



# ABCD FESTIVAL 2015

**"SMALL IS THE NEW BIG"**



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# Foreword

**Brianne Peters, Coady International Institute (Canada)**

I am so delighted to be writing this foreword for what was a fantastic event, to celebrate how asset-based and citizen-led approaches (ABCD) have been embraced by a variety of actors around the Eastern Cape and beyond. More than 120 people attended, from community-based organizations, grant-makers, academia, the corporate sector, NGOs, and various government departments. The idea behind the festival was to deepen conversations that are occurring about ABCD, but also to have fun and celebrate the many achievements Ikhala Trust, their partners, and friends have experienced over the years...and I think everyone would agree that we achieved both.

The festival slogan was “Small is the new big,” which I think characterizes Ikhala Trust perfectly. As an organization, they have deliberately stayed small, maintaining a staff of three, valuing the important contributions of associates, and enjoying the support of an equally engaged Board and partners. They believe that genuine development starts small, drawing first on the resources communities have. They have a commitment to being inclusive, and ensuring that citizens are at the centre of whatever they do. As we heard from community members throughout the three-day event, Ikhala’s small grants have had a big impact in supporting what communities are already doing, whilst not overwhelming them with resources or undermining ownership.

I also want to acknowledge the “big” role that Ikhala has played in changing the development conversation in South Africa, and no one says it better than my colleague Gord Cunningham, Assistant Director of the Coady Institute in Canada, who has worked closely with Ikhala for many years. He could not be at the festival, but sent this message:

*I want to congratulate Ikhala Trust, not just for staging this event – but for being the one to start the ABCD conversation in South Africa. Moses Coady had an expression*

*he used to describe the Antigonish (Co-operative) Movement in its heyday. He would tell people we are out to “set the heather on fire” (create a sensation) and that is exactly what you have done. You have stayed true to your roots and principles and have found ways to find out where asset-based and citizen-led development is already happening in the Eastern Cape, found ways to stimulate and support more of it, and have encouraged the spirit of ABCD to spread from community to community – in a most “non-institutional” way.*

Nowhere in the world, do we have as many and as diverse a set of stakeholders, who are interested and passionate about asset-based and citizen approaches, than here in South Africa. I have said many times that the world has a lot to learn from South Africa.

So congratulations to Ikhala Trust and everyone who was part of this Festival. We danced, we drummed, we explored some tough issues, shared our successes, and had rich discussions, that generated more questions than answers – which is a very good thing for 2016 and beyond.





*Asset-based and citizen-led development is an approach that recognizes the strengths, gifts, talents and resources of individuals and communities and helps people to mobilize and build on these. By focusing on assets and capacities rather than needs and deficiencies, energy is directed toward opportunities at the community level, whilst at the same time remaining conscious of how the policy environment could be changed to further strengthen citizens' capacity to drive their own development. At its core are the various assets (human, social, financial, natural and physical) that already exist in the community. These are especially the associations that mobilize assets and strengthen relationships, importantly linking local initiatives and external opportunities.*

**(Coady International Institute / Ikhala Trust, 2011)**



# Small is the new Big

## Bernie Dolley (Ikhala Trust Director)

Ikhala Trust, operating in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, is a community grant maker, established in 2001 to support small community based organisations with grant funding, capacity development and in-kind donations. We aim to assist organisations to undertake their activities optimally, whilst acknowledging the contributions these organisations make using their own assets.

The principle behind our work is to “sow” where people have already laid a foundation. Put another way, our (small) grants reinforce and build on existing assets (physical, social, financial, natural, human) that have been mobilised locally. In short, we build on people’s own resources.

This approach diverges from mainstream development practices, which are deficit oriented and needs based. These approaches often ignore and undermine what communities already do for themselves, treating local partners as passive recipients, in need of 'help' and 'fixing'. We have always rejected this view.

We recognise the gifts, talents and contributions of organisations and extraordinary pioneers who inspire us to continue to find ways to co-invest. Ikhala has naturally embedded this kind of appreciative lens in all aspects of our work.

It was encouraging and affirming to learn that others in our field share the same philosophy. About 12 years ago, we began to hear about asset based, citizen driven and people centred development entering the mainstream. We also met other practitioners and organisations who resonated with us, Gord Cunningham (and later Allison Mathie and Brianne Peters) from Coady Institute and Susan Wilkinson-

Maposa (then with the Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town). We cemented relationships and opened up the ABCD conversation in South Africa which continues today. Since then, we have actively and enthusiastically contributed to ABCD research, teaching and educational materials



*Powerful communities create a place for everyone’s gifts.  
There are no strangers - **Mary Nelson***

and have met a wonderful, diverse community of practitioners and critical thinkers along the way. We felt it was time to celebrate this decade of action and there could be no better time than at the end of the year, when we host our grantee gathering and awards ceremony.

Ikhala is all about the small things. We are a small organisation, we give small grants to other small organisations and believe it is the small things that often count the most. So when I was invited to attend an ABCD Festival in Blackpool (UK) in June 2015 with the theme: "Small is the new big", it hit at the core of what we do. The conference was a rich and intensive learning experience, and I wanted to bring it back to our community partners in a practical and meaningful way. Ikhala took up the challenge to follow through with this theme and to host a similar event in South Africa to create a platform for activists and practitioners to share ABCD experiences from a grassroots perspective.

We were able to host the Festival at the stunning Willows Beach Resort in Port Elizabeth, thanks to the generosity of CS Mott Foundation and Legal-Wise.

The Festival was primarily a celebration of ABCD in its different shapes and forms. Never before has Ikhala hosted such a large and diverse gathering, bringing together over 120 community development practitioners, from 7 of South Africa's 9 provinces; as well as friends and networking partners from Canada and Scotland. We invited people who have been exposed to ABCD in some way, who embrace it, live it and could share their stories. This was not a conference, but an opportunity for exploration, sharing and most of all – a celebration of our collective journey.

Putting together an event of this size with our small team was not easy, but in fitting with the spirit of ABCD - many people came forward to offer their time, expertise and resources as a combined effort. Thank you to all the individuals and organisations who contributed or attended the event, to ensure its success.



*If you keep your head and your heart in the right direction, you won't have to worry about your feet - **Nