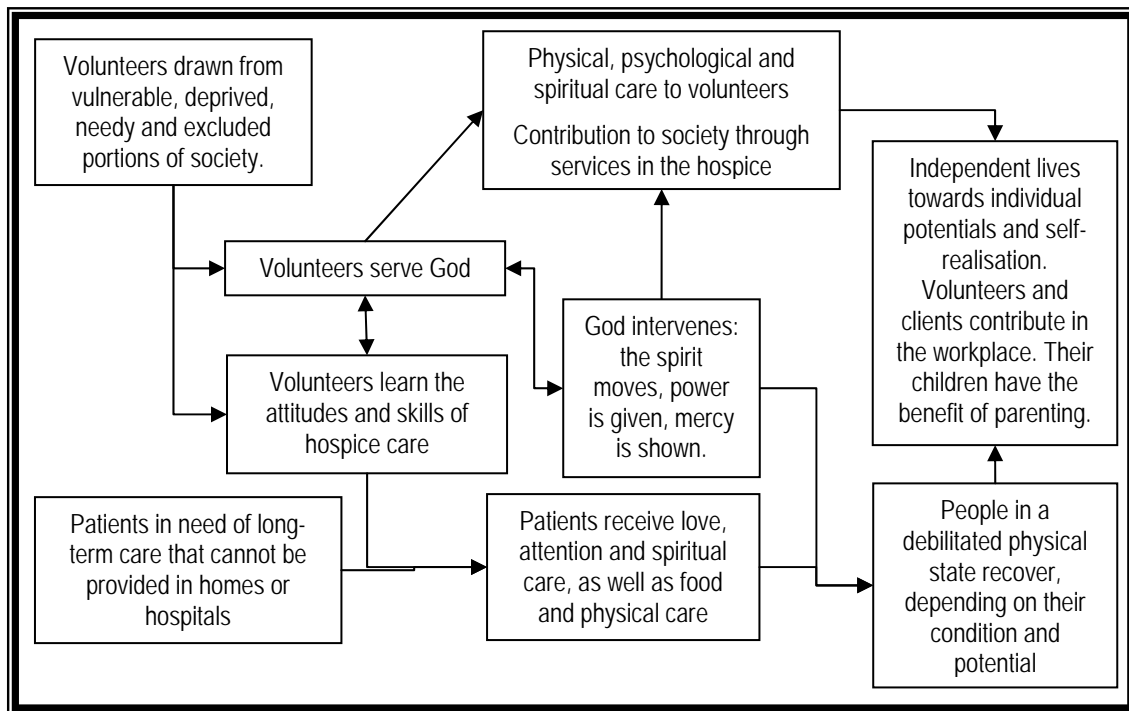


Exhibit DG3. *Success means.*

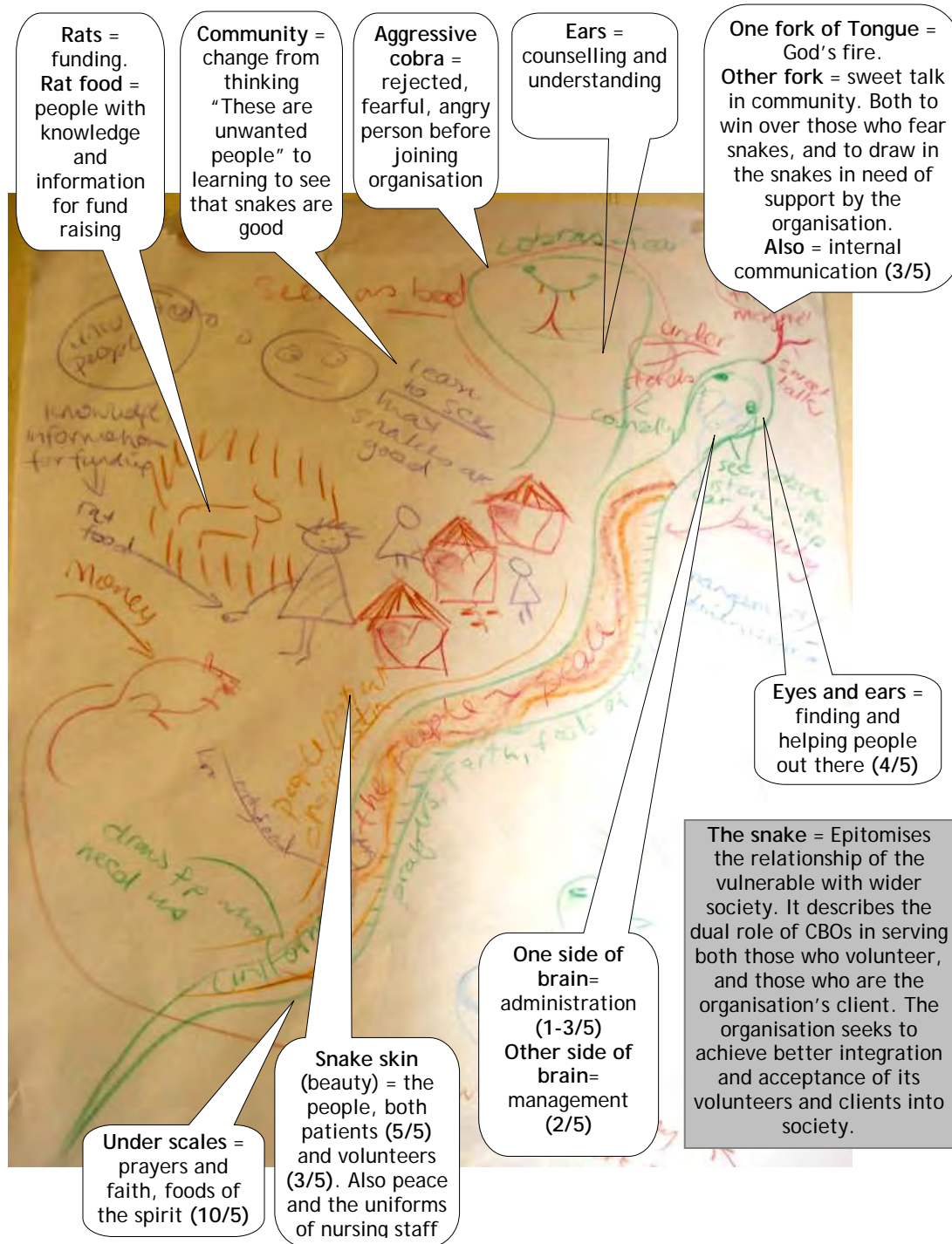
Criteria for success	Number of votes related to the extent to which this is achieved by the organisation		
EFFECTIVE SERVICES			
Patients healed and their situation improved	7 votes	Areas of achievement	
INTERNAL CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS			
Working hard	4		
Responsibility, and people being accountable for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



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

Animal	Reason given	Criteria for success
Elephant	<i>"It started small, and is now very big"</i>	Growth and size
Sheep	<i>"An animal that takes everything. If rejected, it takes the burden, it can cope."</i>	Patience, acceptance, quiet strength
Cow	<i>"A big animal, which can carry a heavy load, has many roles such as both ploughing and pulling, and can feed us."</i>	Effective, versatile, internally-serving
Flamingo	<i>"A very clean animal. We keep our patients very clean, feed them and wash them."</i>	Quality of service
Ostrich	<i>"A big bird, and when there is a fire, it saves its babies and takes care of them."</i>	Responsive in emergencies, protective
Parrot (polly-polly)	<i>"It listens, and then repeats what you say. It doesn't do what is not said. The team all follow the vision and mission."</i>	Management compliance and collective alignment
Tortoise	<i>"It is rare, it hides, it is unique. It is small and grows slowly without rushing."</i>	Uniqueness, invisibility, deliberateness
Snake	<i>"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."</i>	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.

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)

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



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	<i>"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)</i>
Skin	Team	3/5	<i>"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."</i>
Brain	Management	2/5	<i>"Respect. The team must respect management. People do not fulfil their roles." (Director)</i> <i>"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)</i> <i>"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."</i>
Brain	Administration	1-3/5	<i>"Systems and policies are needed"</i>
EXTERNAL EVALUATION			
Eyes and ears	Finding and helping people out there	4/5	<i>"This depends on how well we present ourselves to people. Do I have the love needed to communicate with the public?"</i>

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.

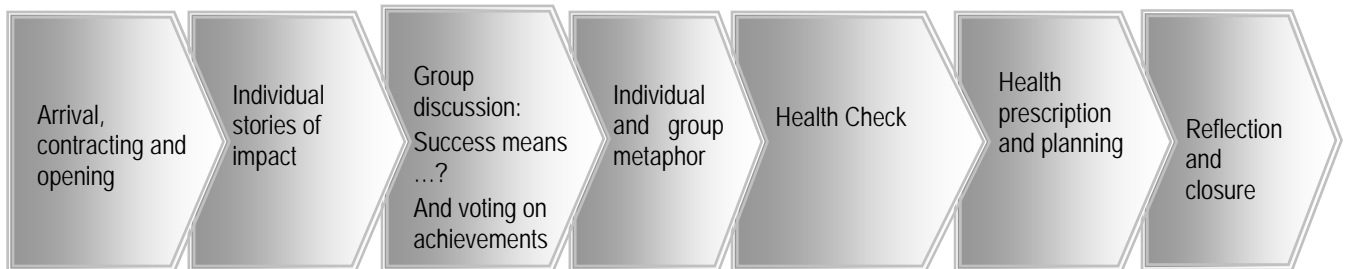
One option to prompt this thinking is to structure the conversation towards more balanced reflection on client experiences. Another is to include client voices in the evaluation. Equal weight in the facilitated process to performance inside the animal (inward-looking organisational issues), and of the 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

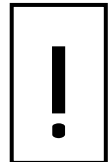
in M&E. Despite this, they speak with a strong external locus of control. Their values attempt to address issues of men as victims and social injustice to men. They see themselves as unable to do what they plan because of lack of resources, but they do not engage with fund raising as a function or a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



- ✿ 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
<p>Director (Male) <i>“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.”</i></p>
<p>Deputy Director (Male) <i>“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.”</i></p>
<p>Trainer (Female): <i>“I was working on counselling for young mothers. Gave training and workshops. But I can’t see that I have made much difference.”</i></p>

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	1
INTERNAL CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS	
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

The image shows three hand-drawn sketches on a piece of paper. The top left sketch is a camel, with the text 'Camel = carries a heavy weight, is patient and perseveres' in a callout box. The top right sketch is an elephant, with the text 'Elephant = also, carries a weight, is patient and perseveres' in a callout box. The bottom sketch is a chameleon, with the text '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."' in a callout box. The sketches are drawn in green and blue ink. The camel is labeled 'Carries heavy weight.' and 'Thirsty for a long time.' The elephant is labeled 'Patient, friendly + sociable. Doesn't take nonsense (communicates)'. The chameleon is labeled 'Adaptable - change colour' and 'stretch - its long tongue to opportunity'.

Carries heavy weight. Thirsty for a long time.

Carries a heavy weight.

People can ride it

patient, friendly + sociable. Doesn't take nonsense (communicates)

Adaptable - change colour

stretch - its long tongue to opportunity

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, Prescription²² and Prioritisation²³ 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 its 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.

Flipchart Content:

- HEARD leaders** 2 * *
- Focus** 4 *
- Adherence to values** 5 *
- Strength** 5 *
- Management** 2/3 *
- Achievement & SUCCESS** INT COMM - BLOOD 2/3 *
- SENSES - COMMUNITY** 1 adaptation *
- Dev-Training** 5 *
- NEC-PLANNING** 5 INFLUENCE 5/4
- MAP-Train** 5 VISION - CHANGE ATT 2♀ ↑↑↑ 5♂
- MAP-Aware** 4 CARRYING OUR TARGET AUDIENCE 3
- Dev-Counsell** REVIEW + FEEDBACK - MPE - PR + MPE 4

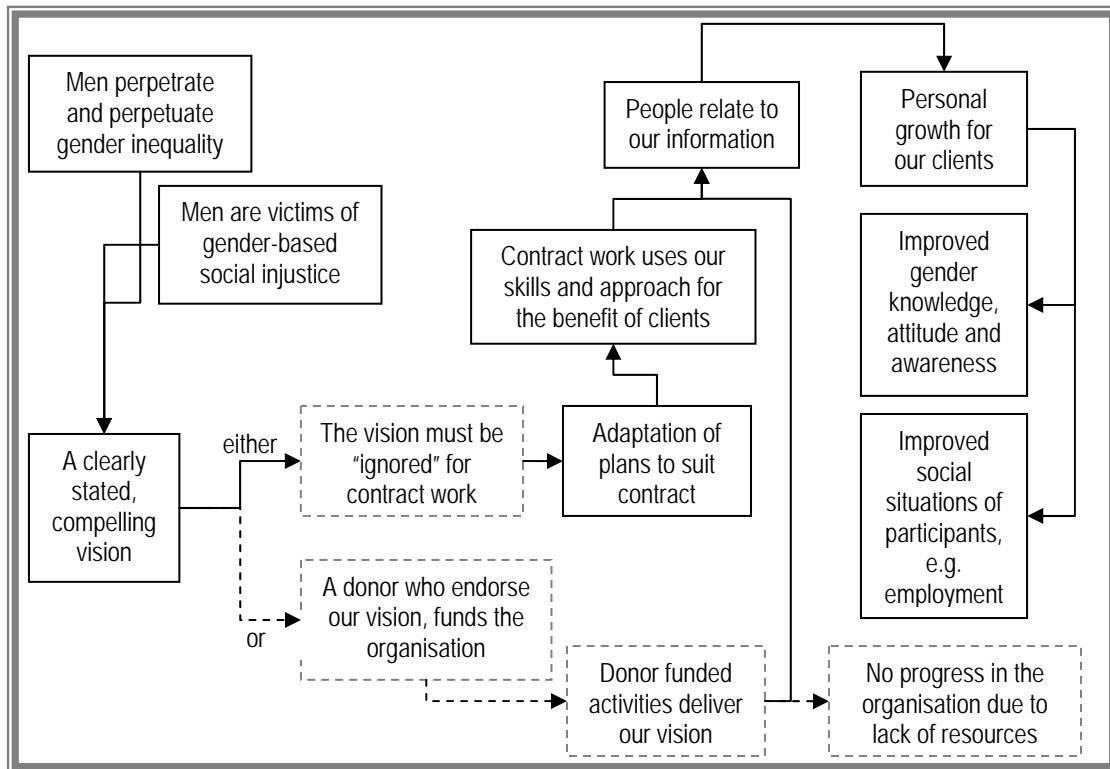
Central Flowchart:

- A** Skills audit (esp leadership mgmt) + skills gaps (what are we already good at?)
- B** Reorganise programmes - review structure → share responsibility → staff resources
- C** Overlapping responsibilities
- D** Mentorship, share information, challenges, successes shared in meetings
- E** Build up ownership of the project - staff included in decision
- F** Resource Mobilisation Plan → Do it
- G** Active roles to staff - within the plans
- H** Training for staff
- I** Talk about progress in terms + challenges
- J** Regular meetings, attendance + strong agenda + chairing.

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:



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 than 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 of 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
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Their advocacy message is simple and clear: "<i>We need food. We need transport for the ill. We need ARVs to be supplied at the local clinic.</i>"</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The future includes finding and enabling solutions through partnership, advocacy or social and medical services to address the basic needs of the community.</p>

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*

<p>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)</p>		<p>Dolphin = Big, but has a gentle heart. It senses when there is trouble and comes to help. (7)</p>	
<p>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)</p>			<p>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)</p>
			<p>Elephant : "Gentle and clever". Sweet and willing to help each other. (3)</p>
			<p>Rabbit = Is cool and collected. (3)</p>
<p>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)</p>			<p>Butterfly = "It has senses and it's always looks for green or colourful pastures" (4)</p>
		<p>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)</p>	<p>Lion = It looks soft and furry, but it is strong inside. It has bite. (1)</p>

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-served 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).	<i>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.</i>
Values: Patience (heart) and the Church (skin).	<i>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.</i>
Drive power of the caregivers (fins) and the Management (tail).	<i>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.</i>
Communication (mouth)	<i>Find resources and partners.</i>

Exhibit CL5. *Theory of Change, with dotted lines indicating the elements of the Theory of Change that are questioned during the process*

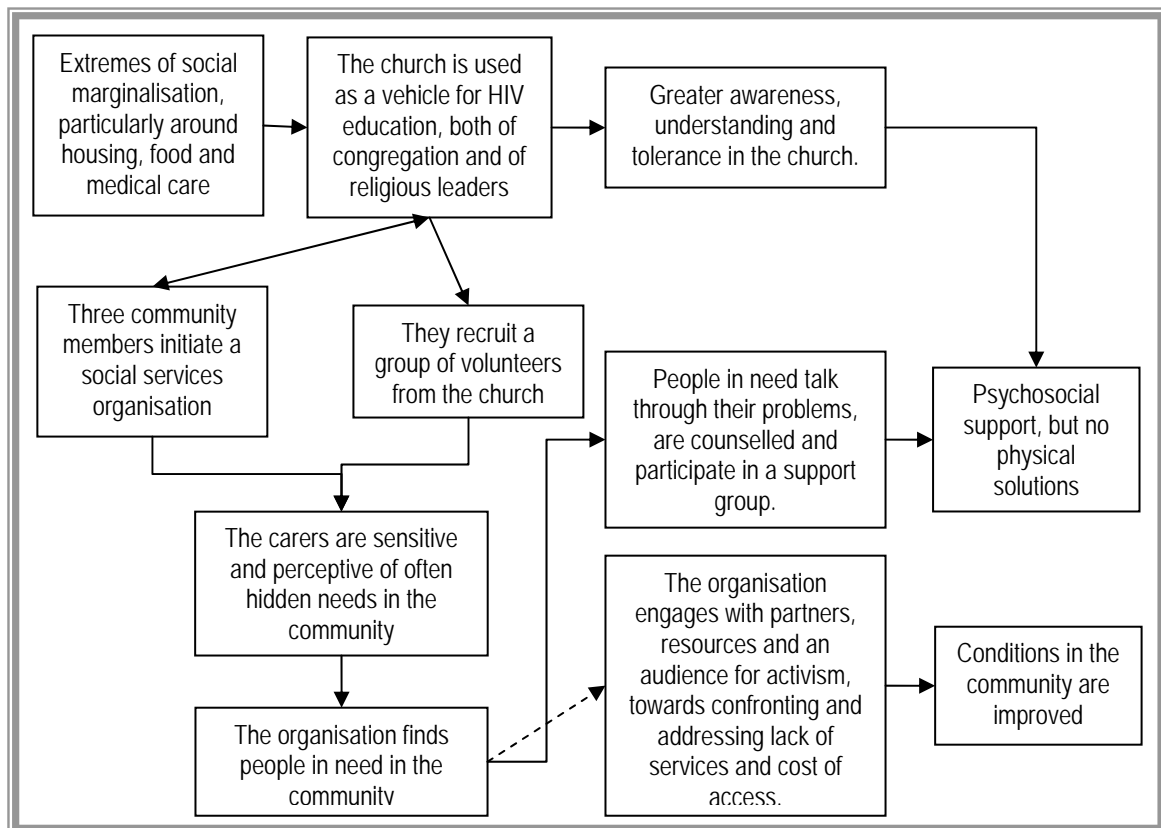


Exhibit CL6. DVD: *Sound bites from interviews captured by caregivers*

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,
contracting 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.

Increase

STEP 3a. Group discussion: Success means ...?

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.

Drop

STEP . Do More Of, Less Of...

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)

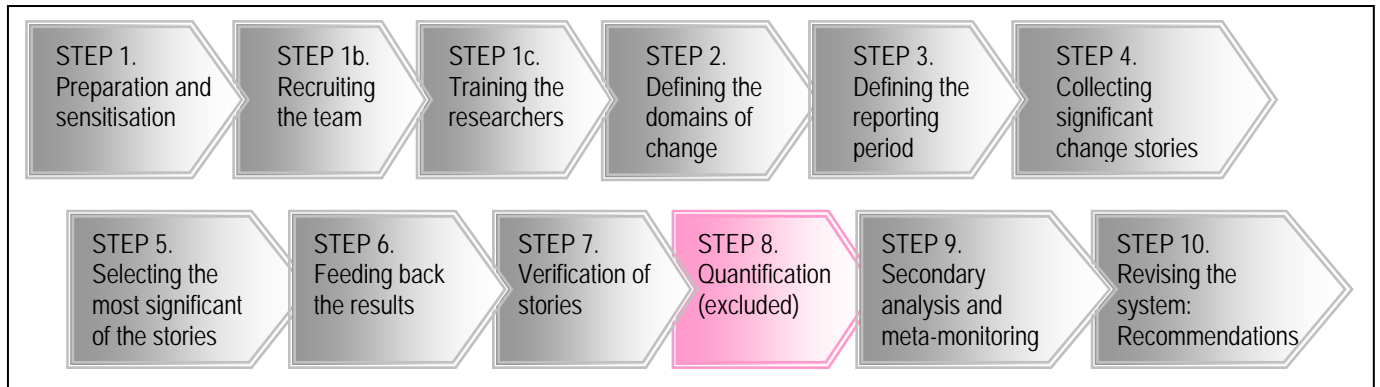


Figure 14 *Diagram of the MSC process as designed and intended for the MabeSkraal study.*

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.

The MSC overview

- 👁 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 Kgosì 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.

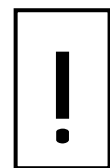
Unemployed or retired people in their own homes are among the most difficult group to access. Despite efforts at sensitisation, door-to-door interviewing at people's homes is least successful. The subject of HIV remains highly sensitive (Exhibit MSC4b). The team considers much of the reluctance to result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

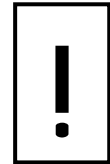
- Evaluators' attitudes to bias require yet another compromise. We need to rationalise evaluation as 'light research' with its primary purpose in management and organisational growth. This does not require the data rigour of academic or social research. Pragmatically, evaluators who wish to canvas public 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).

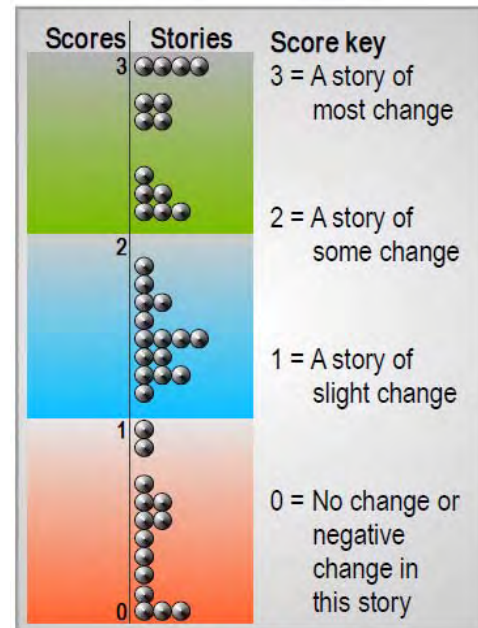


Figure 16 *Ratings of stories for accounts of significant change*

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 un compelling.
- 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.

🔊 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

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*

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 IEC²⁵ 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.

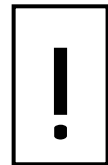
Interview preliminaries should advise respondents that while their names are not being recorded, and researchers will not willfully breach their privacy, they need not feel obliged to share personal information.

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 inexperienced 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.

Organisational learning and authoring one's own story

- 👁️ 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:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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*

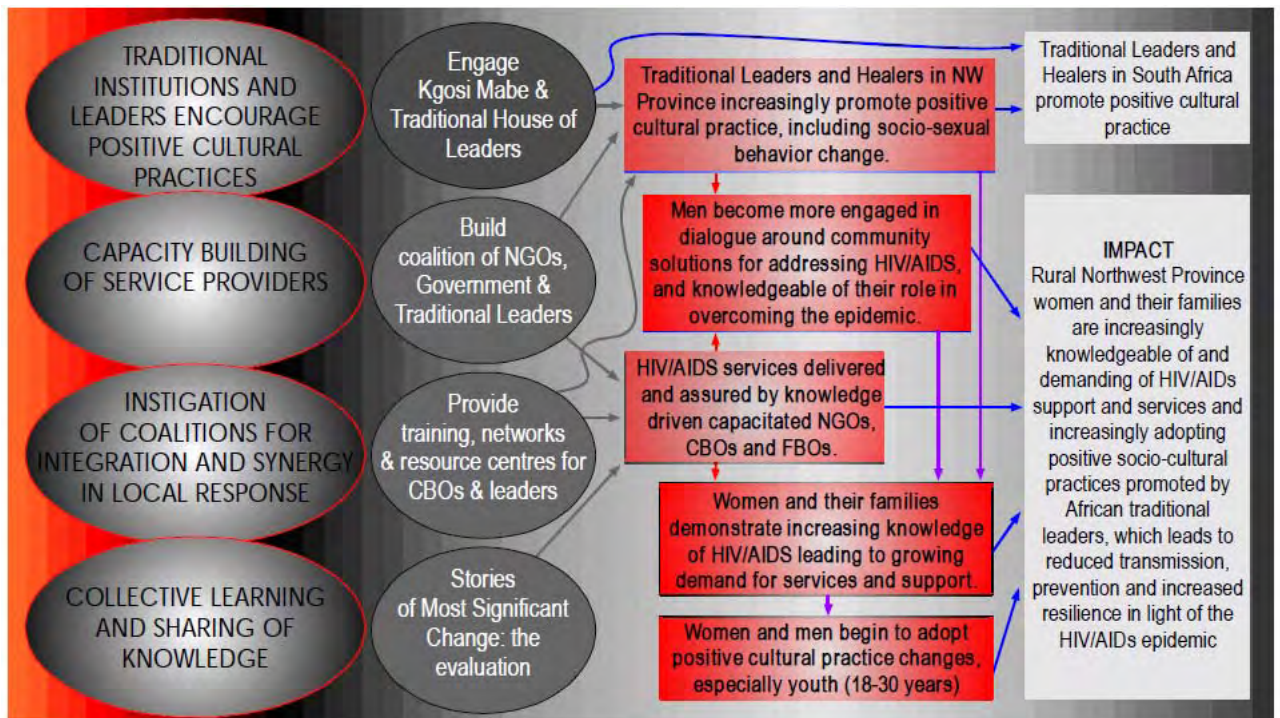


Figure 2. Theory of change for the gender, culture and HIV programme

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 Motswedding 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

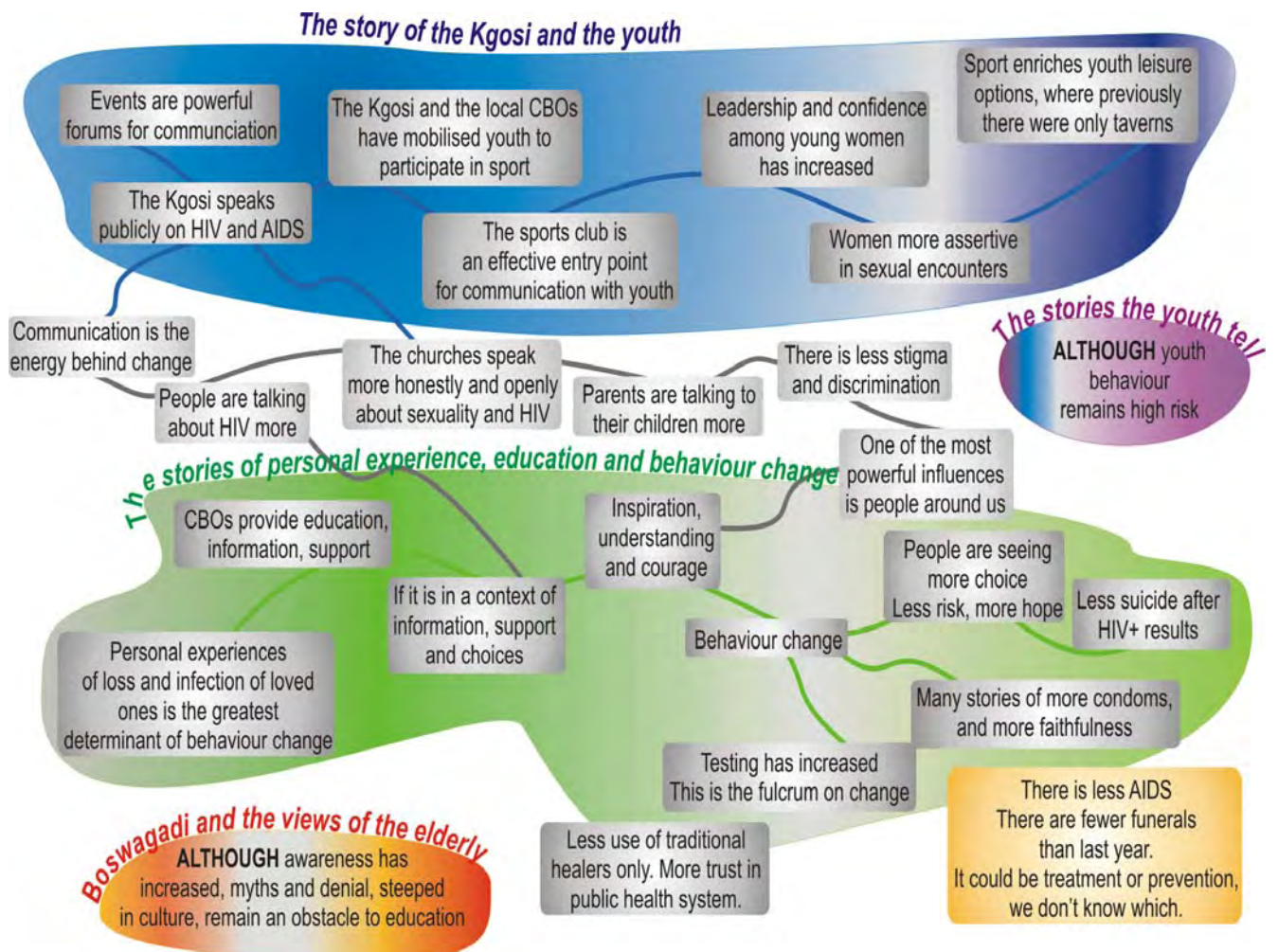




Exhibit MSC9. *Demonstrating local diversity and dynamic tensions: The use of stories in evaluation, and the impact results of the community imbizo discussion*

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)

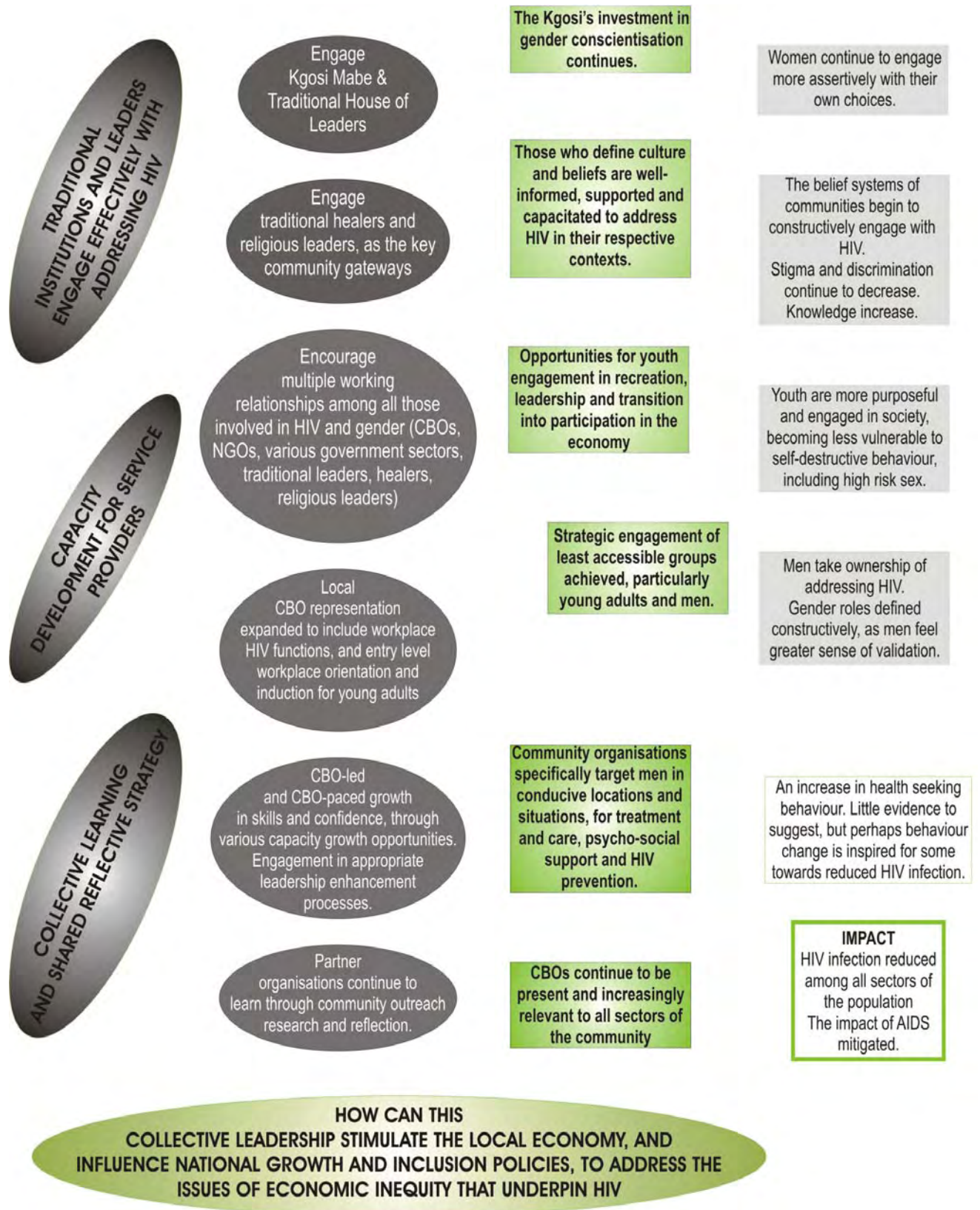
The traditional healer we interview is well-educated on HIV. He has positive professional relationships with the formal health system. He also firmly grasped the rights and wrongs of his own realm: that of culture, ritual and herbal medicines. The traditional healer regarded HIV as a disease, not particularly 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.*



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.

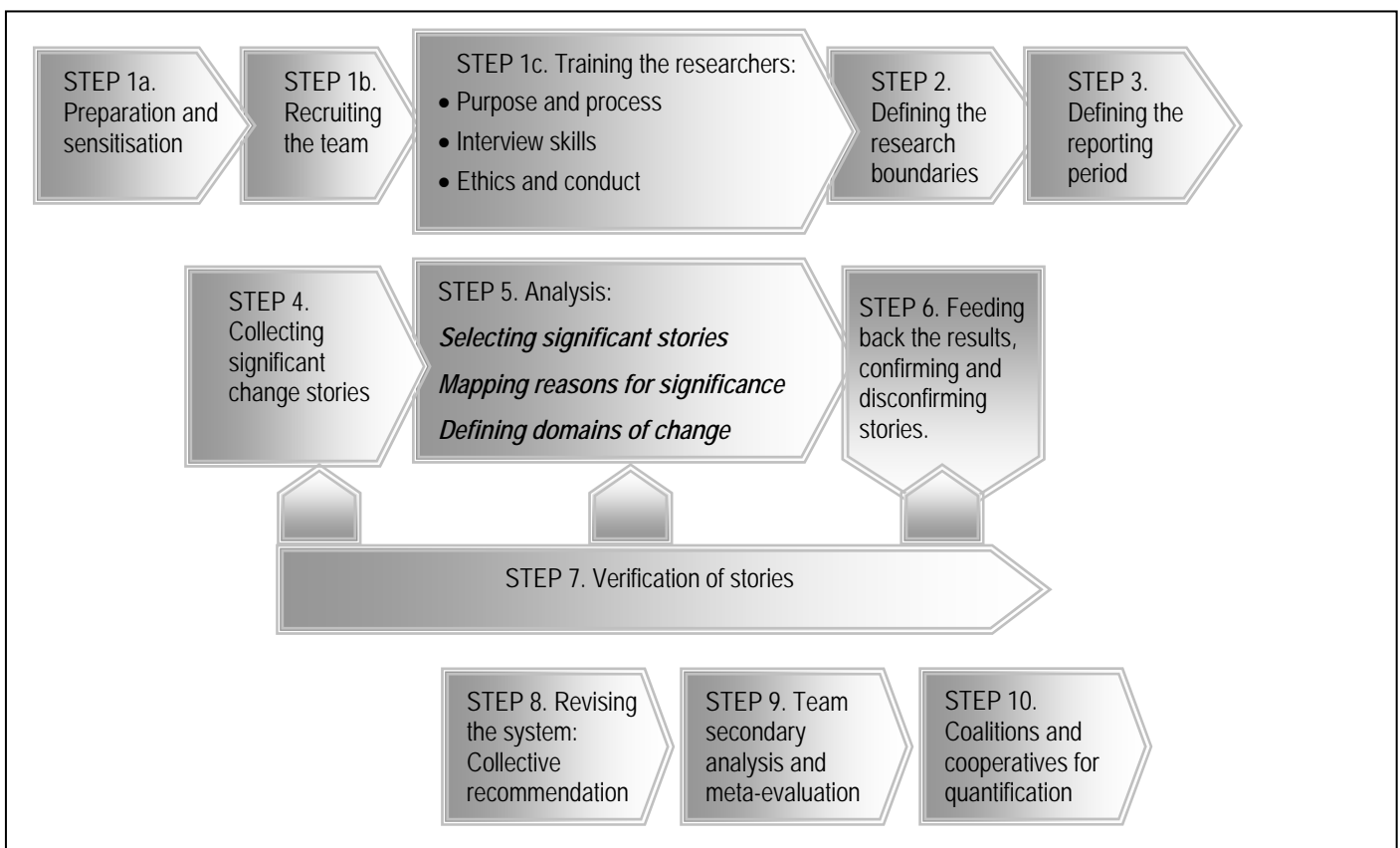


Figure 19 *Revised recommended Stories of Significant Change process, as it emerges from the Mabeskraal evaluation process and meta-evaluation*

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 recommend 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 noticed, 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.

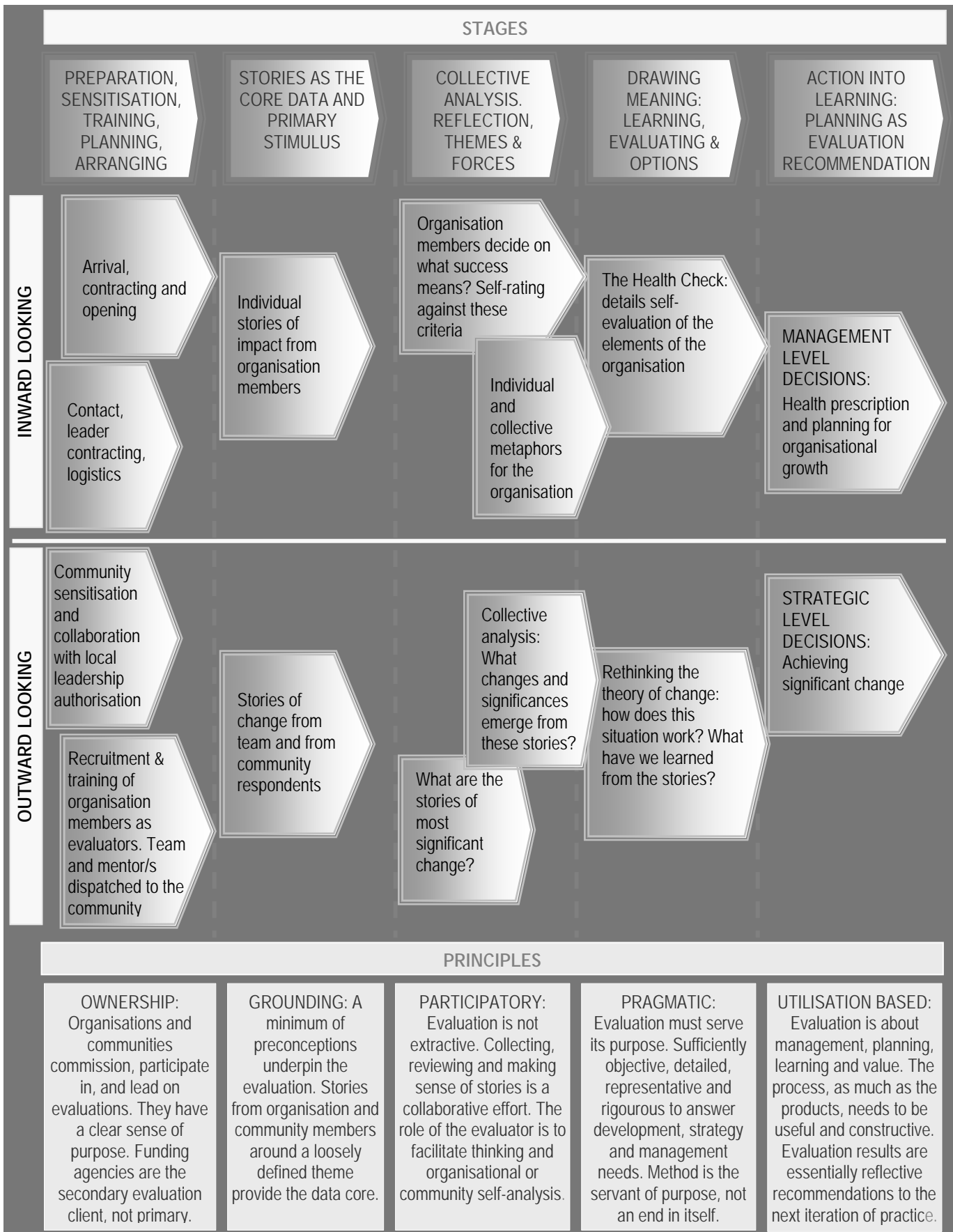


Figure 20 *Process overview conclusions of the Gauteng Stories and Metaphor processes, and the North West Most Significant Change exercise*



CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

This research has focused on the potential for alternative approaches to CBO evaluation to funder-driven, externally designed and power imbalanced conventions. Utilisation-based evaluation solutions and principles that contribute both to organisational development and to evaluative answers offer a particular set of challenges. This research asks how evaluation might best contribute as a servant to development, rather than its master. This Discussion Chapter reflects on the results at three levels.

Firstly, technical insights on facilitating evaluation in CBOs are discussed, providing ideas on methodology alternatives based on this research.

The second, longer portion of the chapter highlights some of the principles, attitudes and approaches to development which any method needs to apply in order to be constructive. The implications of evaluation principles for effective development are highlighted as key conclusions of this study. In an overriding theme, the discussion dwells on the contradictions, compromises and conundrums of effective development and surrounding relationships.

The third section of the discussion draws these somewhat disparate thematic areas into a metaphorical overview of the state of CBO

contribution and the dynamics of their relationships and evolution. Advocacy, role, impact and developmental outcomes in a CBO context compare organisations with knights, saints, snakes and sheep.

5.1 The practice: Towards alternative methodologies for evaluation of CBOs

A great variety of detailed methodological findings are presented in the previous chapter, culminating in descriptions of inward-looking and outward-looking method. The purpose of this section of the discussion is to highlight some elements of these methodologies that warrant further emphasis. The following areas of interest are discussed in the pages that follow:

Peer Review Discussion Boxes

Action research is necessarily reflective and collective. For the purpose of this study, much of this reflection was achieved within participatory CBO sessions and in subsequent conversations with mentors (Table 6). In addition, I conducted a peer reflection survey as principles and concepts began to emerge from the data. I invited evaluation, development and facilitation professionals to complete a questionnaire that tested some of the emerging thinking and conclusions (Table 6, Appendix 1). Of 50 professionals invited to participate, a total of 17 responses were received. There was wide variation in their view points. Some views differed from my own conclusions, while others supported them. All were enriching. The responses were analysed for themes using Atlas-ti 5.0 qualitative data analysis software. Since these opinions took the form of a discussion, their inclusion is considered appropriate in this chapter. Peer responses are provided throughout this Discussion Chapter as 'Peer Review Discussion Boxes', providing divergent, thought-provoking perspectives.

- Inward-looking and outward-looking evaluation of CBOs
- The use of stories in both forms of evaluation
- The use of metaphor in inward-looking, organisational reflection
- Facilitation of participatory evaluation
- Diversity as it affects facilitation of evaluation
- Practical ethics in evaluation

5.1.1. Inward and outward looking evaluation

The study began with an inward-looking series of facilitated processes with different Gauteng CBOs using Stories and Metaphor. Emerging from the findings of this first phase around the limitations of organisation-centred evaluation on its own, an outward-looking method was attempted in North West Province, based on Davies and Dart's (2005) Most Significant Change (MSC) approach.

The study began with organisation-centred evaluation, and evolved to provide rich detail in organisational evaluation. Internal success criteria from these reflective processes had direct and immediate relevance to management and performance. Effective teamwork, volunteer retention and clear planning, for example, were discussed in detail. One Case Study defined the left and right brain as their administration and the leadership, giving each its own qualities and performance ratings. In terms of internal performance and immediate growth paths of organisations, these reflective methods were practical, accessible and appropriate.

Despite various facilitated strategies to probe and explore, however, these discussions remained superficial with regard to participants' impressions, reflections and insights into CBOs' client experiences of service provision. They revealed little of external or client-centred relevance and the impacts of these organisational efforts remained vague and generally not self-critical (Sen, 1987). This limitation was largely a product of the method. Metaphors for organisations tend to focus discussions on inward-looking analysis (Daudelin, 1996).

Using the same school of narrative, grounded methods, a community-centred, MSC process was conducted in North West province to explore outward-looking evaluation alternatives. The results of the MSC evaluation provided valuable strategic insight on CBO approaches. One of several thematic areas to emerge, for example, was the contested evolution of custodianship of culture from traditional healers and their historic African spirituality, to the leadership and cultural practices of Christianity.

Understanding the strategic importance of these opposing forces, and their needs, perspectives and disagreements, was key to powerful engagement by CBOs in this setting. The evaluation also described the role of CBOs in providing emotional support, information and a sense of inclusion to women with HIV-related challenges, while having far less value to men with similar problems.

While these client perspectives were strategically valuable, these tended to be too broad to have specific relevance to management decisions. Organisation-centred reflection was essential to consider the attributes of CBOs in relation to their context. The study therefore demonstrated a need to compliment outward-looking client review with a reflective, inward-looking interpretation (Sen, 1987; Daudelin, 1996; Lawrence, 2006).

There were striking complimentary differences between organisational reflection using Stories and Metaphor, and Most Significant Change approaches (Table 9). Both were strongly participatory and gave a central role for organisation members throughout the evaluation processes. In combination, these two approaches produce a balance between internal and external perspectives, and appreciative and critical enquiry, while producing concrete plans of action for organisational development.

The inward-looking and outward-looking processes were conducted separately in this research. It was clear that stronger linking between evaluation of organisation qualities and service effectiveness outcomes are important. More assertive reciprocation between inward and outward looking analysis during both processes would better populate our understanding of the connections between actions and outcomes.

Table 9. *Comparing, contrasting and combining Stories and Metaphor methodology with established Most Significant Change methods*

Stories and Metaphor	Most Significant Change	Comments
INWARD-LOOKING: Stories and Metaphors describe the state of mechanisms inside organisations, with relatively little recourse to careful analysis of their impact.	MSC is strongly OUTWARD-LOOKING , describing change in the client community, while saying little about the capacity, challenges, talents and processes within the organisations providing these interventions.	Each of the approaches is incomplete with regard the perspectives provided by the other. While they each have value alone, they inform management and strategy most thoroughly if used in combination.
ORGANISATION-CENTRED processes, involving members and staff as the main subject of self-evaluation.	COMMUNITY-CENTRED processes, where organisation members interview their clients and stakeholders in their community.	While there is a broad area of overlap, the main respondents of the two forms of evaluation distinguish them.



Stories and Metaphor	Most Significant Change	Comments
Organisations facilitated through REFLECTIVE SELF-CRITIQUE . Although appreciative insofar as ensuring that defences are not raised by the attitude or style of facilitation, processes are designed to encourage participants to view themselves critically and constructively.	Almost entirely APPRECIATIVE . For the most part, it finds stories of exceptional success and seeks out the factors that create that success.	Both methods use appreciative inquiry. The reflective analysis of Stories and Metaphor requires that any critical interrogation comes from participants themselves, while the facilitator remains clearly neutral.
PARTICIPATION : Organisation members facilitated through a learning and reflection process.	PARTICIPATION : Organisation members trained in basic qualitative evaluation and story gathering. They participate as interviewers and data analysts. Community members participate as informants and co-analysts	Outward-looking evaluation is more taxing on organisation members – it constitutes work. Inward-looking evaluation is far more indulgent, giving participants the satisfaction of facilitated introspection and learning.
The FACILITATOR holds an organisational reflection and development process, and guides the group through its introspection	The FACILITATOR begins as trainer, preparing organisation members for field work. He or she is then the fieldwork coordinator, providing ongoing practical training and mentorship. The final task is facilitation of the analysis and drawing out of learning conclusions.	Facilitator engagement is much longer and more involved for an MSC process. An inward-looking organisation development process can be brief, and is relatively undemanding on facilitation, provided principles of emergent and developmental practice are applied.
PLANNING AND PREPARATION involves agreeing to participation and arranging to meet at the organisation's premises. It is important to ensure that sufficient organisation members, including senior management, can make the time available.	PLANNING AND PREPARATION : A few organisation members are asked to commit for several days or even weeks. Training venues and process design need to be prepared in advance. Permissions from local traditional and public sector authorities are required. FGD participants and a community feedback meeting are arranged during the fieldwork.	Again, the investment for a community-centred evaluation using MSC is more involved than the organisation-based process.
RESULTS : The process is strongest in producing management and organisational insight on areas of strength and weakness. Detailed and achievable decisions for organisation development towards greater effectiveness are possible. Impact is based on CBO impressions and beliefs about their community and their role, many of which may be well-founded. The method provides strong data on internal accountability.	RESULTS : The process is strongest around strategic and client-relevant insight on areas of local need and progress. Further strategic reflection would be required to consolidate these into planning and organisation development. Reasonable downward accountability data are provided.	For the purposes of management decision-making, both the internal and external situation must be understood.

5.1.2. Stories

5.1.2.1. *Impact is meaning*

Stories are the essence of impact evaluation. Impact in a social setting refers to meaningful change. Whether the change is quantifiable or not, it is the meaning attached to the change that justifies it as impact (McClintock, 2004; Lawrence, 2006).

In complex social situations, meaning is layered. It has physical, social and psychological dimensions, all of which reconstruct an experience or a change, and explain its relevance and impact (McClintock, 2004). For example, while households in this study might have needed practical input, such as physical care, assistance with schooling and basic hygiene, education, housing or medical support, these interventions produce intangible results, like the dignity and ultimate independence of adults, or the opportunity for children to feel that they were 'normal' among other children. If the material support had not resulted in these intangible results, impact would have been negligible.

Stories draw participants' and organisations' attention to their organisational meaning, as well as their individual reasons for being part of this meaning (Bahre, 2007).

5.1.2.2. Story collection

In facilitating stories, the key is to distinguish a meaningful story from noise. Even with strong encouragement to be specific, stories told within organisations in this study tended towards generalisations, such as "Whenever we care for people, we make a difference". Similarly, the majority of stories shared by community respondents in the MSC process began with "The government should ..." or "People around here always..." or "Our problems are ...". These stories offer little evaluative value. A guided process is required to elicit personally experienced significant change or stories that lead to insights on what success in the organisation means.

5.1.2.3. Collectively analysing narrative

In sharing stories in organisations, it is important to recognise that all stories are fictions (Bryant and Cox, 2004; McClintock, 2004; Grisham, 2006). Our version of any event, our selection of what to tell and where to place emphasis, result in even the most factual account being the teller's fiction.

Since stories form the basis of meaning, their factual basis is less important than the underlying myth they reflect. The 'so what' of these accounts tells us about meaning, values and intent for the organisation, for the community in which they work, and often for the individual relating the story.

Stories have the potential to convey complex social understanding and concepts (Grisham, 2006). Collective story analysis invokes a discussion of these values and world views by taking the fiction of stories, and attempts to reveal the meaning or mythology behind them (Quinn Patton, 1999). Processes such as "Success Means ..." achieve this

analysis, as does the MSC process of selecting out and discussing the most significant story or stories of change.

5.1.2.4. *Stories as grounded evaluation*

One criticism of logical and predictive planning and evaluation processes is the irrelevance of externally motivated, predefined criteria for success (Bebbington, 1997; Mirafteb, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Kilby, 2006). Story analysis offers a seamless process through which the criteria for change that are relevant to the organisation and its clients can be crystallised. Using stories, organisation members unravel their impressions of their own performance against their own motivations, criteria and meaning. Further discussion on the extraction and use of grounded criteria for evaluation is provided below.

The expansion and application of the potential of stories, story analysis, and story-grounded criteria for evaluation, offer an opportunity for evaluation to reflect reality, and inform management and policy from the basis of reality-based evidence.

5.1.3. **Metaphor in evaluative analysis**

Metaphors are integral to language, culture and thought (Chettiparamb, 2006; Grisham, 2006). Our conversations and conceptualisation of reality are steeped in metaphor. As stories are fictions, so too, words themselves are a metaphor for reality. Much of metaphor is subconscious, so fundamental is it to human thought patterns (Oswick & Montgomery, 1999). We are continuously using forms of metaphor, beyond the obvious metaphors we find in figures of speech. Discrimination and stereotypes in our reactions to human diversity are essentially metaphors of generalisations or assumptions imposed on individuals. Our interpretation of words into concepts, and vice versa, uses language as a metaphor for reality. These metaphors for reality assist as well as obstruct communication between people. It is therefore natural and apt that people and organisations resonate with metaphor (Abel & Sementelli, 2005; Sementelli & Abel, 2007).

Metaphor exceeded expectations in its potential for grounded, nuanced, detailed and sophisticated organisational evaluation. Without exception, metaphors provided meaningful, inspiring, powerful introspection and intense self-analysis. Metaphor provided a lens through which the character, structure, internal strengths and growth areas of organisations could be judged to a deep and precise level (Abel & Sementelli, 2005; Chettiparamb, 2006; Grisham, 2006; Sementelli & Abel, 2007). Metaphor also

placed evaluation into immediate use, and was completely at home in the character and culture of CBOs.

Using an animal metaphor the organisation's 'organs' were labelled in a manner that permitted each participant to grasp its structure and to be guided through a rigorous self-evaluation. A profound understanding of the functions and interactions of the organisation was achieved. Participants viewed the skin of an organisation as its membership, for example; or the tail fin as the driving force of management in mutual support with the lungs of community communication. Metaphor analysis can create a depth of description far more complex, and yet communicable, than any non-metaphorical attempt could achieve (Oswick & Montgomery, 1999).

Metaphor becomes a planning vehicle for outlining Theories of Change (Bornstein, 2006b; Chettiparamb, 2006). They provided opportunities for participants to formulate positive and concrete evaluation recommendations, as organisational development goals.

Sementelli & Abel (2007) point out that despite their value in characterising and analysing organisations, metaphors tend to be static. They have less value in understanding the dynamic, evolving, adaptive contexts of change and relationships. This observation resonates with my findings in this study, where outward-looking, client-focused evaluation of relationships and the outcomes of interventions were not well-captured by metaphor. Used in conjunction with outward-looking processes, however, internal analysis through metaphor warrants firm inclusion in the mainstream toolbox.

The experiences of this study clearly demonstrated the potential for metaphor as a tool for facilitating a shared understanding of organisational dynamics, challenges, values and priorities. Its use in relationship building between partner organisations, and as an integral element to evaluation and reflection, is strongly encouraged.

5.1.4. Facilitating participatory evaluation

Although not always as achievable as imagined (Swidler & Watkins, 2009), CBOs are largely founded in the principles of democratic, participatory, community-inclusive principles (Poindexter, 2007; Abbey, 2008; Mayberry, et al., 2009). Participatory and personal relationships with partners are far more at home in CBOs, than regulated, standardised or dictated communication processes. It is therefore a key principle of organisation and community-centred evaluation that the processes chosen have a strong foundation of participation (Robinson & Cousins, 2004; Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006).

Metaphor, stories, voting and ranking, and community research, as described in the Results Chapter above, are such participatory methods (McClintock, 2004; Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006; Chettiparamb, 2007).

5.1.4.1. Who holds the pen?

Participatory methods have long identified how power within a process resides in 'The Pen'. The person who interprets and captures holds the power to create the results of a collective process (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). Correct participatory theory would therefore expect that participants do the drawing, collage, photography, writing or otherwise represent the results of their discussions.

This did not prove as accessible as one might have hoped. Where participant drawing was attempted in this study, the issue of drawing overwhelmed the purpose of the session. Although their verbal analysis had been rich and thorough, participants were self-consciousness and unadventurous when invited to draw. They tended to capture insufficient detail to provide a visual representation or lasting record of collective evaluation. Similarly, the capture of stories written by participants and MSC field researchers tended to lack detail.

One option might be to replace drawing with a more accessible form of representation, such as collage or photography. Alternatively we might view the act of drawing not as a core expression in itself. Drawing and writing can be seen as a means for probing, facilitating and organising thoughts. The purpose of drawing is to guide conversations that move the group's thinking and self-understanding forward, while transparently and visibly sharing information. Seen through this lens and based on the experiences of this study, the capturing of images and annotation by the facilitator is an appropriate and effective option.

5.1.4.2. Community researchers: participatory learning in action

Although the Results Chapter describes compromises in data quality and data efficiency where CBO members are recruited as MSC researchers, these are offset by the multiple benefits of maximising participation. CBO members can and should have significant involvement and influence in all aspects of the evaluation (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006; Chettiparamb, 2007; Mayberry, et al., 2009). The advantages of increased genuine participation include evolving, continuous, owned and effective organisational learning; accurate and informed story analysis; and the development of skills, confidence and community awareness among participants (Robinson & Cousins, 2004).

Researcher amateurism in participatory evaluation requires that evaluation be light on science and strong on process. Good evaluation must support good management decisions. Good decisions depend on adequate data, moderated bias and sensible cost. They do not need perfect, scientifically rigorous, expensive data. More important to good decisions are clear collective thinking and open honest communication (Baker, et al., 2005).

An overriding theme emerging from this study is that evaluation is a form of social development communication. Evaluators need to relax. This is almost impossible in a context of predictive, structured, positivist, externally-dictated, power-imbalanced evaluation. Although effective learning and communication are far more achievable with narrative methods, an awareness of purpose over method remains critical. An evaluator's role is not to execute a method. It is to facilitate understanding. To the extent that methods support this, we may enjoy them. We must be cautious, however, of being seduced by method as an achievement in itself.

5.1.4.3. *The facilitator*

While the wholesale subcontracting of evaluation to external consultants is considered anathema, there are several advantages to inviting a facilitator to support participatory, owned evaluation. Emergent, qualitative, narrative evaluation is aided by personal contact, at least until organisations learn the skills of self-representation (Senge 2006, p. 230). The evaluator in this context is far more a facilitator of learning and communication than an extractor of data (Robinson & Cousins, 2004).

The distinction between subcontracting an evaluator and facilitation must be clearly grasped (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). A subcontracted evaluator is directly responsible for process, analysis, conclusions and reported results. A facilitator guides an organisation through a process of sharing, analysing and reporting for itself, for which it remains primarily responsible.

Few organisations in any sector have the capability to self-facilitate, particularly where processes require reflection on underlying patterns, confronting of assumptions and dismantling systemic negative feedback forces (Senge, 2006, p. 229). The skills of a facilitator are not necessarily those of a conventional evaluator or researcher (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). The role of a facilitator is to help people to own and engage with the issue at hand, while maintaining freshness and challenge in their thinking (Robinson & Cousins, 2004).

Although participation in itself directly and immediately influences CBO decisions, effective facilitation enables the slowing down of these decisions. Unreflective, reactive management decisions do not necessarily optimise learning from experience (Taylor, et al., 1997) (Figure 21).

Effective action learning in evaluation facilitates a pause between hearing about stories of action, ... and a planned reaction to this information. In this reflective pause, participants dwell on significance of stories and explicitly draw out new learning. Virtually all

unfacilitated decision-making contexts, across organisations and individuals, have difficulty learning constructively from experience (Senge, 2006, p. 229). More often we react irrationally, change direction unreflectively or persevere unthinkingly. The *learning* in action learning is routinely ignored (Taylor, et al., 1997). Effective evaluation facilitation holds the participants in the reflection and learning pause, enabling meaningful learning to inform the next cycle of action.

Ideally, reporting would not be delegated to an outsider. Organisations themselves should remain the authors of their own processes, and all material emerging from an evaluation should be prepared by participants. This scenario seldom transpires, and reporting seems to be the one function that is most enthusiastically delegated to an external consultant. If a facilitator-evaluator does accept the task of written reporting, he or she should provide far more *gathering* and *representing* of the voices of the evaluation contributors, than *interpreting* or *analysing* (Rhodes, 1996).

Self-facilitation can be learned, as organisations become practiced at confronting their own assumptions and thinking together in creative pathways (Senge 2006, p. 230; Sen, 1987). A future where community-based organisations exchange facilitation services with each other, or provide CBO learning facilitation as their core function, would reflect valuable capacity built in the sector as a whole.

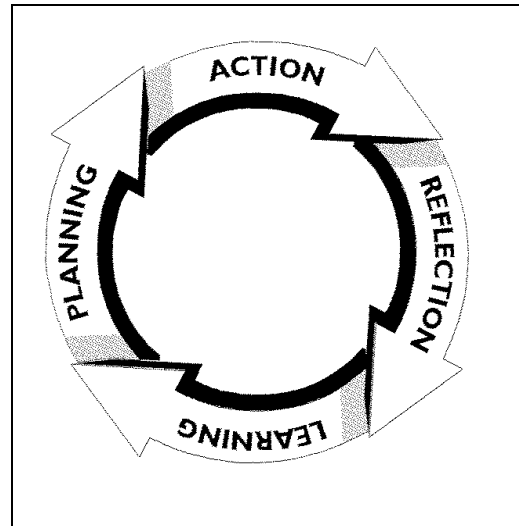


Figure 21 *The Action Learning Cycle again*

Source: Taylor, et al., (1997)

If we regard a facilitator of evaluation as responsible for drawing out the results of self-analysis and self-evaluation, acknowledging the supremacy of internal judgement, where, if at all, does the judgement of the evaluator become relevant? Where does



evaluator meet facilitator? With principles of tolerance, diversity and acknowledgement, at what stage, on what grounds and in what manner, does the evaluator begin to exercise judgement? Do evaluators have any role as judge or critic (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006)?

The question remains uncertain for me. It interfaces with the discussion on funding and power below, where the contradictions of judgement, power and development create direct clashes for ethical practice.

5.1.4.4. *Bias and subjectivity*

From a perspective of purist evaluation or research quality, several compromises are needed in participatory evaluation, including the concept of bias. Community researchers share little of academia's concern around bias. They select their best clients as community informants, and tend to focus on medical (or relevant sectoral) professionals or volunteers as their most enthusiastic respondents. Even in attempting to reach a range of stakeholders in the MSC evaluation, *shebeens* and churches were often most accessible. These locations select for a certain profile of stakeholder. Least accessible in the MSC study, were people at work or in their homes, and these were largely excluded from the sample.

Bias is unavoidable, and needs to be described and acknowledged (Schein, 1993). Apart from efforts to verify across stakeholder groups and being clear on excluded groups, bias need not discredit the process (Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). The advantages of community drawn researchers in terms of immediate learning, analytical insight and the relevance and ownership of conclusions far outweigh this, and other, compromises (Robinson & Cousins, 2004).

In another dimension to bias, evaluators inevitably interpret and analyse participants' or organisations' stories. While to some extent it is the task of evaluation to interpret and analyse, this carries unavoidable subjective bias. A facilitator may draw conclusions against criteria such as: personal charisma of the leadership; articulateness; harmonious internal relations; clarity on internal needs and the needs of clients; or apparent ability to build partnerships and negotiate resources.

My own criteria began to arise unbidden during these grounded processes. They were deeply subjective and personally biased. I embarked, despite myself, on a continuous assessment, judgement and qualification of the organisations in this study. It drew on my own world view and values, and on the framework of research questions with which I

had approached these organisations. Some of the criteria for effective organisations that emerged from my own preferences included:

- Willingness to hold power (reflected in language of helplessness or control, and ability to see opportunities as opposed to obstacles)
- Space and vision for learning
- Ability for reflection, internal communication and belief in self-actualisation

Another facilitator might have been alarmed at the absence of governance structures, or have been most interested in documented strategic plans.

This unavoidable subjectivity has doubtless spawned the culture of checklists and objectively verifiable indicators which rule today's world of evaluation. In attempting to remove facilitator subjectivity, evaluation practice has paid dearly in terms of meaningful communication (Bornstein, 2006a).

I would suggest that despite systems designed to ensure objectivity, many decisions are still intuitive and relationship-based (Edwards & Sen, 2000). In any interaction, it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, for the facilitator to suspend judgement or to resist interpreting observations. All research is biased by the researcher's lens, which is influenced by the unconscious filters of world view and basic assumptions.

How do we formulate an evaluation principle to resolve the conundrum of facilitator subjectivity, without resorting to objectivity and generalisation to the point of irrelevance? The three-way tensions between i) objective externally selected criteria; ii) facilitator subjectivity; and iii) organisation-driven criteria, remain a challenge to designing effective power-supporting evaluation.

5.1.5. Diversity as an evaluation concern

Diversity management lies in acknowledging and embracing both difference and similarity (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1997, p. 33). It does not assume a shared understanding or uniformity of interpretation or world view. Assuming agreement with our own world view is a none too subtle form of arrogance and discrimination. Despite this fairly obvious, intuitive observation, interactions between development practitioners occur across organisation and human cultures, standardised against a 'northern' culture of accepted practice. Those not conforming to the pedestal culture need 'capacity building', while the pedestal culture is seldom called to account. The concerns of this research at a strategic level have to do with issues of diversity.

At a practical, methodological level, concerns of diversity are particularly relevant to community development evaluators, who often come from very different life experiences from their clients. The further from a clients' culture an evaluator comes, the less correct his or her frame of reference and behavioural benchmarks can be. We cannot assume that we are correctly interpreting our observations. Stories, metaphor and creative exchange are valuable cultural bridges, aiding communication and building shared understanding in diverse groups (Bornstein, 2006b; Grisham, 2006)

5.1.5.1. Interpreting unfamiliar behaviour

There were several experiences of the impact of diversity during this research. One example was the long, loud, weeping, passionate prayer that I found vaguely shocking. It transgressed many of the cultural norms of reserved, middle-class society. Without a reasonable sample, however, there was little I could say about whether this behaviour was unusual or commonplace. I had no frame of reference from which to draw meaning. It was impossible for me to interpret it with any trustworthiness. Anthropologists may probe, discuss and look for patterns over a period of extended engagement, but evaluators have neither this role, not this luxury.

Researchers refer to participant observation and body language as valid data. This rationale collapses beyond a certain benchmarked range of understood behaviours. These participant observations depend on the perspective and life experience of the evaluator. Had I come from a Sowetan charismatic church, in this example, I would no doubt have understood the emotional style.

The principle that unfamiliar behaviour suggests for evaluation lies in acknowledging our limits, and resisting trying to over-interpret. In the brevity of our contact, organisational development practitioners and evaluators have no option but to accept a wide range of behaviours as unknowable. We need to accept diversity and realise that, while behaviour has meaning, much of that meaning is beyond what we can understand in the time and conversations we have as facilitators of evaluation.

5.1.5.2. Familiar behaviour

Unfamiliar behaviour, however disconcerting, is far simpler to deal with than familiar behaviour. We can identify our own limitations when faced with the unfamiliar. In terms of Maslow's theory of the four stages of competence, we are consciously incompetent (Chapman, 2010).

How often, however, do we wrongly assume that we are interpreting familiar behaviour correctly, using our own benchmarks? How do we know whether our frame of reference really does apply to those we are observing? Experiences of extremes of diversity and difference, and associated unfamiliar behaviour, are valuable insofar as they raise our awareness of diversity and sensitise us to our assumptions of uniformity.

We risk errors of unconscious incompetence whenever we are faced with diversity (Chapman, 2010). Knowing that we do not understand is useful. Imagining we do understand is far more dangerous.

Part of addressing the challenges of both familiar and unfamiliar behaviour is the facilitator's holding of a neutral position. As external agents facilitators are responsible for holding process. We need to remain neutral and uncritical of content. We need trust and respect for self-analysis by participants, even if their rationale is contradictory to our own basic assumptions and world view. Our interpretation as outsiders has far less reliability than that of insiders themselves. Our role is to prompt, explore and facilitate organisation-centred introspection, and to learn from the thinking and analysis that emerges. This attitude supports sound diversity management and the safer management of familiar and unfamiliar behaviour.

5.1.6. Ethics

Evaluation and ethics are inextricable. As Williams (2002) states, "We [evaluators] are often walking around and occasionally treading on people's dreams. We judge or often promote judgement of those dreams."

An observation of this study is that narrative methods are particularly vulnerable to ethics infringement. Stories of impact can be intensely emotional, particularly in a context of poverty and HIV (Bryant & Cox, 2004; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, 2007; Bahre, 2007; Poindexter, 2007). Participants in this research relived trauma and described the harrowing experiences that are part of the work of a community organisation in our society's most tragic settings. Young volunteers, bereaved families and shocking human conditions were recounted in these stories. There were tears.

Fortunately, the compassion, empathy and ability to contain trauma are qualities that are often found in CBOs. They are part of the essence of their services and integral to their own hardships and support mechanisms as community members (Hilfinger Messias, et al., 2005). Indeed, the incentives for leading and volunteering in these organisations are often emotional (Hibbert, et al., 2003).

What then are the essential qualities in a facilitator in holding emotion? The process needs to accept and contain emotion calmly. A facilitator should neither suppress or feel threatened by emotion, nor give it more energy than is naturally expressed (DiTomaso & Hooijberg, 1996). Contributing his or her own emotion takes emotional attention away from the story holder, and dilutes the integrity of the process. I have colleagues who call the holding of emotion and relationship in facilitated process 'gravitas'. Each facilitator needs to define this for themselves, and cultivate it as a core quality.

In addition to providing a safe environment for individual emotion, narrative engagement can also be an irritant of organisational conflict. An evaluator is responsible for leaving an organisation at least as intact, and preferably rather stronger than he or she found it. However inevitable collapse or conflict might seem, an evaluator does not have the right to precipitate disintegration. Notwithstanding good intentions there are often risks to organisations of which evaluators need to remain aware and responsible (Williams, 2002). This is discussed in detail below as a facet of evaluation organisation development and has important implications for ethics.

A further consideration for ethics revolves around the participatory nature of these evaluation methods, and the implications of this for confidentiality. One of the advantages of outsider evaluation is the anonymity of both evaluator and respondent. In participatory research there is no such anonymity. The evaluation takes place within the flow of communication and relationships among an existing community of people, in a setting of established norms for privacy and gossip. As evaluators, our awareness, strong encouragement and alertness to unethical situations are essential. This can hardly be overemphasised in facilitating a community research intervention, such as MSC. Even with due attention, ethics infringements are very likely.

5.2 The principles: Making evaluation developmental

While ideas on methods involving stories, metaphor and participatory evaluation are recommended for CBO evaluation, this research has clearly demonstrated that method itself does not define developmental practice. Whatever potential a method or approach might have, this is only realised by the skills, attitudes and principles of facilitators, evaluators and commissioners of these methods (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006).

Far more significant than method, are the principles of engagement. Several such principles have arisen through reflection and observation during this study. Equally intriguing, this research has highlighted contradictions, conundrums and perverse challenges. These leave many questions in the evaluation debate. Useful questions, however intractable they might be, are offered here as having as much value, if not more, than useful answers.

These principles and contradictions are raised as outcomes of this research, and areas for further debate and ongoing research. The themes addressed in the remainder of this chapter include:

- Power dynamics and balance in relation to evaluation
- Literacy and language as they relate to power and partnership communication
- Appreciative and accusatory inquiry;
- Evaluation as organisation development, and the associated ethical responsibility of evaluators;
- The evaluation of inward accountability, as it relates to human and organisation development;
- Grounded, realist evaluation of complex, dynamic, unpredictable and intangible systems;
- Funding agencies needs, relationships and responsibility in developmental CBO engagement;
- Contradictions and challenges around capacity building as defined by funding agencies, and as experienced by CBOs;
- Finally, closing a series of themes threaded with contradiction and systems effects, the nature of the shadow in organisational dynamics.



5.2.1. Power in evaluation

Experiences in this research have demonstrated complex relationships of power with process, diversity, learning, openness, appreciation and accusation (Table 10). They reiterate how power balance is inherent in development outcomes and development stakeholder relationships (Fowler, 1995; Edwards & Hulme, 1996; Kaplan, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006; Habib, 2008; Dinokeng, 2009; Swidler, 2009). What power gives development practice the authority to demand the invention of predictions in futures murky with speculation, to elicit the creative massaging of experiences into successes against those predictions, and to expect the presentation of all of these in the firmly loathed practice of written communication (Bornstein, 2006a; Swidler, 2009)?

Table 10. *The power games of the crystal ball*

Power is lost when capable, intelligent, locally knowledgeable development practitioners spend their time:

- Attempting to invent indicators to appease imposed, externally designed systems;
- Grappling with the fine distinctions between outcome and purpose;
- Crafting their observations of impact so that they appear to have predicted those outcomes correctly;
- Ignoring the richness of their role in community to meet the lens of predicted outcomes

Source: Konstant & Stanz (2009c)

Community-based development practitioners have power in various respects: their role as suppliers; their ability to provide development; their access to community; their skills in providing services; and essential local knowledge. How does an ethical development practitioner, responsible for carrying out an evaluation that informs funding decisions, engage with organisations in a manner that respects their power and supports their development? How do we avoid purveying the power of funding over the power of service? How do we make funding decisions, without diminishing local power by standing in judgement? How do we select one above another, while building the power of both the 'winner' and the 'loser'?

A conundrum and a socially entrenched reality with which development aid effectiveness must surely grapple at every level, is the association of power with money (Uphoff, 1995; Ebrahim, 2003; Kilby, 2006; Yachkaschi, 2006). Community organisations do not follow typical donor agency procedures when working internally, or when communicating with equals or with partners in a referral continuum (Gaspar, 2000). The only situation which persuades an organisation to follow such procedure is when their compliance is a condition for funding (Abbey, 2008; Walker, et al., 2008; Yachkaschi, 2006). The instant the funding relationship dissolves, enthusiasm for strategy, outcomes and report writing also evaporates (Gasper, 2000; Poindexter, 2007; Mayberry, et al.,



2009). One wonders why they don't say "No" (Swidler & Watkins, 2009). (Discussion Box 1).

Although a compelling question, the power and allure of funding is not the focus of this study. My purpose here requires acknowledging the power imbalance in funded relationships and considering the implications of this for evaluation practice and trustworthiness. This study demonstrates two reasons for the relevance of balance of power to evaluation. Firstly, to the extent that power is unequal in the minds of funder and recipient organisations, evaluation dictated in these funding relationships reinforces inequality and contradicts effective development (Sen, 1987; Bhana, 1999, p. 235; Edwards & Sen, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Ebrahim, 2003; Kilby, 2006; Swidler & Watkins, 2009; Turró & Krause, 2009).

Secondly, power distortion undermines accurate evaluation (Bornstein, 2006a). The less trust, confidence, control and power the organisation feels in a situation, the less likely it is to be sincere, incisive, honest and reflective. In this study, any process that raised defenses, diminished honesty and defeated the trustworthiness of the evaluation

(Schien, 1993). Evaluation that leverages the power of money undermines the overall goal of development, as well as its own interest in quality data and accurate insight.

During this research I came to regard 'power held' as being apparent through self-awareness and the depth with which organisations interpreted their work in the community. TT offered a particularly clear example of power strongly held. The group was able to receive robust challenges from its own critical thinker. Although the participant who took this role was fierce in his criticisms, the team remained non-defensive, positive and interested. Power was also visible in the organisation's self-assuredness, and a bearing of calm, purposeful confidence. This inner strength was apparent alongside a lack of any source of funding and immense challenges of contributing in to an informal settlement's intractable problems. A core resource for the organisation appeared to be its strong, charismatic leader, and her relationships in

Peer Review Discussion Box 1

"Organisations should be more focused on their 'identity' and clarify what they are...and are not willing to do in order to receive funding."

"CBOs (and countries) that stand up to donor requirements are often given a bad press and yet this should be a key outcome of partnerships."

"My experience is that when CBO's are able to lead the initial relationship and continue to challenge, understand and occasionally say no to funders, that this is liberating for both parties and provides a basis for honest partnership. I also understand that this is often very very hard to do."

"WHY do CBOs look for money and from whom, and what THEY think donors are there for? And what they might realistically expect? What is the CBO expecting the donor to prove? ... I think CBOs could be asked about what they would want to have as criteria for deciding on whether to finance them. And then be 'judged' on these. Also to have donors say what they would like to be 'judged' on and then be so 'judged'. Donors have called this tune for far too long without any constructive opposition! I don't believe donors have more power - it is the perception of those without money that "give them power". I like to believe it is more perceptual than real."

the management team. With relatively little positional status in an unfunded, voluntary collective of community members, leadership was contained in the personal power of the Director.

In contrast, JJ was a large, structured, well-funded organisation where power seemed to me to be held far less emphatically. Participants here were particularly conscious of their personal qualities and challenges, and rather self-serving in their self-analysis: "*We are very caring*"; "*This is very difficult work*". They complained that other players, in particular government departments, were unresponsive to their advances. They found community members uncooperative, even in the care of their own families.

JJ was also in the midst of internal conflict, placing their leader in an embattled position. This illustrated the contrasts between the natures of positional power for leadership, and personal power required by leaders in less structured organisations. Faced with the changing challenges of leading a "maturing" organisation, personal power remains critical for the success in a leadership position, but places new and difficult demands on the charismatic founder leaders of these local organisations.

The question that arose was whether there was an inverse relationship between power and elements of the suite of financial, structural, size and role differences between these organisations, or whether this was an artifact of a small, varied sample. Is it possible that members of small, poor organisations are more confident of their autonomy than those of large, wealthy, structured organisations?

Power shifts as organisations establish, and with it definition and nature of leadership. The intervention of funding creates a powerful driver for these power shifts. As a corollary to funding, evaluative power provides a further dimension to the external forces moulding organisations.

How do we release the systemic self-limiting spiral of: growth > funding > more growth > expectation and dependency on funding > funding focus > diminished core purpose? When combined with the influence held by funders, and their own priorities and purpose as a driver of CBO development, one asks whether these relationships can be developmental.

These are systems effects that are difficult, perhaps impossible to prevent. More assertive internal control, responsibility and leadership by CBOs may moderate them. A far greater sense of funders' trust in organisations is needed. Evaluation that supports qualitative, grounded outcomes and internally generated definitions of capacity are part of the constructive leveraging of systems potentials.

5.2.1.1. *Literacy as a vessel for power*

The use of written communication, and even drawing, clearly emerged in this research as a constraint to effective evaluation. Few of the participants, even those who were organisation leaders, were able to clearly, fairly and effectively represent themselves on paper. Many, however, were verbally highly articulate, even in English. Their verbal accounts in this study were convincing and compelling. Participants' ability for verbal communication in their first language would have been still more effective.

Written formats remain uncontested, despite great reluctance on the part of stakeholders to write and its virtual ineffectiveness in communication (Kelly, et al., 2005). Funding relationships depend on a stream of written strategies, concept notes, organisational briefs, plans, progress reports and final reviews (Miraftab, 1997; Kilby, 2006). In response to these demands, CBO leaders generate somewhat incomprehensible and extremely brief written communiqués. To do so involves stressful, uncertain and time-consuming effort. Extracting and using these documents is a source of frustration to funders, reinforcing mutual belief in the inferiority of their funding recipients (Discussion Box 2).

The poverty, development need and unemployment that define the existence of CBOs are invariably associated with low levels of formal education. Few members of community organisations have completed secondary school. The great majority have never had professional exposure in a workplace. If this were not the case, they would not be where they are. The resulting weak literacy and uncertain professionalism of most CBO members may be seen by outsiders, and by themselves, as a lack of capacity.

Writing is just one means of communication. For CBOs it is one of the least effective. Only one out of the six organisations to participate in this study in Gauteng could represent itself accurately in writing. This suggests that if we require accurate, representative and power-enhanced communication with CBOs, then writing should not be the chosen medium. Yet, funders insist on receiving written

Peer Review Discussion Box 2

"Are levels of fiduciary risk analysis dooming groups to 'fail' before they even start? e.g. requiring qualified accountants at community level when most people can barely read/write the national language ; or made so complex that groups will never be able to comply thus reinforcing ethnic perceptions of backwardness

While, needing to develop the fiduciary risk analysis and competency as a joint analysis between funding and grant holder that can include other measures than formal audit type responses and support the development of the more formal skills if required."

"Sorry I don't buy that one. If we are arguing to have people/orgs believe in themselves and count themselves strong then we can also assume an ease with accountability. Being accountable at such a low level (such as donors request - financial, reporting etc) should not be an underminer - albeit an irritation."

"I think many organisations rise up to meet such challenges."

communication, implying that effective communication is less important than adherence to systems and habits. 'Partnership' becomes wishful rhetoric more than a description of a relationship.

Beyond the pragmatic need for effective communication, we, as development practitioners, need to be honest about our own least self-flattering, deep responses to a low literacy written account (Exhibit TT2)? What are our unbidden impressions, rooted in our assumptions about society, when we read primary school level script? My question is a rhetorical and a personal one. It relates to the uncomfortable fringes of our social conditioning around class and education, and has the same source of discomfort as the tensions of global inequity and development dynamics.

The accuracy, detail and clarity in spoken communication naturally elicit a different level of respect and connection. It also conveys the content of the communication far more effectively.

Another interesting perspective on written communication and literacy emerged in the BN Case Study. This organisation's members were exceptionally intelligent and articulate, with a sophisticated ability to analyse and an enthusiasm for philosophy. The Deputy Director had taken university level courses in business management. It seemed likely that they were perfectly capable of producing written reports that were thorough and well-worded. Despite their convincing and educated style, other Case Studies, with less intellectual participants, who had had much less formal education, were at least *as* capable of sensible, pragmatic action. A conclusion of this study is that education and literacy have little bearing on natural organisational capacity. By effectively elevating literacy as an evaluative criterion through its central role in communication, development selects for a quality that has little correlation with effective outcomes.

Writing reinforces the mutual awareness of a lack of literacy and education, in the minds of both the writer and the reader. It is little less than insulting to equate a lack of formal education and literacy to 'uneducation', and a lack of ability in English literacy as 'incapacity'. These are negations, devised by the schooled and the wealthy, and strongly perpetuated by the 'uneducated' and the poor. By elevating skills of language and literacy to a statement of ability, we widen the gap between rich and poor, and undo development. Development practice which deepens assumptions of power difference and inequity are not development. Practices that widen the chasms in self-esteem, communication and power distribution in the minds of people are guilty of 'anti-development'. The insistence on written media for communication does this.

If we are to replace writing as the main medium for communication, technology and culture of interaction needs to invest in accessible, appropriate formats with which organisation members can engage independently of facilitation. In its simplest form, organisation members might visit and engage in person with partners, voice recording sessions and transcribing or sharing audio materials. Basic technologies, but profound shifts in communication culture are essential in order to permit far more effective access between organisations through verbal, visual and personal communication.

5.2.1.2. *Language games in the evaluation profession*

After several experiments, the question “Success means ...?” was found to be most effective in probing for criteria for impact. Wording such as “What struck you about these stories?” or “What is important in this organisation?” proved too abstract or broad. Similarly, terms such as ‘Theory of Change’ and ‘Domains of Change’ were an obstruction to learning. By using more explicit terminology, the concepts beneath these terms became far more useful and understandable to CBOs and community members. Abstract language interferes with evaluation and with learning. The careful choice of simple, unambiguous wording makes a profound difference to evaluation results.

An issue as mundane as terminology carries great weight in the global M&E discourse. Training courses focus on terms. M&E practitioners invent, engineer, define and arrange these terms, and then require would-be colleagues to learn them. Organisations see language as an obstacle and a reflection of weakness.

The culture has gained momentum, possibly largely due to the global energy and money being invested in M&E as a profession. M&E receives more attention in professional talking circles than development itself²⁶.

The option of deleting the vast majority of confusing words from our vocabulary, and translating the rest into everyday terms in numerous languages has not been considered by the M&E conferencing agenda. As practitioners we have an obligation to effective development to do so.

²⁶ The conferences of: International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS); International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3iE), European Evaluation Association (EEA); American Evaluation Association (AEA); African Evaluation Association (AfrEA); South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) are attended by hundreds of practitioners, drawn from those with the resources to cover the costs of attendance.

5.2.2. Appreciative inquiry

The approaches explored here are all strongly rooted in appreciative inquiry (AI). Evaluation through AI actively seeks out the positive (Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 181; McClintock, 2004; Seel, 2006; Avital, et al., 2009). AI assumes that drawing out the positive from both success and failure offers the most valuable insight to the road ahead.

Some of the most profound learning emerges from a positive understanding of failure, or of the differences between what was imagined and what transpired. Disappointment allows us to expand our knowledge of a situation, and therefore to take more appropriate action. To be most effective, appreciative approaches must actively embrace critical self-analysis of potential for growth (Sen, 1987; Gaspar, 2000).

This critical appreciation becomes more complex when an evaluation is conducted in a context of power imbalance, such as is inevitable in a funding relationship. Power balance is integral to AI. The power of power arose clearly in the non-appreciative sessions of this study (e.g. More Of / Less Of). These produced defensive, slightly conflictual conversations. This 'accusatory inquiry' leads to power sensitivities, which lead to defensiveness and relationship distortion (Discussion Box 3).

Peer Review Discussion Box 3

"Even with learning-based and organisation-owned, in my experience, organisations may feel accused, i.e. respond defensively rather than with curiosity and desire to learn."

Any process that elicits defensive reactions is in conflict with constructive communication and accurate, truthful data (Chambers, 1995; Bornstein, 2006a). Defensive responses obstruct sincere introspection. Defensiveness results in bias in the sense that participants close their own thinking, and are less able to reflect honestly on themselves. The facilitator is seen to be in opposition, rather than support. This study clearly demonstrated how inquiry has to be appreciative, and must carefully avoid external accusation if evaluation is to be developmental or the data accurate.

Peer Review Discussion Box 4

"I find appreciative inquiry works really well with CBOs and then after they've told positive stories, ask them what their challenges are. Also celebrate what they have accomplished with limited resources."

"It's important that they recognise their good work as this in turn gives them energy (appreciative inquiry type of thing)"

"An AI approach where we ask what is working well and why may be a good start to any piece of evaluation work."

The importance of AI therefore lies equally in the value of positive reinforcement building on achievements, as in the experience that the converse, accusatory inquiry defeats communication,

reflection and learning (Schien, 1993). Whether a critical question is legitimate is irrelevant if it raises defense and distorts power. In so doing, it risks defeating the overall purpose of evaluation as a function for development and reduces data trustworthiness. It is better left unasked.

A clear conclusion of this study is therefore that all CBO evaluation should be based on principles of AI (Discussion Box 4). While appreciative inquiry is widely accepted as a nice idea, its imperative really lies in the evidence that non-appreciative or accusatory inquiry, however innocuous, severely derails evaluation.

Evaluators need to be sensitive to any shift among evaluation participants towards defensiveness and confrontation. Neutral facilitation which creates a safe space in which to introspect is essential to encouraging honest self-evaluation. Inquiry is no longer appreciative if participants experience accusation, defensiveness or external criticism, whether intended or not.

Appreciative inquiry does not preclude critical self-evaluation by the organisation. It simply requires that this critical analysis is generated from within the organisation (Sen, 1987).

5.2.3. 'Holding' the organisation: Evaluator responsibility

Several of the evaluation experiences with organisations in this study included strains of tension and conflict. A variety of issues arose in different settings. Among them were: role clarity; contested authority; leader manipulation; organisational cultures around consultation or lack thereof; passive resistance; and gender, class and ethnic diversity dynamics.

Experiences in this research demonstrated how evaluation can cause an internal explosion which dramatically shifts an organisation, for better or for worse. Evaluation must be careful of tipping delicately poised relationships, without being available to support their restabilisation. Any conflict that may be brewing in an organisation is likely to surface through evaluation. It needs to be addressed appropriately within that evaluation. Evaluation does not have the right to prematurely or non-constructively amplify those conflicts without time or recourse to rebuilding the organisation. Evaluation should be an opportunity for an organisation to acknowledge that work needs to be done. The facilitator's role is to encourage the power and potential in the organisation to manage its own growth through these phases of discomfort.



Evaluators have disproportionate power for the time invested and the scant knowledge they might glean about an organisation. They risk being an excitable bull in an overly full china shop. To light the fuse of an organisational bomb may take only an ignorant moment, but the consequences on staff, structures, morale, prospects and relationships can be profound. Facilitators of evaluation need to be aware of their responsibilities and limitations, and tread cautiously. It would be unwise to presume to understand too much, know too much, or proclaim too aggressively.

Despite this fairly obvious observation, evaluators do indeed presume, proclaim and sometimes destroy (Discussion Box 5). Critical, assertive and power imbalanced evaluations can be destructive (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 5; Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab 1997; Lewis, 1998; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Gasper, 2000; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall and Kelly 2007; Bornstein, 2006a, Kilby, 2006). Funders and evaluators who demand changes conceived in their own understanding, may dismiss organisational and individual power and derail the life paths of both.

Peer Review Discussion Box 5

“Evaluation processes which hold people to completely unrealistic statements in logframes can be very damaging.”

In preference to the bomb style of organisational intervention, an organisationally sensitive facilitator can catalyse subtle shifts in a situation. In this study, there were opportunities such as clarifying roles, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation’s culture and confirming vision and strategy.

A clear principle for elevation from this study has been that there is a broad area of mutually reinforcing overlap between evaluation and organisation development. An ethical evaluation must support OD or it has no right to interact in the life of an organisation. This is a key principle of utilisation-based evaluation and critical change theory (Quinn-Patton, 2002, p. 173). The usefulness of an evaluation depends on bridging evaluation with organisation development.

Ethical evaluators need to attempt to close even the briefest process with a clear, achievable, optimistic and constructive path forward for the organisation, and a growing belief in its power for self-realisation. Evaluators need to be acutely aware of riding the knife edge between destruction and development. We are first and foremost development practitioners.

5.2.4. Evaluating for inward accountability

This research has highlighted the importance of integration between evaluation and organisational development. It aligns with the contested question of whether CBO funding is intended for organisation development, or simply for the supply of services at community level (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Fowler, 1995; Mirafteb, 1997; Senge, 2006, p. 61; NDoSD, 2009a) (Discussion Box 6). Are these organisations and their members are themselves part of the development agenda (Edwards & Sen, 2000)?

The organisations in this study clearly highlighted the distinction between inward, downward and upward accountability (Ebrahim, 2003; Gray, et al., 2006; Kilby, 2006; Eade, 2007).

- Inward accountability is reflected by strengthened organisational systems or culture, and by changes in the lives of organisation members (Turró & Krause, 2009).
- The products of an organisation and changes in the lives of its clients and in the state of its community are a reflection of downward accountability.
- Upward accountability, to government or funders, tends to value the latter (downward criteria) over the former (inward criteria) (Discussion Box 6).

The emerging contention of this study is that far greater emphasis is warranted to inward accountability for CBOs. The leaders and founders of community organisations are community members themselves. The volunteers who staff these organisations are their first clients. In marginalised, vulnerable societies both organisation members and community beneficiaries are clients of an organisation (Turró & Krause, 2009; Hilfinger Messias, et al., 2005; Hibbert, et al., 2003; Stevenson, 2007; Raman, 2005). All too often the

Peer Review Discussion Box 6

"Donor/Investors do not give to organisations to solve problems, meet deficits or to meet needs. Donor/investors give to success measured by output, through input and impact."

"Donors, etc., don't want learning and longer term results but rather more immediate results."

"I do not believe that enhancing individual and organisational self-belief should be a primary or even secondary focus. My opinion is that if a participatory approach is applied, then this is a tertiary outcome. The organisations themselves should adopt a vision of empowerment of the clients or individuals they service."

"No, development is not about raising power, in the sense that, for me, development is what happens to all living things and systems – they develop (involving processes of quantitative change – growth; AND qualitative change).. Development practice is about intervention into that process (sometimes to help unstick it, sometimes to hasten it along, sometimes to guide and assist it. Then that's where enhancing people's and organisations's belief in themselves comes in)."

"If it fails to enhance people and organisation self-belief, the intervention will be reduced to one that is technicist, and, without the support or buy-in of key stakeholders, likely to be unsustainable."

value of an organisation to its members is ignored, dismissed and sometimes even regarded as a failure.

Volunteers may be trained, acquire skills, grow in confidence and finally leave the organisation having found formal, salaried employment (Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall, et al., 2007). In this event, the organisation has achieved the ultimate impact of development: it has absolved a household from participating as a dependent beneficiary of the development industry. More often than being vaunted as an achievement, however, this is viewed as instability, wasted capacity building, high staff turnover, weak volunteer recruitment and poor staff retention (Kelly, et al., 2005). Organisations are seldom credited with their contribution to career path development and the socio-economic upliftment of these households (Eade, 2007; Booth, 2008).

This observation calls for a compromise away from the business model of investing in people as an industrial resource, towards viewing human investment as serving society as a whole. Part of the value of CBOs is as conduit for a flow of individual self-realisation.

A legitimate goal of CBO engagement could be that of expelling people from the volunteer sector and actively supporting their pursuit of 'greener pastures'. This directly contradicts the more commonly held goal of retention of volunteers and establishment of stable CBO staffs. The volunteer retention paradigm amounts to holding people in voluntary organisations for the good of humanity, while the wealthy and employed march past in their life paths. This philosophy embodies a fundamentalist position of servitude, and a culture that regards personal development as distasteful, juxtaposed against global double-standards of the value of wealth.

Although highly controversial, and fraught with suggestion of the poor sharing responsibility for inequity, we might ask how much of poverty is psychological and steeped in the safety of the moral superiority of poverty - a mindset promoted by the volunteer industry. If poverty is sanitised and romanticised and the poor regarded as helpless victims to be empowered and uplifted by the privileged, we leave little space for power to be expressed (Bahre, 2007). If, however, the attitudes and beliefs of both poor and non-poor have a role in the eradication of poverty then development practice must support attitudes and relationships that promote self-realisation of upliftment, socio-economic inclusion and eradication of poverty. It must remove practices where relationships are founded in external control and mutual purchase in inferiority : superiority dynamics. If development culture is not to be self-defeating, then what is

needed are evaluation systems that recognise the role of CBOs in creating pathways out of poverty and dependency.

The challenge in the volunteer, unfunded CBO model is that it depends on organisations and a flow of members in the social welfare system. Designing a strategy around the purposeful use of voluntary contribution from society's poorest smacks of exploitation (Friedman, 2002). In this scenario, volunteers can only reap the rewards of their contribution to society by leaving the sector (Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Kelly, et al., 2005). The volunteer scenario also assumes that a stable core is provided by leaders being prepared to remain within the volunteer sector. They are then altruistically bound to socio-economic circumstances less comfortable than the departing flow of members they train and mentor.

Altruism is a rare and complex phenomenon (Raman, 2005; Haski-Levanthal, 2009). It would be fair to assume that in the absence of the Eldorado of donor funding, far fewer organisations would be vying to provide services (Swidler & Watkins, 2009).

A development principle and a criterion for CBO evaluation should therefore be the professional and socio-economic development of every person involved with an organisation. These are the unsung systems effects of CBO engagement. A shift of this nature provides its own set of challenges, which require careful thought and experimentation, and pose a further layer of complex and contradictory systems effects to CBO leadership.

5.2.5. Evaluating in complex systems: Realist approaches

The great majority of social processes and outcomes are far more complex than people might anticipate or imagine, either by organisation members or outsiders (Williams, 2002; Abel & Sementelli, 2005; Chettiparamb, 2006; Sementelli & Abel, 2007; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). This research demonstrates how unmeasurable, intangible impacts are the common threads that hold together the various outputs of CBO interventions.

Outputs such as clothing, cleanliness and the availability of a parent figure, for example, all amount to a greater sense of normality for OVC clients and the relief of perceiving themselves as less conspicuous. Impacts across the range of clients are uniquely relevant in a particular situation and set of human relationships. Interventions are successful to the extent that they retain human responsiveness to individuals, and are respectful of their individuality and the uniqueness of the needs that they experience. Such impacts are difficult to verify, impossible to quantify and not

necessarily replicable. Without them, the work of the organisation, however productive, would have no value.

As development evaluators, we must resist the temptation to prioritise tangible, measurable outcomes (Uphoff, 1995; Gasper, 2000; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Conlin & Stirrat, 2008). This is in direct conflict with the adage, “if you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it” which is bandied unchallenged in evaluation conversation²⁷. This concept has long been dismissed as incorrect and a distortion of Deming’s intent in the business circles from which it emanated²⁸.

While some outcomes may be tangible and measurable, these are mingled inextricably with intangible outcomes that may be far more essential to impact. The adage could more reasonably be phrased as “Just because you can measure it, does not mean that it matters”, and “If you can’t measure it, then describe it”.

5.2.5.1. Learning the language: standardising and quantifying criteria

Conventional, funder-designed planning and evaluation require that organisations decide on objectives, predict the outcomes of their actions and measure their achievements against these predictions (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 13; Fowler, 1995; Gasper, 2000; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004). Training courses in strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) dwell on the subtle complexities of concepts such as results chains, indicators, outcomes, objectives and monitoring frameworks. In order to communicate with funders, local practitioners are expected to learn and apply this language and these abstract distinctions and definitions (Edwards & Hulme, 1995, p. 9; Ebrahim, 2003; Kelly, et al., 2005; Kilby, 2006).

Ordinarily a CBO might simply have assessed a situation, discussed it as a team and decided on a sensible course of action. Once funded, they must describe the higher purpose of their activities as it aligns with the higher purpose of the funding agency, and elucidating how each step is indeed necessary and sufficient. At the end of a period of time determined by their funders’ management cycles, they are expected to refer to indicators they were obliged to invent and measure the success or otherwise of their activities against these indicators whether or not they are appropriate in hindsight. This

²⁷ Met with murmurs of agreement at the NGO Conference, 2008.

²⁸ Various websites describe how Deming is misquoted in this adage.

makes perfect sense to salaried, career-oriented officers whose work life might be devoted to working with tables, reports and systems a great distance from the untidy reality of human lives (Gasper, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006; Kilby, 2006; Abrahams, 2008).

At the lowest level of administration and resource management, a hypothetical monitoring framework might include outputs, indicators and targets as outlined in Table 11.

Table 11. *Hypothetical evaluation criteria for outputs or activities in an imaginary AIDS support CBO*

ACTIVITIES OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR	TARGETS
To provide social and educational services to vulnerable children	The number of children participating in welfare interventions. School fees paid. School uniforms distributed. Food parcels distributed.	1000 children came to the Christmas Kindness X # School fees paid Y # School uniforms distributed Z # Food parcels distributed

Inputs and outputs can, and should, be monitored and counted in terms of time, activities and costs. These data do not, however, give any indication of whether the services have value, relevance or impact. A higher order of planning and evaluation is needed to understand the achievements of the intervention. Conventional evaluation would ask, "What was the intended outcome of this intervention?" and "Has this predicted impact been realised?"

A conventional evaluation framework for the higher level outcomes and impacts of the programme in Table 11 might resemble those in Table 12. They would ordinarily have been decided at programme inception.

Table 12. *Hypothetical conventional evaluation criteria for outcomes or impacts of an imaginary AIDS support CBO*

OUTCOME / IMPACT OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR	TARGET
Demonstrably and sustainably improve the quality of life and education for 1000 children within 2 years.	Quality of Life index School attendance and results	50% increase in QOL index 90% attendance at school from a baseline of, say, 40%.

At this point linear logic collapses (Gasper, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006). These indicators, or any others we might have invented, do not necessarily measure impact for all, or perhaps even most, situations. The weightings in the Quality of Life Index might not capture household priorities. School attendance

might increase alongside school gang membership and drug abuse, or school achievement and psycho-social wellbeing might improve in spite of continued poor attendance. By looking for what we imagined the outcomes would be, we are likely to miss what they really were (Gray, et al., 2006; Chaskin, 2009).

Almost every prediction can, and probably will, differ from reality, and differ from client to client. Development, social change and lives of human beings seldom follow the courses we imagine (Kaplan, 2002; Quinn Patton, 2002). Surprises are the rule, not the exception. Selecting suitable indicators, that are sensitive to the actual impacts of the intervention, in advance, is pure guesswork.

5.2.5.2. *Alternative assumptions: Theory of Change*

Systems thinking asks that we recognise and describe the many complex causes, effects, interactions and feedback loops in designing effective strategies for change (Williams, 2002; Senge 2006, p. 157; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008; Rogers, 2009). As a component of systems thinking, Theory of Change is a mechanism that maps out the system in terms of how change is expected to occur from an intervention.

Chris Argyris described how our behaviour is guided by our 'theory in use' (Anderson, 1997). We behave in a certain way because of our beliefs about the world and our action in it. A development intervention is defined by a rationale or a theory for bringing about positive change. Realist evaluators regard interventions as being essentially theories in execution (Pawson, et al., 2004).

Theory of Change is accepted as an established and powerful paradigm through which to design programmes and represent evaluation findings (Chambers, 1999; Edwards, 1999; Reeler, 2008). It is a form of logic modelling, but different from the Logical Framework approach in that it does not assume linear, simplistic cause and effect. It actively seeks to incorporate complexity, rather than attempting to hone it out in favour of simplicity. Theory of Change captures the theory of an intervention, and presents a justification and rationale for a strategy in the light of that theory (Pawson, et al., 2004).

In this study, the organisational Story and Metaphor process helped to describe and clarify the Theory of Change with which organisations rationalise their decisions and priorities (Exhibits TT3, JD4, QN2, DG2, BN7, CL5, MSC2 and MSC10). The intentions of the Oxfam America Gender, Culture and HIV Programme were presented as a Theory of Change (Oxfam America, 2008), and the results of the MSC evaluation of the programme were provided in the form of an adjusted Theory of Change (Exhibit MSC10 and Konstant, 2009a).

Having described a Theory of Change, organisations can then ask themselves whether the assumptions inherent in that theory hold true. The theory itself is not a benchmark to evaluate the success of the intervention. On the contrary, the results of grounded evaluation of the real events are used to correct errors in the theory (Davies & Dart, 2005; Pawson, et al., 2004). When it measures against prediction using predefined indicators, conventional M&E conflates theory testing with performance testing.

One of the participating organisations in this study raised an interesting dimension to Theory of Change. This organisation held a Theory of Change that all outcomes of its work were a result of divine intervention (Exhibit DG2), demonstrating the rootedness of Theory of Change in personal and organisational beliefs and culture. To the extent that an assumption of divine intervention is constructive for DG it is legitimate and relevant in planning. In fact, without due strategy to drawing on divine intervention as a key condition for success, it is very likely that the organisation would indeed be weaker.

The purpose of evaluation is to help organisations to interrogate and reformulate their Theory of Change. These theories must be tested against reality, accepting that reality too is a fiction read through the lens of belief and culture. A steadily evolving understanding of our complex interactions in a situation emerges as a strengthened and more accurate Theory of Change.

5.2.5.3. Grounding evaluation criteria

Grounded approaches to evaluation are concerned with testing and correcting a Theory of Change. This cannot be achieved from within the restricted perspective of the same Theory of Change it intends to test: “No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew” (Einstein, cited in Taylor, 2009).

Grounded evaluation begins by defining the broad area of interest surrounding the Theory of Change. Thereafter, participants and evaluators need approaches that are open to observations of grounded, reality-sensitive learning. Without the possible erroneous assumptions of the Theory of Change as a lens, there is opportunity to understand the system flows neglected in the theory, but important to refining the theory (Kelly, 1999; Quinn Patton, 2002; Soal, 2004; Kopainsky & Luna-Reyes, 2008).

This study has demonstrated how narrative, emergent evaluation produces relevant results to front-line development (Fowler, 1995; Uphoff, 1995; Gasper, 2000; Bornstein, 2006a; Seel, 2006). The use of standardised or predefined impact cannot help but miss

the point (Gasper, 2000, Doyle & Patel, 2008). For criteria to be realistic, relevant, and grounded in experience they must be set later in the planning and evaluation continuum (Figure 22). In positivist approaches criteria are defined at project inception. In a grounded approach, such as Stories and Metaphor or MSC, criteria are freshly defined at significant milestones (Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006). This simple, fundamental distinction epitomises grounded evaluation.

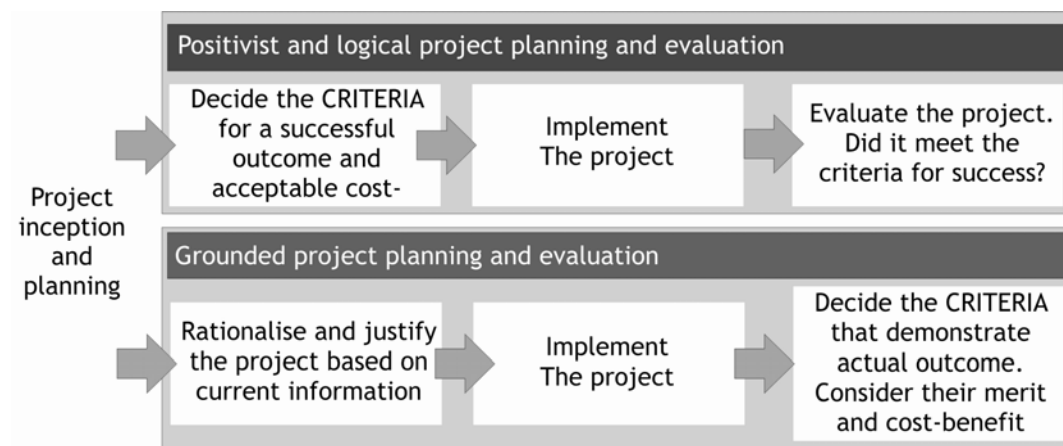


Figure 22 *Contrasting positivist and grounded approaches to project planning and evaluation in terms of the management cycle in each case.*

5.2.5.4. *Quantifying outcomes: measuring grounded indicators*

Stories alone may not provide an indication of the extent to which an organisation meets the needs in its community. Neither can they inform us on the volume of need to be addressed and the relative progress being made. Some of the criteria that emerge from grounded evaluation may well be quantifiable. Psychological health, school results, client well-being ratings or treatment outcomes, for example, might hypothetically emerge as impacts, and are measurable. If management decisions and accountability are supported by it, organisation could quantify grounded indicators emerging from qualitative process (Davies and Dart, 2005; Holte-MacKenzie, et al., 2006).

While appealing, these quantifiable indicators are not without challenge. Even the simplest outcome can seldom be captured into a single, unambiguous, meaningful number or statement (Doyle & Patel, 2008; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008). The very

process of attempting to force a complex description into the conventional columns of impact, indicator and target is patently ridiculous (Table 13). To the extent that such columns prevent a trustworthy account of impact, perhaps it is the columns we might consider dispensing with.

Table 13. *Hypothetical grounded evaluation criteria for outcomes or impacts of an imaginary AIDS support CBO*

STORY OF <u>IMPACT OBSERVED IN REALITY</u>	<u>GROUNDING INDICATORS THAT EMERGE POST-INTERVENTION</u>	<u>TARGET ACHIEVED AND SITUATION ANALYSIS</u>
Referrals to services, in conjunction with counselling and support, have increased access to AIDS treatment. Lack of food and travel costs prevent adherence. Treatment outcomes are only marginally improved A need for basic services of food and transport is identified, and advocacy efforts for rights-based service provision intensified. Not yet effective.	Number of patients receiving treatment, for whom referral, food, travel and treatment access were all resolved. Number of patients not receiving treatment, despite solutions to referral, food, travel and treatment access, and reasons for this.	This column is even more challenging: There is no denominator or baseline available for service-constrained treatment access and adherence rates. The constellation of personal, social and infrastructural challenges that can prevent successful HIV treatment outcomes are unique to each individual.

One challenge in quantifying complex social outcomes, whether grounded or not, is a lack of benchmarks or denominators. We seldom know, or can even define boundaries for the volume of community need, comparative average cost-benefit, or a counterfactual²⁹. For the most part, organisations can quantify the households and people to whom they *do* provide their services, but they are unlikely to know the number to whom they could, but don't. Intelligent social statistics at local or organisational level are seldom possible or unambiguous to define or measure.

Another limitation to populating grounded quantitative data is that only a small and rather arbitrary range of indicators can be selected from the broad range of meaningful impacts. What can be measured, will be measured, but these are not necessarily the variables that carry the greatest weight. They can be as misleading as they are helpful.

Finally, impact depends on the individual and unique situation of each client. Effective CBOs need to have the breadth and imagination to solve unique problems. Attempting

²⁹ The counterfactual refers to what would have happened without the intervention. Some disciplines use a control to measure the counterfactual. A control is unlikely to work in complex systems with myriad variables, and is often unethical in critical change or development research.

to quantify a variety of unique interactions is pointless unless these quantified data inform management or are necessary to decisions and resource planning.

Neither qualitative nor quantitative methods provide a magic bullet to outcome evaluation. Even in combination, there is no perfect solution. At best, quantifying outcomes offers an opportunity to enrich the qualitative account, and to verify some of the more tangible, if rather *ad hoc*, elements of impact.

For the most part, however, the contention of this research is that we count in order to budget resources and quantified data have little value beyond the activity level in a planning hierarchy.

Learning is concerned with reflection, porosity and self-evaluation. Data and evidence have their place, but it is the rationale, interpretation and intelligent use of evidence that have relevance. Evidence itself does not warrant deification.

5.2.5.5. *Ownership: whose evaluation, whose criteria?*

Bhana (1999, p. 235) defines empowerment as "*the raised awareness in people of their own abilities and resources to mobilise social action*". The goal of action research is to achieve '*emancipatory action research*' in which organisations and participants engage with their own questions and take responsibility for their solutions (Discussion Box 7). Emancipatory research is the key competency of a self-empowering, learning organisation (Taylor, 1998; Bloch & Borges 2002; Dierolf, et al., 2002; Padaki, 2002). To the extent that front-line development practitioners have little influence over the criteria or process by which they are to be judged, these concepts of responsibility, learning and self-empowerment are being ignored. The very act of making external judgements is in conflict with development.

One of the most valuable lessons to emerge from this research has been that of organisation-centred criteria setting. Criteria for success emerged from Stories of Impact and stories of Most Significant Change. The Health Check and MSC analysis drew out grounded, organisation-relevant criteria for change, performance and organisational qualities. These qualities were also considered, ranked and rated in discussion. They helped organisations to describe the terms of their own success, reflect on their achievements and shortcomings against these

Peer Review Discussion Box 7

"The only evaluation worth doing IS self-evaluation. Key elements: the evaluator reports to the evaluated, even if the donor pays. Ideally, although this needs 'evaluation capacity building', evaluations should be self-managed and self-directed by organisations. Some purely internal (self-evaluation) might involve external perspectives, but all of it should be owned by the evaluated."



standards, and crystallise their purpose and strategy going forward.

Criteria for success cannot be defined at the inception of an intervention. Projected outcomes should not be contractual commitments. Such expectations of predictable, linear outcomes and impacts from interventions are delusional. Instead, contracting involves discussing a reasonable rationale or Theory of Change, and then sharing an evolving understanding of local need, context and situation.

Criteria for success are therefore best drawn out during and after interventions as emerging criteria. Impressions of achievements against them are grounded in the real potentials, the various ripples of impact, and the opportunities that have arisen. These too are the pulse which informs evaluation.

5.2.5.6. *Funders' criteria checklists*

An organisation's grounded criteria may be very different from those prioritised by funding agencies (Swidler & Watkins, 2009). Transparent, formalised governance structures and rigorous financial systems, for example, are given top priority by funding agencies. These particular capabilities were not identified as a priority by participants and organisations in this research. Neither were they regarded as a prerequisite for effectiveness. In most Case Studies they did not even feature as an organisational function.

Without aligned priorities, how do we compromise between the check listed needs of a funder (Discussion Box 8) and the beliefs and confidence of the organisation in its own needs and capacity path (Discussion Box 9)? Might the organisation's growth path be narrowed by unconscious incompetence: by

Discussion Box 8

"Funding creates an opportunity for the donor and the organisation to share common values. The CBO offers a donor an opportunity to realise its case for giving. Received funds enable the CBO to act on its values."

Discussion Box 9

"A sense of internal ability is often weakened around financial management and planning on which people can't actually formally deliver. When there are problems it removes what limited confidence they had. Too much audit/evaluation is critical without understanding, especially when funding is given by formal donor organisations. The trouble is that fiduciary rules are set to deal with the worst cases (and there are many of corruption and sheer waste) which reduces the ability of other groups to develop ways of developing financial accountability. Funders' needs to comply with international standards (even on small grants) reduce the other ways of ensuring accountability through transparency and group/social pressures."

Discussion Box 10

"I think they give up the sense of ability in that they say they are competent when they know they are not. But, sometimes I think the organisations are not so aware of their true capabilities/competence and either over- or under-estimate."

"Organisations do not see themselves as developing ... only as doing OK, or not OK. There is often no internal sense of integrity/path/being-becoming .. and therefore only external measures of success or failure."

Discussion Box 11

"All of the organisations I have worked with have recognised the importance of the internal processes and checks and balances that need to be put in place and appreciate the support you provide to build that."

Discussion Box 12

"Misunderstanding or frustration occurs when criteria are given to CBOs without explanation and individual engagement, making it seem very impersonal and at times unnecessary."

its ignorance of what it does not know (Discussion Box 10)? Perhaps external diligence checklists enlighten organisations usefully around their own limitations (Discussion Box 11). Or do they derail an organic, natural process of growth and capacity emergence (Discussion Box 12)? Professional peer review responses suggest a jury in debate around these issues, with the generalisations from some experiences, invariably contradicted by others.

My observations in this study lead to the interjection to the debate that funders' due diligence lists should be drastically rationalised to an absolute minimum, possibly limited to only the most basic reasonable measures to deter and detect fraud.

Beyond this, organisations should set their own diligence criteria. They should be supported, including facilitation and mentorship on request, in exploring and achieving their own capacity development direction. The option not to expand and increase in capacity should be given far more credence. CBOs organisation development should compliment their own evolving vision and goals for impact and outcome, in terms of their own unfolding criteria.

While this perspective may be attractive, the reality is that the drive behind expansion and development for CBOs is often closely related to the drive to enter the funding game. Funding as both cause and effect of CBO establishment and growth adds a layer of systems effects that further entangle an already complex context.

5.2.6. Funding relations

5.2.6.1. *Into the funding game*

Little or no funding is available or required for the early work of most CBOs (Birdsall, et al., 2007; Kelly, et al., 2005). These organisations are generally founded and staffed by unpaid volunteers. The day-to-day survival of their members is provided through their individual sources. Most are unemployed (Seekings, 2003). Their households may survive on child-support grants, family members' pensions or, for a few, one employed person attached to a household (Nattrass, 2006). This model of unpaid volunteers providing social services in a context of poverty and unemployment is difficult to conceive as possible (Friedman, 2002). It has both moral and operational flaws. Nevertheless, approximately two thirds of the members of CBOs in this study received no compensation for their work, and the great majority of others received stipends less than the legal minimum wage.

The resources that small unfunded CBOs offer are their time and self-taught skills. They may provide basic hygiene and medication support; they might advise and counsel; share information on available services; and encourage clients to access those services (NDoH, 2006). They soon reach the limits of the services they can offer to their clients without funding, and begin to experience a gulf between the needs of their clients and their services. Many deaths from AIDS, for example, are a result of the lack of patient transport or bus fare (Hall, 2007). CBO clients face the most basic of survival needs in terms of food and shelter.

A dynamic CBO leader negotiates many of these solutions through donations in kind, partnerships and public sector social services (Pfeiffer, 2003). More rarely, CBOs are among the activists demanding that needs be met by addressing the causes that prevent public sector service delivery. Commonly, however CBOs regard their role to lie in direct provision of solutions to these problems, a strategy which carries a cost (Harvey & Peacock, 2001).

5.2.6.2. Community service entrepreneurs

Ultimately most CBOs strongly believe that they need an income stream (Birdsall & Kelly, 2005). These may be directed at services, or a need to establish premises for their organisation. They may wish to retain and remunerate staff in order to become sustainable, semi-professional and less exploitative (Kelly, et al., 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

CBOs therefore try to enter the funding game. Some succeed, many do not. They are often only slightly aware, however, of the organisational and personal price they pay (Discussion Box 13) (Bebbington, 1997; Gasper, 2000; Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Brown & Kalegaonkar, 2002; Kaplan, 2002; Mebrahtu, 2002; Bornstein, 2006a; Yachkaschi, 2006; van der Heijden, 1987).

In this study, TT had never been formally funded as an organisation, although some of its members received government stipends for care work. Despite already making a valuable contribution in the community through referral and partnerships, TT visualised a growth path through donor funding. Difficult and frustrating time and effort were invested into trying to write funding proposals and communicate with funders. The leader of the organisation, someone admired and inspiring, spent a great deal of time wrestling with this challenge. She spent less time managing the organisation, and no time on the care and support activities in her community that had originally motivated her. In so doing, she entered a world in which her qualities of charisma, inspiration and



integrity held little sway. It was a world in which she had very little power (Discussion Box 14). The main capacities she would need in the competition for funding were writing in English for the mysterious mindset of a donor audience.

Certainly, every talented person can achieve great things with sufficient effort. Furthermore, practice in literacy might have been very useful to her. I was left wondering, however, whether chasing donor funds in a framework of their rules was a justified use of her charisma, inspiration and even integrity.

While some CBOs evolve towards the funding game, many are formed with more than a thought to the game in their inception (Abbey, 2008, Swidler & Watkins, 2009). They have at least some private sector intent in their original motivation, and are responding to a livelihood and professional niche provided by funding opportunities. They are no less legitimate than any other entrepreneur, and their CBOs are essentially commercial enterprises (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Uphoff, 1995). The opportunities for income and employment, albeit for minimal reward, have inspired the business model of voluntary service provision (Swilling & Russell, 2002; Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007).

While this may be quite justified in terms of market opportunity, it does have implications for evaluation. If central objectives for the organisation are its fundability and income generation, rather than community development, then appearing to meet the conditions of funding relations becomes paramount in the organisation's strategy (Doyle & Patel, 2008). Funding relations are an end in themselves and a central function of the organisation.

5.2.6.3. *What if there was no CBO donor funding at all?*

For most CBOs, no funding is the reality. Despite a lack of funds, TT used partnerships and relationships with organisations such as a housing project, schools and clinics to

Discussion Box 13

"CBOs will survive if they have skill and internal motivation to survive. I feel very strongly that if CBOs accept funders' money ... to 'play' with the funders, they have to 'play' their game....this will not change. This does not mean that the game will be rough, tough and unfair. It is more a question about finding a suitable funding relationship that matches the needs of your organisation."

Discussion Box 14

"If they do not feel comfortable with funders' rules, they need to find alternative sources of funding or funders who are more compatible with them. I do not promote CBOs to play the role of 'victim' in the funding world; there are alternatives and other solutions. Organisations [should] look at alternative sources of fund development. Internal fundraising initiatives, small business ventures, patron development are scarcely found in South African organisations and are all alternatives which have much more internal controls, as well as contributing to sustainability as an organisation."

"CBOs live in the real world, and it's a world of regulations, compromise and growing. They need to develop, change and respond to funders (and to their community members, government regulators, laws, etc.)."

provide services to its clients. The organisation viewed its achievements and their impact with clarity and subtlety:

"They only had one small room, they were a girl and a boy, now they are teenagers and there is no dignity, they needed a decent place to stay."

"When the school asks the child to take a message to her parents, and she has no parent, the child feels apart. When a child has someone who goes to see her teacher and to take an interest in her, she feels more like all the other children."

A lack of financial resources places certain limitations on the interventions an organisation might undertake. Funding, however, places other restrictions on an organisation's behaviour (Discussion Box 15). Without funding, organisations have no option but to find alternative strategies to achieve their goals. Where the arguably more sustainable and politically expedient approach of addressing human rights and constitutional delivery are served, then development is truly achieved (Birdsall & Kelly, 2005; Gray, 2006; Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Doyle & Patel, 2008).

5.2.6.4. *Supply and demand: The funder dilemma*

Funders have to make choices (Discussion Box 15). Financial decisions are unavoidable in dispensing aid (Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Birdsall, et al., 2007; Lehman, 2007).

Both donors and recipient accept that, "If they/we want the money, they/we must expect to comply" (Discussion Box 15). This philosophy is often reversed in the commercial world: "If you want a service, you must expect to pay". The difference lies around complex and distorted supply:demand relationships in the development context (Figure 23).

The availability of development services from community organisations (*the supply*) is vast. There are limits to available money. Far more limiting, however, is funders' organisational infrastructure to distribute that money (*the demand*), which is minimal relative to the supply of would-be service providers (Birdsall, et al., 2007). Development is a buyers' market.

Discussion Box 15

"My immediate concern with your question is "evaluation for funding decisions". That direct link between evaluation and funding decision creates a problem upfront."

"Paradoxically funders can feel they have to rationalise and objectivise their own 'judgements' – they have limited resources and there are more possible good recipients than it is possible within their operating paradigm for them to work with. They try to be objective to lessen the emotional/human realities of making judgement which will affect both the CBO's but also the quality of life/existence of end recipients such as HIV/AIDS victims who will ultimately be affected. CBO's need to realise that funders also have a difficult job in deciding and have to do it somehow – otherwise it becomes a cycle of aggressor, victim which makes partnership more difficult."

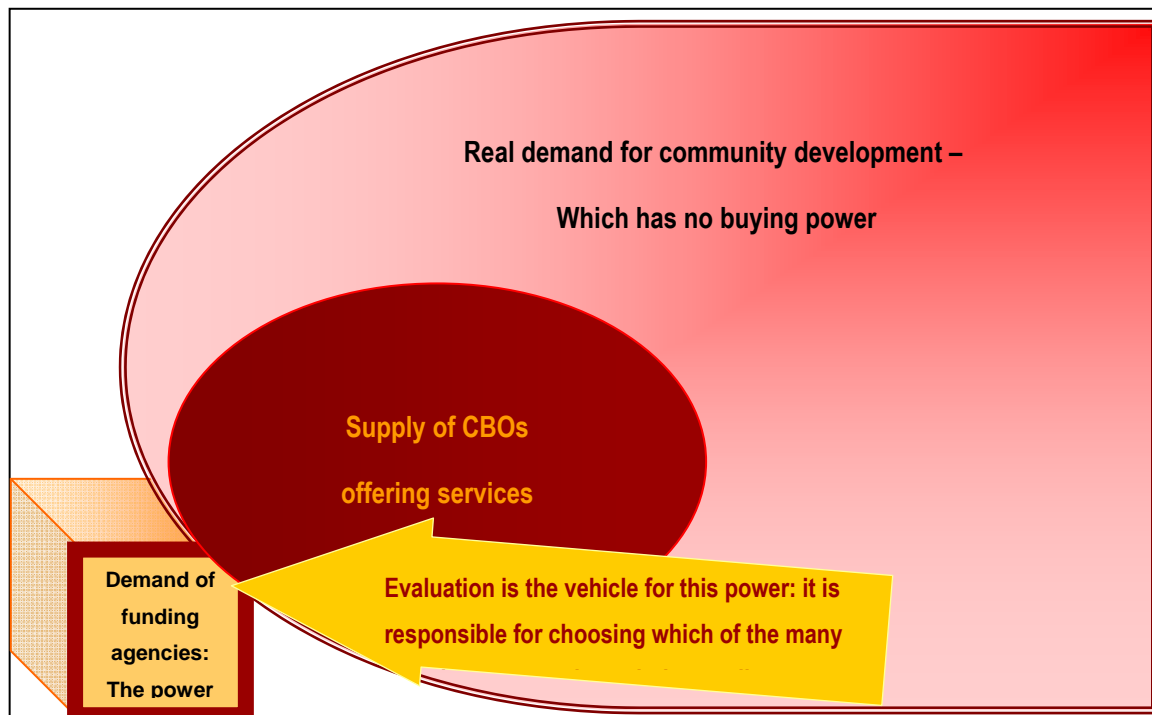


Figure 23 Donor agencies' limited capacity, in relation to CBO supply and community need, with the position of evaluation as gatekeeper.

Source: Adapted from Konstant & Stanz (2009b)

This over-supply of services relative to *funder demand* is placed in a context of drastic under-supply relative to *user demand*, or community needs for these services. In the development market, the buyer (funding agency) is not the service user (community member). This causes irrational forces in the supply and demand model. If aid were apportioned according to community level need, where every service user pressed a "Yes please, I need Organisation X" button in the machinery of development assistance, one wonders how the flow of funding would be different.

As non-users of purchased services, funders do not have a rational basis for deciding what to buy. Instead, they purchase well-meaning theories, plans and strategies. They buy above average English and literacy; convincing administration; and the recommendations of trusted sources. The users of services and the ultimate clients, community members, have no buying power at all.



This amateur supply:demand lens points again to a severe skew in the power vested in the wealthy, and a lack of rational mechanisms that might address the distortion.

5.2.6.5. *Development evaluation: an oxymoron*

Given a buyers' market, development funders can only realistically form relationships with a few of a great many potential suppliers. In so doing, they must select one product and its supplier, over others. Appropriately or not, evaluation has the unenviable task of choosing. This vests great unearned power in the judgements made by evaluators.

Evaluation as part of development practice is placed into contradiction. Evaluation is power, when its consequences are to fund or not to fund. Power is distorted through the experience of judging and of being judged against externally contrived criteria (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Edwards, 1999; Ebrahim, 2003; FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Gray, et al., 2006). No number of developmental principles can dismiss the knowledge that an evaluator's judgement externally determines funding outcomes. We have no choice but to judge, and the act of judgement reinforces power imbalance. Evaluation falls into direct conflict with the purpose of development in redistributing power (Discussion Box 16³⁰).

organisations colouring their reports to funders to appear more fundable. Does it reduce power?

"It also undermines their sense of integrity and a deep seated confidence."

"Any situation that leads people or organisations to the possibility of having to enhance the truth to gain a benefit, opens itself to lies, rather than to truths that lead to true learning and development. This means the organisation may believe that it does not have control, as it may be obliged to enhance stories of diligence and competence in order to deliver what the funder asks for rather what is possible."

"It is an indicator of lack of confidence in what one is pursuing. ... It happens especially where the organisation does not want to jeopardize chances of getting funding."

"Yes, and colouring the truth takes needed attention away from 'organisational development' matters."

"CBOs have excellent experiences, ... and may overemphasise some experiences, I don't feel that this results in the organisation lessening in self esteem, rather more general frustration and resentment towards the 'judge'."

"They cannot tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and speak of [failures] as a learning experience."

"It is quite normal, and links to issues of competitiveness. There is also the issue of pride. Evaluative info on organisations can be used both to its advantage and disadvantage. Hence the linkage between marketing and lying."

"In my opinion, all organisations, businesses, entities etc will always understate their weaknesses or challenges. This is not specific to the NGO community."

"I think that the beliefs / feelings tied to an organisation's attempt to show itself in the best possible light are often unconscious."

"We all tell stories about ourselves, these are not usually false ... In many cases people don't know their weaknesses."

"I think that it makes them feel that reader or audience ends up with a balanced picture because they often get to hear the negative."

³⁰ Around half of the questionnaire respondents felt that 'dishonest' would be too strong a term, and that little harm is done in market spin (Discussion Box 15). What remains missing, however, are the opportunities of evaluation in introspection and undefensive, disinterested reflection.



Evaluation practitioners need imperfect solutions to a circular question (Discussion Box 17).

As development practitioners and evaluators, are we a cog in the machine of today's world system which cannot live its developmental values (Bebbington, 1997; Miraftab, 1997, Lewis, 1998; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Heinrich, 2001; Kilby, 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007)? The integrity we might espouse cannot be expressed in the way things work.

How do we judge without judging? How do we evaluate and leave power with the organisation in the face of this logic flaw? How do we compromise? How do we influence change to the system? What are the principles of our practice that might take us closest to facilitating development, rather than obstructing it? As researcher, I have not found a satisfying answer, and I continue to share the potential that lies in a question.

Discussion Box 17

"Is it the colouring of themselves that MAKES them feel that they fall short or is it the feeling of falling short that makes them colour their story of themselves?"

"True, but this is the nature of evaluation"

Discussion Box 18

"The relationship between funder and CBO probably will never be an equal relationship but it a good enough goal. It requires willingness from both sides to give and get."

"CSOs that coherently identify priority gaps and needs will often get a good response from donors."

"BUT this may be accompanied by an internal / external dialogue (whether it is conscious and politically motivated or an ego defence) that devalues the funder and *their* ability (to tolerate complex issues or the nuanced responses of a development organisation to complex circumstances)"

"If the identification of the problem is done collaboratively and the focus is on explaining them to look for solutions, it can take away some of the defensiveness."

"An understanding of power relations is important including both the perspectives of funders as well as of CBOs. I think CBO's can understandably fall into a 'victim' role (often mirroring the dynamic they themselves are trying to help break with who they help)."

"Evaluation should be something that organisations do anyway, ideally; at the very least they should be something that is jointly agreed by recipient and funder. If not I don't think there's any chance of evaluations upholding the power of people and organisations over their self-determination."

5.2.6.6. Funding review and evaluation: not the same thing

Organisations imagine that they cannot be honest, transparent or reflective when effectiveness seems to be financially rewarded more than sincerity (Discussion Box 16). Perhaps they could be (Discussion Box 18), but they do not trust financially disparate relationships. Cultivating trust in these relationships would require that funders demonstrate deliberate and reflective restraint in using the power of money.

Are there ways in which we can redesign the playing field? How do we separate learning from judgement?

Evaluation implies accuracy, research and objective truths. Development evaluation implies learning, organisation development, individual progress and upliftment. All of these are completely undermined by financial incentive.

Discussion Box 19

"It is about marketing and branding oneself for financial sustainability purposes."

Can we expect transparency in a context of donor funding decisions? Or would it be better to declare non-transparency, and regard funding relationships as marketing relations. We could label funding proposals and funding 'evaluations' as marketing (Discussion Box 19), and separate them from evaluation and learning. Evaluations commissioned with implications for funding might be more accurately termed as 'funding review' rather than 'evaluation'. These reports could be one of the products of an organisation-commissioned learning process, selecting the market spin from a more reflective learning experience.

I would not expect the funding sector to embrace this suggestion. The discomfort itself illustrates the considerable challenge the development sector faces in finding common ground between donor accountability and CBO organisation development (Fowler, 1995; Gasper, 2000; Gray, et al., 2006). Principles and practice which meet the needs of all concerned could revolutionise grassroots development (Kilby, 2006; Bornstein, 2006a; Abrahams, 2008). More realistically, however, a gradual process of compromise, and of embracing each other's needs and priorities, would better balance these relationships and support rational systems which are pragmatic and meaningful, and yet adequate.

Learning and development evaluation should be commissioned at milestones *after* a committed funding contract, rather than a step required in making that commitment. Programmes or organisations themselves should commission learning evaluations, with the financial support of funders as part of the contractual prioritisation of learning. Within these evaluations, however, they should have the right to censor what is communicated to those funders. The CBO should be assured of confidentiality by the facilitator, with the least flattering parts of their learning outcomes held for internal use. These processes would constitute evaluation.

Funding review is distinct from evaluation. It is the negotiation of a relationship in which an organisation sells itself to funders. Even under a banner of funding review, conventional external evaluation would need to shift its culture substantially to achieve meaningful development. The criteria and process for a legitimate organisation would need to be quite different from accepted standards. Changes to the conventional

expectations around written communication, established infrastructure, proven productivity and absorptive capacity are essential in funding review if the industry is to contribute effectively to development.

5.2.7. What about capacity building?

CBO development practitioners are drawn into the service continuum through their motivation, social mobilisation skills and local credibility. They offer resourcefulness and ability to leverage the resources of passion, time and relationships. Their leaders offer charisma, a sense of contribution and social value, hope and power. These are capabilities that have relevance in the setting of local development.

These are not, however, the capacities that the aid industry seeks to build. A substantial part of so-called capacity building involves instructing organisations in applying externally-designed systems to address externally-contrived inadequacies (NDoSD, 2005; Kelly, et al., 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). We see an emphasis, for instance, on skills around governance and boards, strategic planning, prediction and linear M&E, and financial management.

In this study, none of the respondents identified any of these as limiting their organisation's effectiveness. Instead, some of the capacity needs that were identified by participants included team work, leadership, management, branding, social mobilisation and motivation for unpaid volunteers. Another group of participants may have raised further areas of learning need.

There is a clear rift between the perceived needs of CBOs for themselves, and the skills gaps (and therefore evaluation criteria) that outsiders define for them. The principle lies less in selecting an appropriate list of qualities, than in assumptions of

Discussion Box 20

"Different capabilities and ability to utilise them will vary depending on the situation in which one finds oneself."

"There is a balance in terms of realistically being able to identify the problem and react to it, with recognition of the limitations in place for both the issues and the organisation. E.g. when apartheid ended many anti-apartheid organisations struggled to re-identify themselves in a new environment, some were able to identify new challenges and survived, others were not able and therefore closed their doors. This is not a bad thing."

"Development should be about transformation. But change in/of what? My belief is that it involves changes at various times in a multiple of areas eg. physical, mental, social, political, spiritual, environmental, psychological. Facilitators cannot determine these ends for people as world views change slowly."

"I think interventions should lead to an empowering form of self reflection. They might realise what they shouldn't be doing as well as having increased belief in what they are doing. This should allow change in course of action as well as continuing what they currently do."

"... participatory evaluations recognising the process of evaluation as part of the cycle of an organisation for the purpose of focus and improvement rather than just a check point on a funder's agreement. Some suggestions are for the partners to be provided with a space to discuss their own internal evaluation before the evaluation to see if they are able to identify strengths and weaknesses. One often assumes that this process has been done in the planning of the organisation, but in my experience, CBOs often have weak capacity for comprehensive organisational development processes."



the relevance of standardised, homogenous organisational development paths. Standardised capacity-building programs make little or no use of organisational self-diagnosis or experiences of need. In a grounded evaluation process, participants would prioritise their own unfolding development needs according to limitations they themselves experience (Hibbert, et al., 2003). In order for an organisation to embrace growth, it must have experienced these limitations (Discussion Box 20). While externally designed capacity building formulae might define a valuable set of skills, until the organisation reaches out for these skills itself, they are unlikely to be transformative.

An organisation's relationship with capacity building is distorted when participants associate training with funding, which they frequently do (Pfeiffer, 2003). In the light of this, any curriculum that offers a funders' conceptualisation of capacity would attract dutiful compliance. This may have far more to do with imagined benefit in the funding chain, than in embracing capacity building as a force for organisational development (Gasper, 2000). There is a risk that most capacity building is accepted and appreciated, but not owned, applied or effective in enhancing the organisation (Walker, et al., 2008). As a result, organisational learning seldom follows individual training, a woe expressed across capacity building programmes (Sen, 1987; Hailey & James, 2002; Ebrahim, 2003; Senge 2006, p. 172).

These 'Stepford Wife' organisations are part of the pattern of 50 years of ineffective development progress. Does a proudly compliant organisation constitute development and contribute to it? Many say "Yes", others "No" (Discussion Box 21). Several of my peer discussion colleagues disagreed with my analysis of the negative impact of external capacity building.

Discussion Box 21

Does funder diligence testing reduce CBO power?

"Yes, definitely"

"Yes! and this, ironically and paradoxically reflects on the CBOs weakness."

"Yes, accountability rules are set for the worst case, and they reduce other ways of ensuring accountability through transparency and group/social pressures."

"Not necessarily. It depends on the relations and on how this is put across (communication). It might actually make the organisation feel good because it has an opportunity to prove itself or discover more of itself, which is important for its growth and development. When such diligence and competence is proved, I think that this can even make the organisation believe more in the power that it is holding."

"If the main compliance problem is weakness of basic systems and skills, maybe that is the primary and real problem to solve. The funder facilitates ways for an organisation to fill key capability gaps e.g. through direct capacity development, mentoring, twinning with other organisations etc."

"No. [Evaluation challenges are] a reflection of organisations' and individuals' lack of organisational skill. Therefore by increasing their organisational and management skill, you impact their confidence levels."

"No. In my experience it often adds value to the organisation and makes them more accountable, it is shocking to see how some CBO's and NGO's operate."

"Not always. If the process of meeting funder criteria is accompanied by capacity building it can be a positive force for building self confidence."

For evaluation to impact on effectiveness, it needs to facilitate an owned and profound recognition of strengths, weaknesses and needs that are relevant to the organisation (Hibbert, et al., 2003). Externally-defined, standardised criteria for organisational evaluation, however reasonable, which are not embraced as having value, cannot contribute to a strengthened organisation.

Due diligence relationships need to learn to trust organisations. If the criteria are as reasonable and necessary as their purveyors believe, then organisations themselves will surely reach a realisation that these are the capacities they need to develop.

Specifically, I contend that the murky realms of strategic planning, predicted outcomes and written reporting have no place in development practice as they are normally applied. A dramatic reorganisation of accepted development practice in these areas is needed.

5.2.8. Shadow: the poltergeist of organisation dynamics

Any organisation, or indeed, person, that takes a facet of its culture or personality to the extreme, risks experiencing the shadow side of that facet (Hase, Davies and Dick, 1999; Kaplan, 2002; Reeler, 2008) (Discussion Box 22). Several of the observations in this study demonstrated this phenomenon.

In one of the most compelling examples of the power of the shadow side, religious devotion and service found a masked shadow in resistance, demands and less than spiritual internal relationships. While speaking continuously of the 'grace of God' and 'the spirit working through us' the organisation was crippled by an inability to live out values of respect and consideration for each other.

In another example, the three male founders of a gender rights organisation invited women to join their group in order to live out their values for gender equality. The men shared well-worn routes of conversation around social injustices to men, such as "husband-beating", police ridicule of domestic violence against men and assumptions of men's guilt in cases of domestic violence against women. They were surprised and frustrated to find that the women did not take their passion for these injustices seriously. In a further

Discussion Box 22

"We have to be sensitive of expectations that are created with empowerment and also [of] who is not part of the empowerment and what that will result in. It is argued in South Africa that women's empowerment has directly resulted in men's feelings of disempowerment which has manifested itself in some cases in increased domestic violence."



fracture, the organisation's major decisions tended to be made during passionate, spontaneous, informal conversations among the men. The women communicated differently, in different social settings, and were seldom part of these decisions. The women did not fully share their leadership's enthusiasm and were slightly uncooperative and dismissive. The gender polarisation in this organisation was far deeper than in organisations for which gender was not a central concern.

Shadow reminds us that nothing is ever as good or as bad as it seems. Extremes of 'goodness' often lie juxtaposed to their shadows, with equivalent intensity between their respective light and darkness. When seen through this lens, an evaluator's role in defining and affirming good and bad, or broken and fixed, becomes conspicuously trite.

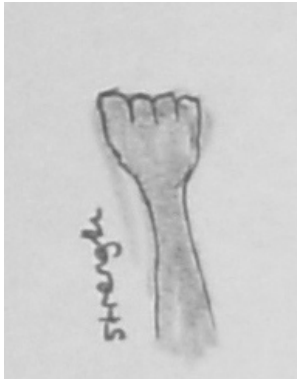
Where might shadow play a part in facilitated processes? Where are the shadows of our own practice in evaluation and development? How can we be conscious of contradiction in ourselves? In this piece of work, when we attempt to promote organisation-centred participatory evaluation, where do we undermine these very intentions?

To be alive in a reflective practice, these are some of the questions we need to continuously dare to ask ourselves.

5.3 *Development, power and CBO character in metaphor*

In a study around Stories and Metaphor, it is appropriate that I use metaphor as a vehicle to draw together my understanding of CBO and development dynamics. This study revealed among participating CBOs the characteristics of knights, saints, snakes and sheep, which are elaborated below.

5.3.1. The Knights

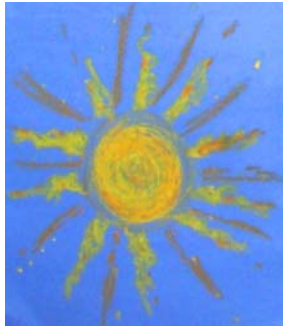


Civil society is traditionally associated with advocacy and activism. Civil society was central to achieving South African democratic government in 1994 (Biggs & Neame, 1995). In another example, until as recently as 2002, the South African government denied the validity of the medical science behind HIV and AIDS, and refused to provide anti-retroviral treatment to people with AIDS (Doyle & Patel, 2008). To date, over five million South Africans have died, largely as a result of this policy: essentially genocide by neglect. The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), encouraged by many across civil society and academia, ran a concerted campaign for the right to treatment for several years. Finally, following a constitutional court battle, legislation was passed for provision of treatment through the public health system. TAC is perhaps South Africa's archetypal modern day knight.

Although a rarity, knights, both large and small can be found throughout the NGO and CBO sector (Bebbington, 1997; Hearn, 2000; Harvey & Peacock, 2001; Heinrich, 2001; NDoSD, 2005). The work of knights is to confront the underlying causes for vulnerability (Heinrich, 2001; Friedman, 2002; Abel & Sementelli, 2005; Krishna, 2007; Sementelli & Abel, 2007; Chaskin, 2009). At local levels, CBOs might demand services that are not being provided, advocate where rights are being undermined, or confront for changes to local policy or practice.

The question for practitioners and evaluators is, "Where does each of our opportunities to influence lie?" As development practitioners we automatically find ourselves in a critical change paradigm. Whether evaluator, funder or community organisation every development practitioner needs to reflect the knight. What can we do to address the causes behind the situations in which we work?

5.3.2. The Saints



Many communities have at least one person for whom no challenge is an obstacle. Saints are those in civil society who refuse to tolerate wrongs, and who meet the immediate needs around them through whatever means they find at their disposal. Examples are numerous. We could cite the unfunded staff of TT whose members, in addition to providing voluntary home-based care services, formally adopted orphaned children into their own families and homes. Some doubled the size of their households. Saints earn their exceptional status by virtue of extending themselves beyond what you and I might imagine possible.

Saints resolve the tragedies that they observe in their own communities by creating relationships. Unlike knights, who confront the underlying systems that create these tragedies, saints draw around them a web of those in need and those inspired to help, to directly address symptoms and improve lives.

Saints and knights share certain characteristics. They tend to be lead by charismatic, passionate leaders for whom injustice is intolerable, and who take it upon themselves to act. Their most powerful resource is often relationships: people who are drawn to them by the opportunity to contribute and to be part of an inspiring vision. They solve problems through finding opportunities for sharing of resources. They bring together those able to provide solutions, with those able to use those solutions. They are highly imaginative in their solutions. They are not easily deterred and are flexible in the means to their end (Kaplan, 2002; Strode & Grant, 2004). Their views are respected and they are likely to be held in some awe by the people who support them.

While many development practitioners may speak the words of knights and saints, and see themselves in those roles, only a small and mysterious proportion of all those who claim this space really are knights or saints.

5.3.3. The Snakes



This is not a negative term, despite our society's connotations. It originates from one of the organisations in this study which, when asked, "What animal is this organisation like?" agreed on the snake.

"Why?"

"We come here angry and afraid, rejected and feared by society. It is in this organisation that we are healed of our fear and we let go of our anger. When we find that peace, and we relax, we show the beauty of a snake's skin and teach society to accept and celebrate that beauty. We offer a safe haven to others who feel rejected, afraid and angry."

This perceptive and subtle self-analysis offers us insight into one of the most powerful contributions of CBOs to society. Those drawn to volunteer come to organisations to meet their own needs, as well as to contribute to the needs of those around them (Hibbert, et al., 2003; Raman, 2005; Stevenson, 2007). The first clients of a community organisation are the volunteers who give it their time and service. In return they may be looking for meaning, an opportunity to contribute to society, and with that a sense of belonging and value.

In addition we hear the yearning for "greener pastures", a poignant image in the dust and squalor of an informal settlement of shacks, dirt paths and putrid ditches. Greener pastures refer to dreams such as employment, housing, sanitation, education, food security: dreams of better times.

CBOs contribute concretely to their members' futures (Edwards & Sen, 2000; Carter & May, 2001; Hilfinger Messias, et al., 2005; Haski-Levanthal, 2009; Turró & Krause, 2009). By engaging in wider society, connecting with colleagues in other organisations with similar ambitions, participating in training courses and gaining formal work experience, many of those who might never have been exposed to a workplace, do indeed find a pathway out of poverty, and into participation in the economy.

To the frustration of training programmes and organisations, greener pastures frequently involve individuals moving from a voluntary organisation to some form of formal employment. Although losing its staff is seldom among the objectives of any community organisation, this constitutes one of the most profound impacts that a CBO can provide. It is a household's escape from cycles and traps of poverty, and the first step on a path to economic participation in society. In situations of intractable poverty,

such escape routes are rare. Where civil society organisations provide these escape routes, they provide development in its most meaningful sense.

The symbolism around celebrating greener pastures is deeper than that of individual lives. A paradigm of emancipation should be reflected by every organisation as the dream for an entire swathe of marginalised South African society that is real and achievable. Evaluation and development rationale should be leveraging this neglected potential.

Inward accountability that acknowledges this contribution is virtually absent from development programmes and their evaluation (Kelly, et al., 2005; Booth, 2008). Capacity building is intended for organisations, and there is generally some annoyance when individuals reap greater benefit than the organisations they represent. While the two may not be mutually exclusive, recognising the value of individual benefit would require a substantial shift in capacity building norms. CBO leaders would become mentors, and volunteerism would be seen as a flow of self-paced internship, offering some justification to the notion.

5.3.4. The Sheep



The term and role are again not intended to be disparaging. Vast numbers of civil society organisations are formed in response to market niches in the development industry (Biggs & Neame, 1995; Uphoff, 1995). Like sheep, these organisations are lead by the 'farmer' (government or donor agency), which delineates the field (of priorities), places out feed (or financing) and sends the sheep dogs (reporting requirements and application procedures) to herd the flock accordingly (Bornstein 2006a).

Where fodder is made available, sheep organisations converge. Community-based participation in the public sector response to AIDS is a prime example (Russel & Schneider, 2000; NDoSD, 2002; Friedman, 2002; NDoSD, 2003; White & Morton, 2005; Kelly, et al., 2006; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, et al., 2007; Birdsall, 2007). Organisations have flocked towards the offer of stipends for HIV-related services, despite these being below the legal minimum wage (Swilling & Russell, 2002; Kelly & Mzizi, 2005; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007). Their contribution has been invaluable. A great portion of the burden of care in the epidemic is met by CBO carers. They may support treatment adherence or palliative care in the community. They provide a mechanism for household level

integration that facilitates access across the otherwise fragmented public sector services of social welfare, health and education (Birdsall & Kelly 2007; Chaskin, 2009). As the front-line service deliverers of state sector support, these organisations lengthen the arms of the state, as well as providing a particular form of support which the public sector finds difficult to provide (Edwards & Hulme 1995, p. 4; MirafTab, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; NDoSD, 2005, 2006; NDoH, 2006; Kilby, 2006; Albareda, 2008).

In providing services for the poor on behalf of the state, these organisations depend on state bureaucracy and financing for their rights to engage (Abbey, 2008). This effectively excludes them from a role as knights in political advocacy (Salamon, 1994; Gray, et al., 2006; Lehman, 2007). Relations between service providers and the state are fragile at best, with the members of each feeling threatened and suspicious. If a sheep organisation attempts to be a knight, and address the causes of inequity and poor service delivery, they are seen to be biting the hand that feeds them. They also risk working themselves out of a job as service providers in a setting of poverty and poor public services.

While supporters are likely to hold knights and saints in awe, I more frequently hear polite and sympathetic patronisation of sheep and snakes: "They don't have much capacity" "They really can't manage systems" "They are simple" "They are rural" "He is a village boy". The individuals and organisations seen in this light are 'capacity built' according to the culture and curricula of support agencies. Many come through these processes with enhanced skills and confidence. In some cases the investment bears the snakish fruit of arming individuals with the tools they need to leave the non-profit sector and enter formal employment.

Many organisations also develop basic skills for engaging with the development aid industry. They grow, establish and enlarge themselves. They use these skills to sustain funding relations, to keep themselves comfortable, and to continue to fulfill the valuable roles of snake and sheep.

While sheep and snakes provide useful services at household level, their approach cannot address the underlying causes of poverty and disparity in distribution of resources (Bebbington, 1997, Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Hearn, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; NDoSD, 2005; van der Heijden, 1987). These organisations may, in reality, be reinforcing the status quo (Biggs & Neame, 1995; MirafTab, 1997; Senge, 2006, p. 61). By providing a minimum low standard of services, at least possible cost, to people most in need, while meeting their own needs for meaning and survival, they relieve social pressure for

deeper transformation. The most vulnerable have a sense that they are being considered and that there is hope for improvement. Through a sheep's fleece, the brunt of inequity may be softened and the voices of the poorest muffled.

While the alternative, a lack of the most essential of community and household level services, is clearly intolerable, we need to be aware of the costs of purveying a system that ultimately promotes inequality.

Conventional evaluation, development practice and capacity building are designed specifically for sheep. They are part of the infrastructure of the farm itself, and from the perspective of farmers and flock they are 'the establishment'. They are very difficult to change from within the context that created them. It is here that the conundrums of judging without judging, funding without choosing, and the power of money over the power of service are most stark.

Knightliness, saintliness, snakishness and sheepishness

It would be limiting to imagine organisations as purely knights, saints, snakes or sheep. It is more likely that each person and organisation has a quotient of each of these qualities. Part of the nature of an organisation's culture is related to the proportions and weight of each. Organisations continuously compromise between activism, addressing symptoms, internal priorities and funding agency compliance.

"Every revolution evaporates and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy"

"Bureaucracy is the art of making the possible impossible"

Franz Kafka

It is saints and knights who might ignite change in the world, who confront inequity with integrity and courage (Swidler & Watkins, 2009; Yachkaschi, 2006; Poindexter, 2007; Friedman, 2002). The loss, therefore, of saintliness and knightliness into sheepishness, is a loss that undermines the potential for deep development and fundamental change. It is a loss which quenches the fires of genuine progress and allows the apathy of acceptance, compliance and collusion (Miraftab, 1997; Bebbington, 1997; Lewis & Sobhan, 1999; Gasper, 2000; Hailey, 2000; Hearn, 2000; Howell, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Kaplan, 2002; Ebrahim, 2003; Bornstein, 2006a; Gray, et al., 2006; Birdsall & Kelly, 2007; Robinson & Friedman, 2007; Dinokeng, 2009; NDoSD, 2009a).

What happens, then, to the small or large quotients of knightliness and saintliness that inspire the birth of most community organisations? Part of both the cause and the effect of knights and saints in society is that they tend to believe in their own power to influence, and to exert that power with perseverance and assertiveness until their

objectives are achieved. Knights can only confront power and authority if they have a strong sense of their own power to influence. The weapons most effective in vanquishing knights are relationships and evaluation that diminish this power and replace the inspired with the bureaucratic. As with knights, saints feed their energy with active engagement in society, synergistic opportunities and relationships, gratitude and celebration. Their energy and enthusiasm are defeated by rigid, incomprehensible demands, illogical templates, and management concepts that do not translate in their context.

How does the aid industry and M&E dispel knightliness and saintliness, to create a uniform, obedient CBO flock (FAHAMU & CAE, 2004; Hearn, 2000; Jaime Joseph, 2000; Ebrahim, 2003; Kotze, 2004; Eade, 2007)? The typical process:

- Many organisations begin with a charismatic leader who has passion for a cause, who refuses to tolerate the intolerable and stands up to act and to lead. At the outset these knights and saints may regard funding as a useful resource, but do not necessarily regard the lack of funding as an insurmountable obstacle.
- The first sheepish step is acquisition of belief in the non-negotiable need for funding in order to have power to do good. With this belief leaders begin to court relationships with a sense of pleading, rather than offering their partners the opportunity to share in contributing to society. They begin to doubt their power without the backing of a greater power, a wealthier power.
- Before long they have less time and energy to invest in creative solutions, sincere relationships among equals and working directly in the lives of those they are passionate to help. Instead they spend their time on proposals, reports, evaluation templates, monitoring spreadsheets and administration of registrations to various authorities.
- Their skills and confidence in production of proposals, reports and bureaucracy is far less than the skills and confidence they once held in addressing the wrongs in society.
- In order to be funded, they study what funders prioritise, informing their work in terms of its fashionability more than the needs of their clients. They feel less certain of their own insights into the meaning of change in their context. Their sense of power diminishes. Their belief that they can and will change the world and stand up to inequitable systems erodes. The system that creates the injustices they once fought against, consumes them. They are sheep.

Saints and knights can be effective without written strategic plans, predicted outcomes, objective indicators or targets. They do not provide written reports on their weekly, monthly or quarterly achievements to those who support them. Knights and saints in revolutions have never been on training courses for strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, report writing and filing, governance or financial management. While some of these skills might be useful, we should not delude ourselves that they correlate with effective development outcomes. The most effective of development practitioners, the true knights and saints of the world, have little use for them.

Conventional evaluation must take its share of the responsibility for the destruction of knightly and saintly resources. In order to redress this erosion of power, we need to shift the criteria and emphasis of evaluation (Figure 24).

↑ Increase from conventional 20% to 40%	<p>Evaluation question about IMPACT: What difference has been made to people's lives? Describe what success means here?</p> <p><i>Quality quelled by: Predicting outcomes. Forcing dignity, hope and opportunity into quantified indicators.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">SAINT</p>	<p>Evaluation question about ADVOCACY: How has the organisation contributed to addressing underlying causes of under-development in its context?</p> <p><i>Quality quelled by: Complacency. Unwittingly fostering inequity by serving the power games that create it.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">KNIGHT</p>	↑ Increase from conventional 0% to 10%
↓ Decrease from conventional 80% to 20%	<p style="text-align: center;">SHEEP</p> <p>Evaluation question about ACTIVITIES: Monitoring. Basic budget & audit. Basic counting of services.</p> <p><i>Quality quelled by: Cost-benefit analysis. Reductionist quantification of social processes. Attempting to 'count' development.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SNAKE</p> <p>Evaluation question about MEMBERS: What achievements have been possible for members, through this organisation?</p> <p><i>Quality quelled by: Discouraging personal advancement, dismissing internal impact, while exploiting unpaid volunteers</i></p>	↑ Increase from conventional 0% to 40%

Figure 24 *Reconsidering the weighting of characteristics of a development organisation in terms of the role, potential and impact of evaluation*

Source: Adapted from Konstant & Stanz (2009a)

5.4 *Conclusion to the discussion*

The discussion reflects the complexity and multi-faceted character of the social process of development. In a context of diversity in human condition, organisational nature, global position, alongside wealth and ethnicity, overlain with the interactions of individuals, groups and organisations, we cannot reasonably expect simplicity. It is in embracing complexity and accepting imperfect understanding, emerging outcomes and serendipitous relationships that development achievement lies. The thread that runs through the discussion of the data of this study, and the further literature review, is that of emergence in the systems effects of power and relationship. The results confront the aid industry with a challenge to dramatically transform its culture from entrenched rigidity, to one that is alive to possibility and to the reality of the uniqueness of each situation and setting. This thread is presented in the conclusions below in terms of the concrete possibilities of theory, method and practice.



CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the conclusions of the analysis of the evaluation processes provided to participating CBOs. An overview of the main findings is given, integrated with the key recommendations they have inspired. These are presented in terms of theoretical, methodological and practical insights. The study has also helped to elaborate several of the contradictions that face development aid and evaluation. These questions are at least as valuable to thinking forward into emerging development practice, as recommendations or answers. The research question is then reviewed and I reflect on the extent to which the study meets its objectives and on its limitations. The chapter then offers suggestions for areas in which further research would be valuable. A brief overview of the potential significance of the study to the overall goals of the development sector is provided before the closing remarks for the thesis.

6.2 Summary of findings and associated recommendations

6.2.1. Theoretical contribution

Theories around complex dynamic systems (Senge, 2006, p. 72; Ramalingam & Jones, 2008; Rogers, 2009), emergence (Beeson & Davis, 2000; Seel, 2006; Wheatley & Frieze, 2006) and grounded research (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1999; Dey, 2004; Heath & Cowley, 2004; Charmaz, 2006) have provided the framework for this study. The contribution of this research to these theoretical foundations lies mainly in observing and describing their application in a context of CBOs, communities and development, and not in elaborating them.

CBOs and development rest in a web of relationships. These are complex, dynamic, unpredictable and emergent. Variable such as human nature, circumstance, opportunity and attitude combine in unexpected and unprecedented ways in organisations. Systems theory, with its complexity, emergence and realism, is key to understanding and accurately observing in this context.

At the same time, although largely through inference, questionable theories such as linear logic as a framework for development (Gasper, 2000) have been demonstrated to be inadequate and misleading in explaining reality.

6.2.1.1. *Complex dynamic theory*

It would certainly be making too much of a relatively small data set and a single study to attempt to embellish on Senge's work (2006), but some of the insights in this context may serve to illustrate its value. Complex, looping, dynamic systems are integral to social development, community organisations and power hierarchies. Complicated systems, such as over-engineered evaluation designs, are indeed in conflict with complex systems (Rogers, 2009). Senge's thinking (2006), which was largely informed in the business world, has been shown to apply in many respects to non-profit, social systems within and between organisations, and between organisations and their stakeholders. Senge's views on self-perpetuating feedback and negative spirals (2006, p. 59) underpin the observations that external systems which impose authority are in opposition to self-realisation, despite stated intentions to the contrary.

This study has also observed the implications of theories of non-linearity in complex systems (Dey, 2004) in support of the growing unease with cause and effect logic (McAdam *et al.*, 2008). Flows of logic, multiple pathways and intertwined theories of change that emanated from these results clearly demonstrate the immaturity of linear logic in social systems.

We can expect complex systems to adapt and self-organise, and for relationships in those systems to be co-evolutionary. Evaluation in this context must observe connections, relationships and re-coagulating forms in organisations. Accepting and working within complex systems requires that we embrace uncertainty. By using multiple fringes of learning, we find the direction where most energy and potential lie. We create the paths by walking them. By communicating and working together, systems and people find ways to compliment each other.

6.2.1.2. *Emergence*

Complex systems are unpredictable. Emergence depends on more variables than can be seen or managed. How then, can change or development be influenced? Or would that be an exercise in futility? How, equally, can emergent systems contribute to learning, if there are no rules that can be applied, perhaps even in the future of the same organisation?

However unsettling this is, this research has demonstrated how acknowledging the delicate interplay of unknowns in relationships among organisations allows us greater modesty and responsiveness than if we complacently imagine simplicity and predictability.

To the extent that emergent systems are unpredictable and uncontrollable, evaluation can only describe what has transpired with the shrewdness of hindsight. In the process we gain clarity on the situation and its interactions. As organisations and evaluators, our own interventions in that situation become better informed experiments.

6.2.1.3. Grounded theory

The ongoing debates around grounded theory and its application as either a responsive set of principles (Glaser, 1999; Dey, 2004; Charmaz, 2006) or as a structured analytical process for rigorous theory development (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), connect to the heart of this research. My conclusions support the importance of holding principles and purpose when defining methodology. They highlight the dangers of dictating processes, whether of evaluation or of grounded analysis. Grounded *theory* in the Glaser school is therefore demonstrated and supported in this study.

Grounded *methods* of the Strauss school, although easily integrated into iterative, action research, are relegated to the realm of 'methodology' and cannot claim the more elevated status of 'theory'.

6.2.2. Meta-evaluation: Methodological contribution

The study used an action research analytical process, based in principles of grounded theory. While the two disciplines are ordinarily linked, this research illustrates some examples of their application in practice for method development.

6.2.2.1. Action research

The explicit use of description, reflection, learning and planning is drawn from a non-academic setting in the organisation development sector (Taylor, et al., 1997). This has been applied here in a rigorously academic context. This conceptual framework provides a simple, pragmatic and trustworthy research approach that warrants acknowledgement by the social science community and qualitative research standards. It also demonstrates the importance of using simple, open processes to understand complex systems.

6.2.2.2. Iterative, cumulative coding

Iterative, cumulative analysis using this action research model provides an interesting deviation in the contested field of grounded research protocols (Dey, 2004). Rather than applying open, axial and selective coding to a replicated data set, replication and coding follow the timeline of the research.

Each iteration follows a process of:

- **Indicative analysis** (“I wonder if we can say that”) feeds into;
- **Confirming and contesting analysis**³⁷ (“If, when, under which conditions is this the case?”), both within process iterations and through reflection with mentors and participants. Finally, these emerging conjectures are crystallised into
- **Concluding analysis** (“I would suggest that”).

Triangulation and cross-testing are integrated through an iterative reflection and action design. By the time conclusions have settled, the researcher is satisfied that these can be put forward for further elaboration, testing, confirmation and contesting by the scientific community.

Iterative methods illustrate how there is no truth, no final conclusion and no end point. Every suggestion is a work in progress, an idea which science might hold until its usefulness is usurped. Every conclusion is essentially a question.

While I have applied certain phrases in the sense of methodological contribution, such as iterative, cumulative and indicative, confirming, contesting and concluding analysis, the intention is adamantly not to recommend more terms and more definitions. The phrases simply illustrate a process of learning through growing a theory using time, experience, thinking and rethinking, and reflective suggestions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Institutionalise meta-evaluation.** Meta-evaluation currently receives minimal attention. This may well have contributed to the firm establishment of weak, illogical and undermining evaluation conventions. Meta-evaluation should accompany all evaluation. It should include participant and evaluator reflection on the evaluation approach itself, its process usefulness, as well as the trustworthiness and value of its findings for all concerned.
- **Action research in methods development.** The use of iterative, cumulative methodology design, in the practical application of exploratory research has been demonstrated. It would be in conflict with the principles of emergence and grounding to suggest that this should be applied as a rigid process. The application of principles of reflection, emergence and iteration, however, have been demonstrated to

³⁷ Creswell, 2007:127.

effectively produce methods, and are recommended as valuable for meta-methodology.

- **Cumulative coding.** Much of scientific method depends on sample and replication. The methods applied here define replication as iteration, and allow each cycle to provide a foundation (either to confirm or contest) the next. Triangulation and rigour are built into a process where learning is a research journey, rather than a dataset destination.

6.2.3. Developmental evaluation for CBOs: Practical contribution

As a critical change piece towards designing more developmental evaluation methods, practical contribution lies at the heart of this study. Evaluation has taken refuge in a Tower of Babel in reaction to some of the challenges of development. It has constructed an artificial, monolithic worldview in a new language. The best we can do is to provide principles and some ideas for practice that have relevance to reality outside the tower. Evaluation needs to learn to accept imperfections rather than attempting to force reality to fit artificially constructed clever engineering.

The contested debate is multi-fronted with various interests and perspectives. The contribution here does not attempt to find truth, which I regard as an illusion. It is about confronting complacent attitudes to practice habits, unchecked assumptions and conventional, ritualised inter-organisational behaviour. It simply asks that the development evaluation industry, and all its stakeholders, engage with the debate.

The core practical conclusions revolve around answering the research question. These are elaborated in the section below as a set of loose themes, contrasting grounded and conventional evaluation:

- Visual and verbal communication and evaluation; versus preconditions of literacy.
- Grounded, intangible, complex criteria for success; versus external, non-grounded, predicted criteria.
- Greater recognition of internal accountability in evaluation; versus denial and rejection of participant benefit.

- Responsive, emergent, facilitated processes for self-evaluation where method is the servant of purpose; versus externally engineered and imposed evaluation, where method prevails over purpose.
- Appreciative self-evaluation; versus accusatory evaluation.
- Participatory leadership, ownership, management, relevance and usefulness for organisations; versus external evaluation.
- Capacity building that draws on rationalised formal training in support of organisation development; versus capacity building defined as applying formulaic standards

6.2.3.1. Organisation-centred, visual and verbal communication and evaluation formats

If the purpose of evaluation is for CBOs to communicate, then an effective format would rationally be that in which the CBO most effectively expresses itself.

Written communication was shown to be virtually ineffective in accurately and comprehensively conveying ideas, facts or descriptions from one person to another in a context of low literacy. As such, it is not communication. If this matters, then the development industry needs to rise to meet the challenge of finding formats that do communicate. This research strongly recommends replacing written media, with visual and verbal communication. Metaphor, stories and images have been shown to be sophisticated and detailed, and to offer immediate benefit to organisations in a process for reflection and learning.

For optimal, thorough, comprehensive communication, funder representatives should understand the first languages of most of their CBO clients and engage using personal, verbal communication. Increased employment of South African by foreign agencies would be a step toward this. Even if the language of communication remains English, then at least personal, direct, verbal communication is reasonable to suggest. The role of intermediaries, with the appropriate linguistic abilities, would support this capacity among funding agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Personal, verbal communication.** Funder - CBO relationships (including evaluation) should be managed using personal, verbal communication, preferably in the first language of most CBO members.



- **Intermediaries.** Trusted, responsible, participation-skilled intermediaries providing both the qualities and the time for this engagement should be built up within the institutional fabric.
- **Much less writing.** Written proposals, reporting and communication should be rationalised to an absolute minimum, with equally credible verbal options in place for even this minimum.
- **Imagery and stories.** Metaphor, stories and images convey complexity highly effectively. Learning the 'language' of these formats would greatly enhance inter-organisational understanding.

6.2.3.2. Appropriate M&E technology

A cutting edge of developmental M&E is therefore that of developing tools and technologies to support verbal and visual communication.

Beyond technology, communication culture needs to become more embracing. In a developmental vision, alternative formats such as DVD recordings, annotated diagrams or photo narratives would be received with enthusiasm and seriousness by external partners, including funding agencies.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Technology to support visual and verbal.** Investment in appropriate, affordable, accessible technology to support verbal and visual communication is a current, critical leading edge in evaluation progress.

6.2.3.3. Intangible, complex, systemic thinking

The purpose of evaluation is not to measure. It is to manage. The criteria for the sort of information that supports management do not include tangibility or measurability, although these may be tempting parameters from the measurer's perspective. Management decisions require accurate reflections of reality, with sufficient complexity and detail. Tangibility and measurability have no rational link with clearly and coherently representing a situation. Complex social systems are not better understood through reductionist data, especially if reduction only selects out a convenient and rather arbitrary set of indicators on the basis of their accessibility.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Accept complexity.** To be effective, evaluation needs to embrace the intangible, unmeasurable and complex. It needs to be able to hear stories, draw inferences, and

conceive reasoned, rationalised conclusions. We must stop expecting proof, certainty and simplicity.

6.2.3.4. *Alternatives to predictive planning and evaluation*

The crystal ball gazing of predicting linear outcomes and indicators is seldom realistic or valid. In practice, impacts are inevitably wider, more complex and possibly completely different from those that could have been imagined by even the most astute planner.

Predictive, linear systems persist despite the lack of logic in their 'logic model'. Development is contradictory, unpredictable and emergent (Kaplan, 2002; Soal, 2004). Inertia, crisis, revolution and consolidation are more typical of development processes than predictability or attributable cause and effect (Quinn Patton, 2002). The very concept of an indicator is incomprehensible in a local setting. How will I know that I have had an impact on my client? They might live, or they might die with dignity. They might smile more, or they might be more assertive. Their family might accept them, or they might move to another town. They might take their medication, or have personal reasons not to. They might have access to the clinic, but might require other social services more urgently.

Prediction and indicators have a slightly bizarre hold on development reasoning. An organisation which does not predict accurately may be considered a failure by its funding agency, and deemed unworthy of further support on the basis of the variance between its achievements and its predictions. The capacity to predict well is rewarded more enthusiastically than the capacity to serve community interests.

Since there is little logical link between ability to predict the future and the impact of CBO relationships, many successes are lost from learning, and many questionable and arbitrarily selected results are masqueraded as achievements. Predefining indicators in the context of local community development is as meaningful as trying to catch a selected drop of water from a sieve.

A core finding of this research has been that it is possible, rational and meaningful to isolate criteria for effectiveness *after* an intervention. This reordering of criteria-setting has benefits to evaluation accuracy, usefulness, relevance and application in organisational development.

Although deceptively simple, this conclusion requires quite profound reorganisation of thinking around evaluation, and a substantial shift in the mindsets of development convention. Strategic planning and evaluation methods based on prediction and

indicators need to be redesigned. Theory of change is a preferable entry point for planning. Evaluation should be grounded in reality rather than based on prediction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Theory of change** (multiple pathways) should replace logical frameworks (linear thinking) during planning.
- **Replace prediction with grounding.** Evaluation culture needs a complete reversal from convention. Imperfect, intuitive, opportunistic, complex, reflective and grounded evaluation should replace rigid, 'unbiased', data efficient, standardised, rigorous, predictive evaluation. Evaluators need to reclaim their humanity and intuition by learning how to see, understanding and telling a story, and being trusted to do so.
- **Most social, institutional and developmental evaluation should follow a grounded model. Evaluating from prediction should be dropped wherever the evaluation subject is complex and dynamic.** I would suggest that this conclusion applies beyond CBOs. Theory of change and grounded evaluation, as a replacement (not a corollary) to logical frameworks, prediction-based evaluation and indicators, would be more appropriate in most of the contexts I have observed all the way up to national and international development planning and evaluation. Even quantifiable situations in social and development settings, where statistics can and should be monitored, are likely to have far more management meaning if primarily supported by grounded narrative evaluation.

6.2.3.5. Responsive, pragmatic, organisation relevant evaluation

Developmental, participatory evaluation at community organisation level is not research. It is social development communication. It need not be rigidly methodological, unbiased, systematically representative or data efficient. Rules and rigour have far less relevance than pragmatism and intuition. Loose responsiveness is essential. Evaluation should be aiming away from perfect evidence and complete justification for action, and towards trust, intuition and emergence. Evaluators need to be relaxed, intuitive, opportunistic, awake to learning as it emerges, and ready to interrogate their own unfolding conclusions and underlying assumptions. Evaluation is far more of a treasure hunt, than an inventory exercise.

The attitudes necessary to achieve this are impossible in a context of predictive, structured, positivist, externally-owned evaluation.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Graciousness.** Attitudes of humility, sincere curiosity and self-awareness are needed among the facilitators and commissioners of evaluation.

6.2.3.6. *Purpose prevails over method*

While effective, accurate and meaningful insights are more achievable using narrative methods, an awareness of purpose over method still remains critical. Our role is not to execute a method. We are responsible for facilitating understanding and listening to a situation. Most importantly, our role is to create conditions where participants and organisations can understand and explore their own situation afresh. The touchstone for a high quality evaluation is the extent to which we can make sound management decisions based on a fair understanding of the situation.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Method serves developmental purpose.** Alternative methods remain at risk of simply adding a slightly different style of bureaucracy within old paradigms and attitudes. New approaches to evaluation can only make a difference to the extent that we can describe, and then shift, our fundamental assumptions.

6.2.3.7. *Be appreciative*

The use of appreciative approaches in evaluation would probably be accepted as reasonable by most practitioners. What is more striking, however, than the value of appreciation, is the damage that *accusatory* approaches inflict on relationships and on the quality of evaluation data. Unintentional accusation, especially in a context of funding decisions, external motivations and power imbalance, poses a threat to the value and standard of any evaluation, however appreciative its intentions. Facilitators need to be sensitive to the reactions that are being elicited, and to the patterns of behaviour and assumption that are inherent in diverse and power influenced relationships.

Critical thinking needs to be facilitated through evaluation processes in a form where organisations themselves take all responsibility for criticism and corrective planning. The facilitator's role is to hold this critique with neutrality, and to allow the organisation its own limits to the intensity and assertiveness of its self-interrogation. Evaluators must earn trust and be trustworthy, regarding the way in which honest self-critique is used and communicated.



RECOMMENDATION

- **Be appreciative.** Appreciative inquiry should define every evaluation, where failure and success are both interpreted as learning.
- **Do not be accusatory.** More importantly, facilitators of evaluation need to be sensitive to accusatory inquiry. Accusation elicits defensiveness. Defensiveness destroys learning and yields nonsense data.

6.2.3.8. *Facilitation, more than evaluation*

An evaluator may either see him or herself as *evaluator*, standing in judgement; or in the more neutral position, as *facilitator* of self-evaluation. This research suggests that the former style is not conducive to development, organisational learning or useful, trustworthy data. External facilitators need to be respectful and patient, trusting that understanding will emerge, and that the depth of insight of locally experienced practitioners has far more relevance and reliability than their own opinions on content.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Facilitators of self-evaluation, not external evaluators.** Sharing and building *content* is the task of organisation members. Holding *process* is the task of the facilitator.

6.2.3.9. *Participation*

Participatory evaluation and, ultimately, organisation-managed evaluation are critical to evaluation being effective in guiding management, being reasonably accurate in its data and interpretations, and being a source of inspiration rather than denigration. The ownership, leadership and active participation of organisation members in the commissioning, design, execution and use of evaluation are absolutely essential to evaluation being justified and valuable. Real trust, risk and respect must start somewhere.

To take participation beyond the lip-service of the many donor agencies that espouse participatory development, these external agents need to release the reins over method and learning, and be sincerely open to organisation-led processes. Trust, patience and flexibility will invariably be required. Outside supporters need to show restraint and wisdom in the careful catalytic inputs they provide, in terms of both the amounts and nature of financial support and the systems and capacity they import.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Funders align to organisations' systems.** "The only evaluation worth doing is self-evaluation" (Sue Soal, Peer Review Questionnaire). Where funders are sincere in their bid to be partners, they should be prepared to accept organisationally relevant self evaluation as meeting their accountability needs
- **National level bureaucrats - become international leaders.** The in-country staff of international funding agencies need to become advocates and educators in their own organisations, and to their own sources of accountability, rather than bureaucrats who borrow and lever power from remote and lofty autocrats in their home governments.

6.2.3.10. Evaluation and organisation development

The relationship between evaluation and organisation development may be seen from two polarised standpoints. i) The conventional ethic of an external, independent, objective and judgemental evaluation implies that evaluation has neither responsibility nor role in organisation development. ii) In contrast, utilisation-based, critical change evaluation would integrate every interaction with the mutual growth and learning of all concerned. This study suggests that the first, external evaluation, is neither conducive to the goals of development espoused by the industry, nor accurate in terms of data and objectivity. The second, developmental evaluation, may be messier, but allows growth and learning to emerge from a shared experience, and a gradual crystallisation of insight as the essence of evaluation learning.

Evaluation is learning. Learning is a journey for all those involved. It is not a destination, and is never complete. Ethical, principled evaluation simply asks that this learning be focused on observed reality, by those closest to its source and to its application. To the extent that such discovery-based, exploratory learning is integral to organisation development, so too is evaluation. Ethical evaluators recognise this integration, and take responsibility for their interference in an organisation's learning. Developmental principles tell us that every interaction must have constructive value, and that evaluation too is responsible for development impact.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Evaluation has responsibility for organisational learning.** Evaluation processes should contribute immediately to organisational development and community benefit. Evaluation has no right to interfere, unless it makes its own relevant contribution.

6.2.3.11. *Internal accountability*

CBO strategy, including design, management and evaluation, should acknowledge the personal development of organisation members as a legitimate and valuable immediate social contribution. Strategic management should formally support career paths for volunteers as workplace interns or apprentices into the formal economy. In part this would justify volunteerism. It also aligns with the grounded observation of this study that inward accountability has outcomes which have tangible and immediate socio-economic value. In this instance, by seeing it and planning for it, we can better manage it.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Internal achievements count.** Active management for the life goals of volunteers should be an encouraged, acknowledged and fundable outcome for a CBO.

6.2.3.12. *Capacity building*

Externally-defined, standardised criteria for organisational capacity and training courses with formulaic content, including those for M&E, need to be carefully rationalised and reduced to an absolute minimum.

This is unlikely to be a popular suggestion. The business models of capacity building agencies depend on multiplying training courses and marketing for greater demand. In addition, dispensing training is low-hanging fruit for funding agencies, and a useful, easily achieved output to those holding them to account. Furthermore, like most of us, CBO members enjoy attending training courses. Most stakeholders therefore have an interest in keeping and increasing formal training programmes.

However well appreciated they are, there is little to support the effectiveness of formulaic, standardised, off-site training courses for meeting the management needs of CBOs. I offer two main reasons. Firstly, the content priorities addressed in these training curricula (e.g. governance and M&E) are designed a long way from CBO practice and are seldom the most immediate constraints facing an organisation. Secondly, the style of management that is promoted as organisational standards is also generated from organisational models that are very different from CBOs (e.g. linear planning, focus on core business, productivity, efficiency). These courses cannot easily contribute to real growth, from real foundations.

Different styles of engagement and different definitions of CBO capacity are needed. These should follow models of emergent realism and organisation-led growth fronts.

They should be based on problem solving, reflection and the organisation's vision for self-realisation. This self-directed capacity journey could then be supported by the availability of content-rich training to fill needs as they are identified by organisations.

It is the promotion of standardised training as automatically and inherently valuable, that is one of the reasons for its limited institutionalisation.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Less formal training, with more CBO-defined curricula.** Training must meet a real experienced need in an organisation to be incorporated effectively into an enhanced practice. Training facilities and organisation leadership need to co-design their approach to capacity building with this in mind.

6.2.3.13. Ethics

The results of the research provided richer insights to the practice of organisational ethics, especially with regard to integrating organisation development with evaluation, and the matter of process use. More generally, the recommendations are all essentially rooted in ethical practice, as well as effective practice, as the underlying purpose of the study.

Lessons from individual interviews in the conduct of community-based public interviews also emerged as a major finding. These produce recommendations on the risks, precautions and challenges of public research, to which qualitative, narrative, participatory evaluator would need to give clear attention.

6.3 Conundrums and unanswered questions

Posing unanswerable, circular, challenging questions might not be ingratiating to the M&E profession or the development industry, but ignoring these conundrums is what leads to stagnation. This research has stimulated thinking and discussion around several of development's great irritants:

- **Subjectivity:** Objectivity, predictability, standardisation and simplification were the answers to subjectivity. They have not helped. Reflections on challenges and perceptions around subjectivity in evaluation need to be refreshed.
- **The power of money:** The realities of mismatched supply and demand, creating forces that contradict visions of equitable, power balanced societies.

- The power of power, habit and social conditioning: is power imbalance a resource for an interminable development industry, or are there opportunities for transformation?

6.3.1. Subjectivity

Subjectivity and its close cousin, trust, are unmeasurable, instinctive, relationship-based qualities between people. We would assume, intuitively, that good process and strong organisations, which are clear about the needs of their community, should automatically confer good outcomes. We might acknowledge that this assumption is probably true most of the time. This is the assumption, however, against which conventional evaluation has reacted:

Just because we do good work well, how do we know we make a difference?

Are we sure we are doing the *right* work well?

These legitimate questions have driven conventional evaluation into a corner of self-contradiction and methodological tangle. There have been justifiable concerns confronting the assumption that good people probably do mostly good things.

Having experienced the force of subjectivity myself, observed the feeling with which organisations desire funding relationships, and seen the anxiety of funders' employees to do their job well, it is clear to me that the sources of subjectivity in evaluation are many and vehement. The urge to create standardised, objectively verifiable, independently measured criteria for success is understandable. These have been explored. They have run their course, and failed.

The lesson from this failure has been that subjectivity cannot be resolved by attempting to remove it. Even if it were achievable, so-called objectivity has as many flaws as subjectivity in terms of its impact on organisations and its effectiveness in determining 'truth'. Relationships are ultimately formed between people, and are therefore basically subjective.

How then can evaluation manage the three-way tensions between i) external interests; ii) facilitator subjectivity; and iii) organisation interests? The results of this research suggest that the solution lies in including subjectivity as data. By revealing the beliefs, myths and concerns of each party, we begin to understand our real respective purposes and cultures. Evaluation that hears the stories of each stakeholder, and encourages self-evaluation first, including introspection on the important values embedded in these stories, might have more chance of gaining a shared understanding, even if it doesn't

find common ground. The discipline this asks for is that time, reflection, patience and emergence must infiltrate the business-like, unreflective culture of efficient, rapid output performance.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Rethink subjectivity.** Objectivity and standardisation have been tested as an answer to the challenges of subjectivity. They have failed. We need to rethink subjectivity.
- **Acknowledge and reflect on our own subjectivity.** Subjectivity may largely be resolved by being more thoughtful, trusting, honest, transparent, reflective and tolerant. We need to accept that we are indeed subjective, but that we can see and respect the values that frame our subjective reactions.

6.3.2. Exploitation or volunteerism

While small grants make operational sense in funding CBOs, the main costs of organisations in the service industries are their human resources. Funding CBOs without funding salaries assumes the contribution of unpaid volunteers. The tacit expectation is that people will work for the good of society, in so-called partnerships with comfortably salaried outsiders, while their own essential survival needs are left unmet. The concept smacks of exploitation, and is fraught with double standards.

On the other hand, CBOs that professionalise essentially become private sector service providers (Uphoff, 1995). Unless they explicitly cast themselves as activists and raise funds for their role in this capacity, their role as knights has to be subjugated to their task as fund raiser for salaries. They are fully converted sheep.

Becoming a sheep entails various compromises. With professionalisation CBOs lose some mutual trust in their community, and with it, they may lose unresented access into these communities. They may gain pressure of expectations, conflict of interest, internal conflicts between volunteers and professionals, and a plethora of other organisational challenges. The CBO's purpose can no longer be set unambiguously in local knowledge and intuition. It must seek out common interests with the external priorities of funding partners in terms of content, process, systems and relationships. While these may be different, they are not necessarily incorrect. They are not, however, primarily representative of local perspectives. The challenge lies in organisations continuing to hold sufficient autonomy of thought, ability for discernment and assertiveness to engage as equals in relationships, despite the forces of power and wealth imbalance.

In another layer of contradiction, for every professionalised CBO, many other voluntary, community organisations are likely to emerge. This creates tensions in the sense of the power, rights and belonging of each. The professionalisation of one CBO does nothing to resolve the challenges of exploitation, volunteerism and unprofessionalism across a community.

This intractable challenge requires an in-depth organisational behavioural research piece in its own right. Further, bolder exploration around organisational models and funding relationships that take account of volunteerism and professionalisation, and the impact of both on CBOs themselves, and on their development outcomes, is recommended based on this research.

A return to sustainability models based on local economic development and small industry in parallel with community development might well be the answer. Once popular, this model has been largely replaced in the HIV and AIDS industry. Most organisations look towards easier income generation through contracting for stipends and donor grants. This reduces their autonomy and creates unsustainable dependency. While valuable and potentially fair, stipends have created a market niche filled with sheep (although menially remunerated and exploitative compared with a reasonable service fee). They are appreciated, certainly, and their work meets a critical need, but they do not resemble development or transformation.

Growth, professionalisation and financial expansion are assumed to be desirable for organisations. This needs to be questioned. It buys into the private sector ethic that larger and formal are better. In terms of development outcomes, they may not be. The value of 'small and informal' needs to be captured as having high quality in its own right by evaluators in this context. This is an area where evaluation needs to have particular awareness, whatever the financial and professional position of an organisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Work with volunteerism.** Volunteerism is an emergent, accepted reality of society. Volunteer participants choose to cooperate in this way, and have their own hopes for various benefits. We need to accept this and work constructively in a context of volunteerism. CBO evaluation needs to include internal accountability to these volunteers.
- **Watch professionalisation.** Evaluation also needs to be sensitive to the positive and negative impacts of professionalisation (e.g. stipends and salaries) on both organisations and communities.

6.3.3. Funding relationships

Donor agencies vary tremendously in culture, approach, ethics and beliefs. They range from archetypal development villains, to sincerely thoughtful agencies prepared to learn and grow to address the difficult contradictions implied in their role in the industry. Whether villainous in their systems and organisational attitudes, or not, funding agencies are generally staffed by well-meaning individuals, for whom development is a career in which they have commitment and integrity. The observations presented here are therefore not generalisations. Some are behaviours and patterns against the flow of which more enlightened donors have expressly reacted.

6.3.3.1. *More, smaller, easier funding relationships*

Mechanisms need to be designed in order that financial support becomes less onerous, and more catalytic. These might draw on the emerging architecture of CBOs, networks and grant-making intermediaries. Very small sums are more appropriate for CBOs, than larger grants and their associated commitments for scaled productivity. Amounts as small as R1000³² worth of taxi vouchers may be all that a CBO needs to reach its immediate goal. And no-one can 'throw their weight around' for R1000.

Finance is only a small component of the resources a CBO needs. CBOs' power is held in their access to community, their ability to provide services, potential for local influence and local relationships. With small grants, these would automatically take precedence over the power of money.

Funding relationships should help to motivate the knights in these organisations to address the causes beneath local needs and socially sustainable solutions ... Where *should* those costs of transport be coming from? CBOs need to have the opportunities to relate to outsiders, including funders, by simply talking with each other as passionate practitioners. These conversations will encourage organisations to reflect on their situation, while motivating them as serious professionals in their field.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Small amounts with commensurate trust and autonomy.** Large funding grants, beyond the original planned intentions of an organisation, serve little purpose apart from the convenience of the funding agency for fewer, larger relationships. Mechanisms for small grants, depending on leverage and partnerships that keep CBO

³² Approximately €100

culture thrifty and resourceful, are better suited to community development outcomes.

6.3.3.2. Funding review and learning evaluation

Some of the controversy in this study has stemmed from the aid industry conflating marketing for funds with learning for management. Evaluation, although a multi-faceted discipline, has had to compromise between these mutually exclusive roles. Separation of these two purposes, and clarity on the rules of the game for each, would enable greater emphasis on learning for management which is otherwise overwhelmed by financial incentive.

Several principles emerge which would enhance the quality of relationships, the standards of learning and organisational growth, and development outcomes. Marketing should be acknowledged as such: as the opportunity to convince an agency of one's legitimacy and potential for contribution.

Even then, marketing culture and effective salesmanship must compliment the nature of CBOs. A convincing CBO should reflect the contradictions and unpredictability of community development, the importance of slow, emergent growth, the potential destructiveness of donor directives to power, and the qualities of shared learning, thinking and analysis in true partnerships. Marketing or fund-raising systems which encourage extremes of market spin leave organisations tense and uncomfortable in their own integrity. There should be no incentive for an average organisation to exaggerate its capabilities.

Most evaluation is motivated in some way by demands for funding accountability. Evaluation for organisational learning is generally neglected. Most evaluation, therefore, tends to fall under a marketing definition. Little wonder then, that development has learnt so little, and achieved so modestly.

A culture of learning and skills in self-evaluation and reflection is not easily cultivated in organisations, or even in us as individuals. Imagine a scenario in which CBOs were not obliged to show the full findings of their evaluation to their funder. Based in learning, evaluation could become constructive, confidential and continuous. It could sometimes be facilitated as an integral element of capacity building. This definition for evaluation would need the support of flexible, imaginative and responsive agencies prepared to experiment alongside their CBO clients.

An evolving common path becomes possible if our shared purpose is development effectiveness, and the role of each stakeholder is respected as having equal decision-making power. If, however, the path of each stakeholder (funder and recipient) is carved out in their respective boardrooms, and the common path determined by the weight of their respective power, then we have no chance of moving at all.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Evaluation for learning.** *Marketing is marketing. Learning is learning.* Evaluation should not attempt a combination of the two. Capacity building should be integrated with organisational learning, and learning organisation self-evaluation should grow to be the core of normal evaluation practice.
- **A learning community of practice.** More than learning organisations, we need to see a learning community of development practitioners. Stakeholder (funders, CBOs, intermediaries and other partners) should have as much sincere interest in learning from each other and applying their learning to its practice, as they do in promoting their own viewpoints and fulfilling their perceived needs.

6.3.3.3. *A culture of engagement*

In a rather chicken and egg situation, funding agencies tend to take the lead in a vacuum of initiative from expectant CBOs. Some agencies may be relieved if CBOs were to step forward proactively, and define their needs, preferences and terms. In many ways CBOs that are attempting to comply and be acceptable, are not effectively or sincerely engaging in relationship - they are not reaching out to would-be partners from a position of their own power and integrity. They cannot connect properly if they are trying to say the right things. This makes a funding agency's task difficult, especially since they tend to lack the patience to follow a gradual process of relationship building.

Leadership, self-knowledge, reflection and assertiveness are qualities that may become contagious, once their credibility is seen by both funders and CBOs.

The challenge is that organisations may not know themselves, or what they need. Instead of facilitating a process of reflection, external agencies tend to helpfully *tell them* who they are and what they need. And CBOs learn to wait to be told. This externally driven 'self-awareness' cannot help but defeat any potential for real reflection, and therefore for real engagement.

CBOs themselves need to invest far more selectively in relationships with diverse donors. Difficult as it is once the funding game is on, they need to be prepared to assert

themselves, and to turn down relationships that are not in the interests of their own organisational and community vision.

Funding agencies will require patience if the impasse is to be resolved. Placing facilitated reflection resources at the disposal of CBOs, and injecting a culture of self-awareness through CBO networks, would take time to reap assertive proactivity. It is certainly quicker just to tell them who they are and what they need.

- **CBOs: learn to know, engage and assert.** A culture of asserting their own needs and values, and negotiating their own conditions for entering into funding contracts, needs to be inspired through CBO networks, as the legitimate exercise of power.
- **Funders: learn to listen, wait and respond.** We cannot hear what someone has to say, unless we have the patience to wait for them to speak.

6.3.3.4. The power of money

While these and similar adjustments might contribute to greater development effectiveness from within the model, the uncontested power of money still ultimately determines organisational behaviour. No other resource carries this universally accepted assumption of authority. Communication, power distribution and sincerity cannot survive in a context of funders' and recipients' shared belief in dependency on money, and their mutual acceptance of funders' authority.

However well-meaning a funder might be in determining the most appropriate terms for the relationship, the very fact that the authority for those terms rests with them, shapes the power dynamic in the relationship. Both the funder, in its expectation for gratitude and compliance, and the recipient, in its acknowledgement of dependency and patronage, feed the disparity between rich and poor. The deep assumptions of each party in this relationship are rooted in centuries of social moulding. The wealthy, whether benign or not, hold the power. The poor, whether defiant or complacent, do not.

Funding is desired, and yet it carries with it competition, incentive and control. It is a game, with rules and winning strategies. There will never be funds for every applicant. Decisions have to be made. As players in the game, as well as referees and primary rule writers, funding agencies themselves need to focus on their intent for effective development, rather than on how well-played the game is from their perspective.

Power and money, as cause, process and effect for development, catch us in a web of contradiction and hypocrisy. The answer? I don't know. Perhaps immense and

ungraspable, like a global systems revolution. Perhaps simpler, like community basket funding and local level management. Perhaps we need to be looking at the conflict in terms of our own relationship with power, money, class and social status, and to begin to remove the taboos against these conversations and to be bold enough for 'dirty talk'.

What we do know, is that there is an ulcer in the belly of development, and ignoring it will not resolve it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Live with the question.** We need to confront the contradiction that development funding reinforces disparities of wealth and poverty, the power of the wealthy, and the frailty of dependency. Public debate and collective thinking, speaking out, interrogating the challenges and living with the questions will take us towards the emergent formulation of an answer.

6.3.4. Power as a development resource

Power needs to be taken to exist. Power given (or empowerment) is not power at all. While it might create opportunities, change behaviour and instigate new activities, lasting change needs power to create opportunities and choose actions without external enablement. Few externally inspired development initiatives, and very few of development's planning and evaluation ideas, endure beyond the external energy that created them.

CBOs may well do different things during 'empowerment', but they do not become different beings. Trying to inspire this profound change from the outside follows the laws of force in physics. We try to create channels of power downward to CBOs, which overwhelm the channels through which power might have been drawn from within.

Development must be about catalysing the taking of power, without pretending to have the power to give it. As practitioners we need to be aware of the delicacy of power and the risks of unsustainability in power perceptions.

RECOMMENDATION

- **Think and talk about power.** Power is a perception. Global culture needs to shift towards sincere belief in equitable power distribution and awareness of old power habits and attitudes. Perhaps, like money, we need to be bold enough to speak honesty and frankly about power, however unflattering this might be.

6.3.5. Development and colonialism: dare we ask?

During the recession of 2008/2009 many international funding agencies were in search of caveats to their global citizenship. There were questions about the impact of development, particularly in Africa, over the last 50 years. During these discussions I heard "After all these years of giving you our tax payers' money, you are as undeveloped as ever"³³. Attitudes seem to be as firmly entrenched in 'us' and 'them' as ever. Tax-payers, who by definition have wealth; versus tax-users, who probably don't. And all the while the north quietly and sanctimoniously ignores its own responsibility for global distribution.

How far have the paradigms of development evolved since the colonial era? Colonists provided schools, medicines, foreign languages and religion while their governments scoured natural resources. In an unnerving parallel, development provides capacity building programmes, complex technology, foreign language and written communication, and the religion of the power of money, while fundamental inequality in society remains entrenched (Table 14).

What made colonialism most abhorrent? We might say it was the imposition of external power over self-determination. Does the development discourse dare to imagine history repeating itself? Do we confront ourselves as we purvey the power of financial conditionalities over the self-direction of community

Table 14. *Comparing colonialism with development*

Well-meaning colonialism:	Well-meaning development:
<i>schools</i>	• <i>externally designed capacity building</i>
<i>language</i>	• <i>written, English communication</i>
<i>western religion</i>	• <i>the proper worship of the power of money</i>
	all conveyed in evaluation

organisations? Colonialism was founded in global greed; well-meaning, but misguided, expatriate energy; ignorance of each other's values and culture; and reasonable local acquiescence. What should we be doing differently now with much the same four ingredients?

³³ NGO Conference, 2008, CSIR, Pretoria

RECOMMENDATION

- Locally, nationally and globally, the development industry, large and unwieldy as it is, needs to be shocked into stopping, talking and thinking, and become prepared to be revolutionary in its reflection³⁴.

6.4 *Returning to the research question: achievements and limitations of the study*

6.4.1. Problem statement and research objectives

The problem statement posited that *"Conventional, predictive evaluation systems used by funding agencies for HIV and AIDS CBOs are too simplistic, rigid, linear and one-dimensional to accurately assess the contributions of these projects in communities, or to facilitate evaluation processes that contribute positively to organisational development"*.

The study rationale was intended to identify viable evaluation process elements and principles for assessing the outcomes of CBO efforts in building a community-based response to the impact of HIV, which:

- i) Support CBO self-determination and development as organisations;
- ii) Encourage responsive project planning and organisational learning;
- iii) Respond to the accountability needs of funding agencies?

6.4.2. Thesis outline

Literature on development evaluation and CBOs contextualised the study. Methodological literature on grounded theory, systems thinking and action research served to link the literature review with the methods chapter.

Evaluation ideas were tested around stories, participation, metaphor and reflection, intended to support self-determination and learning. The crux of the methodology, however, was the action research meta-evaluation of these evaluation designs. The intention was to be voyeur over the processes as I was facilitating them with the organisations. These observations had two main aims: firstly to design better methods; secondly, to describe some principles of evaluation in a context of the development industry and CBO settings. These themes form the discussion chapter.

³⁴ The Paris and Accra meetings and declarations, and the sequence of meetings which surround them, have been global level attempts to stop, think and talk. They have fallen short, however, of being revolutionary, essentially punting more of the same.

Various practical guidelines to applying alternative methods emerged in the discussion. The study demonstrated at quite a general level that grounded evaluation and analysis can provide a high standard of detailed, subtle, informative and enlightening learning. The results of grounded, visual, participatory evaluation were starkly contrasted with what would ordinarily have been predicted with linear logic. The uniqueness of each case was testimony to the limitations of standardised methods and expectations.

More important than methods, were the emerging principles of developmental evaluation in support of self-realisation and learning. These principles apply broadly to the triangle of development, funding and evaluation. The discussion therefore uses evaluation as an entry point, but highlights the inter-organisational and community implications of power distortion, external authority, and imposed, rather than emergent systems.

The discussion culminates in a characterisation of the CBO sector, in terms of its activism, service, internal and contractual roles, under the respective metaphors of knights, saints, snakes and sheep. The relationship of funding and evaluation to each of these roles is described.

I would regard this characterisation, as well as the recommendations and intractable questions above, as the core contribution of this study. If we have a metaphor for transforming an industry, and a few more entry points to contribute to the contemporary work of many others, we have both the language and the ideas for a revolution. As a critical change practitioner, in an industry that I see as self-serving, stagnant, bureaucratic and uninspired, I am in favour of revolution.

6.4.3. Limitations and unmet potential

The third condition in the research objectives, that of responding to the accountability needs of funding agencies, was less satisfyingly addressed. Much of the discussion on conundrums and contradictions emerges from grappling with this issue. The key conclusion here is that the attitudes of funding agencies and CBOs to accountability need to shift. We need to see greater assumption of power and authority among front-line development practitioners. It seems to be broadly accepted that decisions and directives of wealthy, employed, professional, office-based people, carry more authority than the suggestions and preferences of those who are poor, unemployed, voluntary and community-based. This is so inculcated in the minds of both, that neither is really knows what those suggestions and preferences might be. To truly shift this attitude would require reaching into the depths of the global distribution of power and

wealth, and centuries of conditioning around class and ambition. This leads us to difficult circular discussions which this research can only air, in the hope that by contributing to collective consciousness and confronting complacency, something better might gradually, chaotically emerge.

This study would have been stronger with the addition of donor agency focus groups, although the peer questionnaires were much appreciated in this regard. In thinking through new approaches, it would have been powerful to engage more with those likely to be in opposition, as well as those who were converted or neutral.

Another limitation here has been a tested counter-factual. People thrived on metaphor and stories, and there were indications from their attitudes and responses that strongly bore out my impressions from experience and the literature on conventional approaches. Different and more detailed, informative insight would have been received from conducting conventional evaluation, using checklists, forms, templates and interviews in addition to these grounded methods.

6.5 Suggestions for further research

As a research study for which raising questions was inherent to the approach, various research opportunities have arisen.

6.5.1. Further theoretical research

- **Emergence theory.** Complex dynamic systems theory and grounded theory employed in this study are already well published, and widely debated. Theories of emergence, however, are less accessibly packaged for the organisational behaviour field. Emergence finds its roots in chaos theory, which has been the subject of a great deal of abstract and conceptual work. Although critical to managing organisation complexity, thinking and writing on managing and describing emergence and the application of these theories in social and organisation settings, seem to me to offer great potential for cutting edge theoretical work.

6.5.2. Methodological research

- **Iterative, cumulative action research design and analysis.** Academic action research and the use of iteration and accumulation in analysis would be usefully elaborated by a methodologist. I am an organisation development practitioner with an interest in processes in that setting. Meta-evaluation and meta-methodology were only the approaches to this study, not its purpose. They produced some interesting variations on the themes of action research and grounding in exploring

organisational processes. Placed at the centre of a research piece, there is potential for reflection on the principles and practice of action research in methods development, at the risk of meta-meta-methodology.

- **Meta-evaluation** was identified as a key neglected field in development practice. This has been to the detriment of development and learning. Careful thought to guiding methodology, without constructing rigid, non-emergent, formulaic methods that overwhelm their own purpose, would greatly contribute to this field.

6.5.3. Suggestions for practical research

- **Developmental aid funding** needs to be the focus of far more research. This study on evaluation was inextricably linked with funding relationships. The purpose of this study, however, was not to give in-depth thought to funding modalities, systems effects and the advantages and disadvantages to development outcomes of financial relationships. What would motivate funding agencies to adjust their conditions for funding relationships? What are the factors that enable them to evolve and change? How does their much vaunted commitment to development results, come to translate into culture and systems which are in direct conflict with development results? This would be top priority research in the industry.
- **Global economic influence in development.** Why has nothing changed? Why do the poor get poorer? Are there flashes of optimism anywhere for Africa? How does Africa compare with other developing settings? How might we ride the global currents, rather than be drowned in them? Surely a lifetime of research.
- **Organisational dynamics in other CBO and NGO sectors.** This research was conducted with CBOs offering HIV and AIDS services. It is a sector which has been particularly well-funded, formalised and recognised by the state response to the HIV crisis in South Africa. A disproportionately large number of CBOs have been generated, many with at least government stipends as income. They are often formed as a means of accessing these stipends. Comparisons between the inception, operations, values, vision, loyalty and effectiveness of such CBOs, with those in less lucrative sectors, would provide a deeper understanding of the forces that mould organisations, and of the positive and negative impacts of financial engagement.
- **The civil-private sector: new models for social fabric.** The abundance of local organisations with constituted rights and responsibilities and a capacity to form networks and collectives, is unprecedented in our society (Swidler, 2006). How best do development and politics celebrate and encourage these new, emerging forms of

governance? Organisational research on the systems and social impacts of burgeoning civil society across Africa, and CBOs in particular, would highlight some of the opportunities for new models of political and social engagement.

- **Most Significant Change.** The use of Most Significant Change approaches in evaluation (Dart, etc) has vast potential in the context of social development. A stream of research on its application in different settings, on different subjective matters, and with different adaptations of the process would be valuable. This would provide the alternative development sector with the impetus it needs to bring narrative, community-centred, locally-owned evaluation processes into mainstream practice.
- **ICT (Information Communication Technology) and culture change to support visual and verbal communication.** A key conclusion of this study has been that all other communication in low literacy settings, including evaluation, needs to be visual and verbal. Literacy is a noble goal, but it should not be a pre-condition for access to basic rights, organisational existence and self-determination. Culture, mechanisms, appropriate technology and systems whereby verbal and visual communication can become serious and respected options need to be developed. We need to see research, design and development, and then market the required ICT support in the industry. Options might include digital recording, verbally annotated photography, metaphor and teleconferencing for low income, low technology settings. Storage, relaying and sharing these media in time and data efficient ways would be critical. The benefits of this would extend beyond meaningful communication. Stronger communication would contribute to drawing in those at the margins of social and economic participation.
- **Grounded evaluation in all social and organisational settings.** Grounded data have been shown to be legitimate for CBO evaluation. Prediction and linear models have been shown to be ridiculous. It is my contention that linear prediction is also irrational in virtually all social and institutional contexts. National strategies, major programmes and most development, organisational or programmatic evaluation are unable to evaluate sensibly while they remain committed to indicators and prediction. This does not suggest that key social indicators, such as GDP, HIV prevalence, wealth distribution or unemployment are not important. These are part of describing our situation and are the statistics that help to point us towards underlying less tangible and measurable causes. Evaluating interventions on the basis of these tangible, measurable symptoms, however, even at the highest level,

cannot reflect the complexity of reality. Grounded evaluation is far more likely to provide sensible management and realignment information. The wisest indicator statement for most development programmes would be, “this plan makes sense, let’s wait and see”. We need to let go of our attachment to logical, linear frameworks throughout the development sector. Meta-evaluation research is needed into applying grounded evaluation in all settings.

6.6 Potential significance

The accusation of destruction by an industry that purports to build equity is a chilling one. The development aid industry has invested in its own complicatedness, at the expense of the genuine complexity of dynamic systems. Writing such as that of Dambisa Moyo (2009) confronts these complicated solutions as having been inept in supporting real change. Equivalent to aspiring to withholding an unpaid volunteer from greener pastures, the industry stands accused of aspiring to stable, established organisations rooted in social disaster, and destined to remain so.

Human social interactions are fraught with games, positions, perverse and self-defeating behaviours and negative feedback loops. Radically shifting these addictive patterns takes far more than methods. It requires that global systems, basic assumption and generation of society’s habits gradually change. Optimistically these are changing all the time. Systems and society are not static. Mini-revolutions are part of continuous social emergence. Less optimistically, this chaotic change seems to impact on society negatively as much as it does positively.

The role of development practitioners and of this study is to be advocates within the currents of change. We are responsible for leveraging the positive and raising awareness of the negative. Through many small interjections, creative collective consciousness may grow in a generally upward spiral towards a more enlightened, equitable society.

6.7 In closure

The simple act of demanding inappropriate requirements of community level development professionals as a condition for funding, reinforces the epitome of the development crisis. Development itself stands accused of deepening the divisions and widening the chasm between those with power and wealth, and those without.

A half a century into the modern development paradigm, aid in Africa has not been effective. Global and national divisions between the rich and the poor are wider and deeper than ever. How does the Millennium Development Goal of ‘eradicating poverty’

translate in a world system where the powerful cultivate wealth, but where wealth is partly defined by poverty, and people's very identity is carved into their position in this continuum. Human rights contravention is a reality for a vast proportion of global citizens. We live in complacency, paying optimistic attention to the little wins. We execute methods and follow rites in relationships, but have become caught in a stagnant net of under-achievement.

Developmental evaluation asks for some profound, perhaps unimaginable, shifts in worldview. Unimaginable because the 'system' is so pervasive that new paradigms are inevitably born from within it, based in the assumptions that define it. We are so close to the system, that we have difficulty seeing it well enough to confront it (Senge 2006, p. 160). We need to either find peace with a divided, unsustainable and unjust society; or a means of influencing a world system held in broad agreement by both developed and developing, that is in direct opposition to power equity. Far deeper shifts will be needed in our global belief systems before aid effectiveness and equitable distribution of power become a possibility, rather than an industry.

Like the oceans, 'the system' is a combination of elements, forces, currents and variables that operate in relation to each other. It has laws, energies and forces that are beyond the control of those caught in its flow. There is no control room at which it can be influenced. Global socio-economics has generated energy and momentum far beyond the management of its makers and members. We must then choose whether to be buffeted, eroded and drowned by the system, or to use its force for energy and movement. Do we sail the ocean, or do we drown in it? How would development and development evaluation practice use the power of the system?

We need fresh, less combative and less arrogant development ambitions around facilitating enabling environments, and confronting inequity and injustice. The role of knight has long become embarrassing and exhausting, but it remains by far the most relevant role for development practitioners. At every level the essence of development work compromises between meeting immediate needs as interim relief (saintliness), and confronting those politically and economically responsible for fulfilling constitutional rights (knightliness). Unless we are knights, all of us who benefit from the system (and development practitioners are not least among them), need to confront our own complicity in perpetuating inequity and injustice.

We need to see the NGO sector look up from its private sector leanings. We need to rekindle belief in a vibrant, influential civil society that holds governments, private

sectors and global systems to account. We need to see donor agencies align themselves proudly and unapologetically with activism, as well as government; and be blunt about their dual relationships to both their governments, and ours. I am no economist, but the knights of the development discourse need to be. In the global conversation, the causes of extremes of inequitable distribution need to be explained and confronted. For as long as development practitioners hand out the sop of the system which creates the inequity, they too remain its sheep.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Mentor and peer review demographics for action learning reflective data analysis

Mentors	
Penny Ward	Facilitator and rights-based consultant, SA
Ingrid Obery	Facilitator and development consultant, SA
Annalize Fourie	Health systems expert and development consultant, SA
Sue Soal	CDRA: Developmental practice facilitator and writer, SA
Bridgit Snell	Oxfam America: Organizational Learning and Knowledge Manager, USA
Denise Hunt	Executive Director; AIDS Consortium
Questionnaire respondents	
Caitlin Blaser	CIVICUS: International NGO and advocacy organisation, SA
Ebbie Dengu	Development Consultant, Zimbabwe
Jennifer Bisgard	Khulisa Management Services: M&E agency, SA
Linda van Blerk	USAID agencies: Director, SA
Shani Winter	UNICEF: Rights-based practitioner, USA
Janine Mitchell	FPD: NGO capacity and training, SA
Sheelagh O'Reilly	IOD: International Organisation Development, UK
Anthony Kinghorn	TSF: Director, Development contracting house and UN agent, SA
Mutizwa Mukute	Development Consultant, Zimbabwe
Rebecca Freeth	Rights-based, developmental practice consultant, SA
John Wilson	Livelihood Consultant, Zimbabwe
Sue Soal	CDRA: Developmental practice facilitator and writer, SA
Anita Simons	Development Consultant, SA
Martyn Foot	World Vision: Development & Learning Advisor, SA
Indran Naidoo	DDG, Leadership & Management, Public Service Commissioner, SA
Mark Keen	IOD: Director, International Organisation Development, UK
David Douglas	NGO Financial management consultant, SA
Davine Thaw	Organisation Development Consultant and facilitator (ex Olive OD)
Exchange events³⁵	
SAMEA, 2007	Paper presentation, 2nd Biennial Conference of the South African M&E Association, Johannesburg, 25-27 March 2007.
SAMEA, 2007	Workshop with Mark Keen (IOD-UK) on action learning in organisations
NGO Conf 2008	Paper presentation, 1st South African NGO Conference, CSIR, Pretoria, 24-25th Oct 2008.
IDEAS, 2009	International Development Evaluation Association Global Assembly 2009, Jhb, 18 Mar '09.
Cairo, 2009	Conference on Perspectives on Impact Evaluation 2009, Cairo, 29 March – 2 April 2009 (3IE ³⁶ / AFREA ³⁷)
Prague, 2009	Keynote Speaker, Conference on Civil Society Effectiveness 2009, Prague, June 23rd.
SAMEA, 2009	Paper presentation, 3rd Biennial Conference of the South African M&E Association, Jhb Aug 27th.

³⁵ Details of contributions listed in the reference under Konstant or Konstant and Stanz

³⁶ International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

³⁷ African Evaluation Association

Appendix 2. The questionnaire template

Dearest Evaluation and Development Thinker

I am working with the AIDS Consortium and its Community-Based Organisation affiliates (CBOs) in Gauteng, on a research project to develop stronger developmental approaches to evaluation. This contributes to my PhD with University of Pretoria in Organisational Behaviour. It is also intended to contribute to conversations, thinking and stimulating dialogue.

I have spent time with CBOs working through a process, and attempting to improve this process with each experience. While some powerful elements have emerged, we find ourselves stuck at a dilemma. I would very much appreciate your help in thinking through it. Would you mind interacting with this conversation, to the extent that it intrigues you?

I have three questions. They apply specifically to front-line implementers of community development, especially thinking of CBOs and local NGOs, in their relationships with funding agencies.

Question 1.

What do you think of the following rationale? Please consider whether you agree or not, and elaborate if you would like to.

Logic sequence	Please circle your closest response and qualify your answer by adding a comment if you choose.
Development interventions should enhance people's and organisation's belief in themselves (buzzwords like self-actualisation, empowerment)	Yes / No; But / And:
Belief in ourselves includes our belief in our power to influence our own situation (buzzwords like internal locus of control)	Yes / No; But / And:
Organisations sometimes colour their story of themselves to attempt to appear more attractive to someone else. This makes them feel that they fall short under judgement, and their esteem for their whole selves is lessened.	Yes / No; But / And:
Equally, when they selectively understate their weaknesses or challenges to appear competent or capable enough, they give up part of their internal sense of ability.	Yes / No; But / And:
Where a funder requires a CBO to prove diligence and competence to delivery against the funders criteria, this process and experience reduces the organisation's belief in the power it sees itself as holding.	Yes / No; But / And:



Question 2.

Given this scenario:

Assuming that financial honesty is already established (say, we know that the organisation is not out to pinch the petty cash and do a runner):

Funding agencies need to make good decisions on partnership. They run the risk in doing so, of unavoidably and unintentionally damaging the organisations they assess. Evaluators can encourage organisations colour their story; to feel judged as adequate or inadequate against someone else's criteria.

As an external evaluator wishing to be true to my values as a development practitioner, I observe that even the mildest implication of judgement causes community organisations to feel accused.

In search of practical suggestions and principles that can really be applied, how can evaluation for funding decisions uphold the power of people and organisations over their self-determination?

Your innovative suggestions, experiences, "tough luck" responses and justifications, etc, would be much appreciated. If you disagree with the scenario, please talk about that too.

Question 3) How do you think funding agencies should make decisions on who to support?

Please score each as being **critical** (1) to **not important** (5) in the following criteria for deciding on funding eligibility, in your practical experience and honest opinion:

1 = Critical. 5=Not important					
Criteria for choosing to partner with a community organisation:	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Please add your own three criteria of choice in the last 3 spaces.</i>					
1. Very basic, convincing enough, financial systems in place					
2. Financial systems that meet our due diligence requirements					
3. Demonstrated ability to deliver services					
4. Demonstrated ability to report on results					
5. Demonstrated ability to govern					
6. Skilled staff with experience and qualifications					
7. Staff with positive attitudes					
8. Values that align with those of the funding agency					
9. Values for community based development					



1 = Critical. 5=Not important					
Criteria for choosing to partner with a community organisation:	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Please add your own three criteria of choice in the last 3 spaces.</i>					
10. An established office and infrastructure					
11. Potential to improve to meet the needs of the programme					
12. Capacity to absorb a substantial enough minimum grant to make it worth while					
13. As partner, I intuitively feel that we can work well together					
14. I trust them, I think they are good people with strong abilities					
15. Demonstrated competency not to waste money or be inefficient					
16. Ability to convincingly describe their own strengths and weaknesses in detail					
17. Ability to assertively negotiate for their rights in the partnership					
18.					

Any comments you might like to add around your reasons for this scoring:

About yourself

My organisation, and/or I :

Indirectly funds CBOs (e.g. through an intermediary) _____

Directly funds CBOs as a donor agency _____

Is a grant-maker for donor funding to CBOs _____

Independently evaluates CBOs on behalf of funders _____

Independently evaluates CBOs on behalf of CBOs _____

Is a CBO _____

Has another connection to this dialogue (please tell) _____

Please feel free to make any further general comments that you might wish to

My sincere thanks for your time and energy, which I appreciate is stressed and stretched. I do hope you enjoyed the conversation, and I am very grateful for your joining it.

A massive thank you

Tracey

Appendix 3. TOC - Presentations, and written publication on a CD attached to this thesis (to be compiled for final publication)

Konstant, T.L., 2007. *Using Grounded Evaluation: systems for operationalising the principles of grounded evaluation into mainstream practice*. [Paper presentation] 2nd Biennial Conference of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, Johannesburg, 25-27th March 2007.

SAMEA, 2007 Workshop with Mark Keen (IOD-UK) on action learning in organisations

Konstant, T.L., 2008. *Learning through stories, sharing through pictures*. [Paper presentation] 1st South African NGO Conference, CSIR, Pretoria, 24-25th October 2008.

Konstant, T.L., 2009a. *People talking about AIDS: Working with gender, culture and HIV in rural South Africa - Evaluation using Stories of Most Significant Change*. Oxfam America. [Online].

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http://issuu.com/oa-padare/docs/final_oxfam_msc_report_october_2009_padare_versi/1?mode=a_p

[Accessed 6th January 2010]

Konstant, T.L. 2009b. *Power, development and civil society*. Invited Keynote Speaker, Conference on Civil Society Effectiveness 2009, Prague, June 23rd. Czech Forum for Development Cooperation

Presentation available at FORS / Seminars & conferences / 23-24 June 2009

<http://www.fors.cz/assets/files/konference/TraceyKonstant.pdf>

[Accessed 6th January 2010]

Konstant, T.L. & Stanz, K., 2009a. *Paris, Power and CBOs*. Paper presentation at the International Development Evaluation Association Global Assembly 2009, Johannesburg, 18 March 2009. [Online full text and presentation]

Available at IDEAS / IDEAS Conferences / IDEAS Global Assembly, 2009 / Building Evaluation Capacity in Response to the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action

http://www.ideas-int.org/documents/file_list.cfm?DocsSubCatID=24

[Accessed 6th January 2010]

Konstant, T.L. & Stanz, K., 2009b. *Power, Conundrums and CBOs*. Paper presentation. 3iE / AFREA Conference on Perspectives on Impact Evaluation, Cairo, 29 March - 2 April 2009.

Konstant, T.L. & Stanz., K. 2009c. *Evaluation: the value in evaluation for community-based organisations*. 3rd Biennial Conference of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Conference 2009, Johannesburg, August 27th, 2009.

Presentation available at SAMEA / 2nd SAMEA eVALUation Conference 2009 / Conference Presentations 2009

<http://www.samea.org.za/samea-52.phtml>

[Accessed 6th January 2010]

Appendix 4. Programme for the Partners' inception meeting for the NW Province Gender, Culture and HIV programme MSC review

Meeting Objective:

To gain informed collective support to and awareness of the project closure research project, enabling optimal contributions to the project, and optimal use and relevance of the research outputs.

Sub-objectives

- To align and agree among partner organisations on the purpose of the MSC research project.
- To orient management and researchers to the MSC approach, its relevance in this context and fitness to the purpose envisaged by OA
- To enable the coalition of organisations to consider its collective use of the products of this research
- To enable the individual organisations to reflect on the value and relevance of their participation as researchers and users of the research

TIME	OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES
09h00	<p>OPENING AND INTRODUCTION BY MARIAN (OXFAM AMERICA)</p> <p>Welcome the participants and introduction of the research programme. Introductory conversation by Marian on how we come to be at this point, and the OA vision for this process. Questions and answers.</p>
09H30	<p>EXPECTATIONS OF THE RESEARCH</p> <p>Stories of impact: Participants reflect on their involvement or impressions of NW Province Gender, Culture and HIV programme, in order to share with the meeting on the questions below (5 minutes individual reflection time):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● An event, conversation or experience that signifies the impact of the programme. ● Their expectations of the MSC project. ● What they imagine contributing. ● What they imagine gaining from it.
10h20	<p>OVERVIEW OF THE DAYS PROGRAMME</p>
10h30	<p>Tea Break</p>
10:45-11:45	<p>THE PROGRAMME TO DATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussion on the Theory of Change for the NW programme, including the formation and the coalition as a key process. ● Discussion on where participants feel that this Theory of Change holds true, and where it might not.



TIME	OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES
11:45-13:00	WHAT IS MSC Orient the group to the theory behind MSC: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exercise using MSC using the example of the formation of the coalition.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Domains of change for formation of the coalition (30)○ Reflect on stories and allocate them to a domain (20)○ Select the most significant story and given reasons for your selection (20)
60 minutes	Lunch Break
14:00-15:00	WHAT IS MSC CONT' and WHY <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Feedback/discussion on the story selection and criteria for selecting stories (15)2) Verification and quantification - discussion (15)3) Revising the system (15) Summary of the method. Overview of the reasons for using MSC. What they can expect from MSC, and what not.
15:00-15:30	DOMAINS OF CHANGE Exercise on defining domains of change for the MSC process Formulate advice to the training and field work planning process on the questions which will offer greatest insight on the outcomes of the programme
15:30-16:00	MSC PLANNING Advice regarding the target audiences to be engaged, opportunities for focus groups (support groups, organisation meetings) Logistical issues confirmed regarding field time.

Appendix 5. Partners' meeting for the NW Province Gender, Culture and HIV programme MSC field work preparation and training

Meeting Objective:

To build the field teams 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

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:

- Capture comprehensively, the details of stories, including sound bites.
- Listen well, and listen in a way that encourages story telling
- Interview well to achieve rich stories across the domains of change
- Facilitate group discussions on these issues and capture the stories and conversations that emerge in focus groups
- Analyse stories for significance, themes and gender disaggregation

The field team should have:

- Heard each others most significant stories of change
- 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
- Agreed on terms of engagement and ethical practice for the research process.
- Planned division of roles, allocation to interviewing teams and logistics for field work next week.

TIME	OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES
09h00	OPENING AND INTRODUCTION Recap on the conclusions of the first session. Highlight the goals of the two day course. Introduction bingo - getting to know each other better
09H20	EXPECTATIONS OF THE RESEARCH Review the expectations of the first session: Are there new or specific expectations for this course? Would we like to refine the Domains of Change at this point?
09h40	OVERVIEW OF THE 2 DAY PROGRAMME Including introduction of Opmaat.



TIME	OBJECTIVES/ACTIVITIES
10h00	<p>NOTE TAKING</p> <p>Discussion on the importance of capturing data.</p> <p>Discussion on strategies for ensuring that the stories are fully and comprehensively captured - e.g. voice recorder, scribe role, reading back to the informant.</p> <p>Story by Mbuyisele for note taking.</p> <p>Notes contest - who do we think has captured the story best? What makes their account so good?</p> <p>Discussion: Challenges in note taking</p>
10h45	Tea Break
10h45	<p>LISTENING SKILLS</p> <p>Exercise demonstrating the challenges of poor listening, and the importance of effective listening to communication</p> <p>Exercise on reflective listening as a means of probing in research; Exercise allowing time for reflection; Discussion on listening and research</p> <p>Working in pairs they were asked to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell their stories simultaneously (an important event in their childhood) • Become gradually distracted as their talking partner related a story (An important event in adulthood) • Keep a fixed expressionless face during their talking partner's account (An important event in adulthood) <p>Debrief: bad listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to reflect back in the same words what the person says (Why I do the work I do) • Try to reflect back in different words – what you understand from the person (Why I do the work I do) • Try to get the person to say more about something – note what phrases you use for this (My first party) • Switch <p>Debrief: What helped to get the most information possible.</p>
11:45	<p>INTERVIEWING SKILLS: GETTING STARTED</p> <p>Introducing ourselves; Approaching a person or a group; What is the role of a researcher? Role plays on opening a conversation</p>
12:45	Lunch Break
1:45	<p>INTERVIEWING SKILLS: STEPPING STONES</p> <p>Framing the questions</p> <p>Breadth: Moving from problems to solutions, statements to stories</p> <p>Depth - Probing for underlying issues: Why, why, why? Reflecting.</p>
2:15	THE BALL GAME: Exercise demonstrating team roles
2:30	OUR STORIES: Group exercise with respondent, facilitator and note-taker.
3:30	Tea Break
5:00	CLOSURE FOR DAY 1: Review of the day's events. Opmaat team

TIME	DAY 2
08:00	OPENING AND INTRODUCTION Opmaat Recap on reflections on the Day 1
08:30	ANALYSIS 1) 3 stories - the tortoise that saw the world, the teacher and nasrudin's boat, the priest and the treasure (write down what you think is the significant lesson/change in each story, and vote for Most Significant of these - why is it the most significant?) Posting up the stories of change - in themes, under gender Clustering the stories into themes, choosing the most significant story for each theme (men and women votes disaggregated) All stories grouped into male's stories and female's stories: choosing the most significant story within those categories (men and women votes disaggregated) Why were these most significant? What does this say about change and HIV? What are the themes that have emerged? What does this say about our approach? What can we say we have achieved? What are the risks? What should we do differently?
10h0	Tea Break
10:15	THE CHAIR GAME Exercise on agendas, communication and third solutions
10:45	STAKEHOLDER MAPPING Brainstorm - What makes someone an appropriate respondent; and what do we expect of an appropriate setting? E.g. able to spend time, able to concentrate, somewhere we can speak in privacy, the respondent "type" will be available for analysis next week? List: Who are the key groups of respondents? Allocate groups to each stakeholder group by expertise - strategy for how best to reach this group? Where? Individually and in groups. Feedback and discussion: Strategy for each of these groups <i>LOCATIONS</i> How many locations can we work in? Map of the area please
12:15	FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION Discussion on how to run a focus group Role play - Focus group discussion using Group Members, Note takers and Facilitators. The rest of the participants are observers 20 minutes discussion Debrief and feedback from observers



TIME	DAY 2
12:30	Lunch Break
1:15	ETHICS What might go wrong and what are the risks to our participants? What are the risks to the local organisations involved? What are the implications for confidentiality? What does sensitivity look like? How do we manage these risks?
2:15	THE BALL GAME and Team planning Exercise on flexibility and cooperation <i>TEAMS</i> How many teams do we need? Who will have specific roles? Allocation to teams for the field work <i>Self-evaluation according to confidence in different skills - who should allocate team members?</i>
3:00	PLANNING The story of the rabbi - I told you, I don't know. <i>Brainstorm - what do we need to plan?</i> <i>Groups to prepare a draft for discussion on each of:</i> MATERIALS: Prepare the introductory paragraph and the ethics statement Prepare the demographics page - what do we need to know about each person? EQUIPMENT - what does each team and each individual need? Who will provide this? TRANSPORT - who needs to be transported from where to where, when? How will this be organised?
4:30	CLOSURE

Appendix 6. MSC Community feedback Mabeskraal 25 September 2009 Draft Plan.

Purpose of the feedback

- To give feedback on the findings of the MSC Process.
- To report on the results of the MSC and the changes.
- Show casing of the active organisations in the community in Mabeskraal.
- To report on what has been done in the last 12 months in Mabeskraal.

Target Audience

- 150 people.
- The community of Mabeskraal.
- The Kgosi's from the neighboring community.
- Government departments.
- Other Community Based Organisations.

Proposed Draft Agenda

Programme Director: Mr. Thapelo Rapoo

Time: 10h00am to 13h00pm

Venue: Mabeskraal Tribal Office hall

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsible person</u>	<u>Time allocated</u>
Opening Prayer and word of encouragement	Kgosi Sefanyetso	15min
Welcome and introductions	Kgosi Mabe	15min
Purpose of the day	Marian Gotha	15min
Partnerships in NW	Mr. Ian	15min
MSC Process	Ms. Tracey Konstant	10min
Organisations working in Mabeskraal	Ms. Wendy Mofokeng (Aids Consortium NW)	20min (5 minutes speaking, 15 discussion on this theme, facilitated by Sammy)
Story of Kgosi and the Youth	Ms. Lerato Mphato (Bacha ba Kopane Organisation)	20min (5 minutes speaking, 15 discussion on this theme, facilitated



Activity	Responsible person	Time allocated
		by Sammy)
Boswagadi and the Challenges facing older people	Ms. Motshidisi Kgasoe (Botho Jwa Rona)	20min (5 minutes speaking, 15 discussion on this theme, facilitated by Sammy)
Story on personal experience and behavior change	Ms. Lesedi Molibatsi (Pholo Modi wa sechaba)	20min (5 minutes speaking, 15 discussion on this theme, facilitated by Sammy)
Story on the youth and behavior change	Ms. Julia (Lovelifie)	20min (5 minutes speaking, 15 discussion on this theme, facilitated by Sammy)
Closing Recommendations from the audience	Mr. Sammy Kgaswe	15min
Vote of Thanks and summary of the main points provided from the audience	Ms. Denise Anthony (Aids Consortium Gauteng)	5min

Note:

- It was agreed that organisations that were involved in the MSC will exhibit as part of profiling them.
- Sammy, Micheal and Motshidisi will be responsible for distribution of the invitations, with the help of other partners in Mabeskraal.
- Thapelo will be responsible of the logistics around the event (i.e. catering, communication, etc).
- Tracey and Sammy will lead the Process on the presentation of the findings.
- Sammy will lead/facilitate the community recommendations session.
- There will be catering for 150 people.

Bafana represented Sonke will not be at the event; due to that Mbuyiselo has family commitments on the day.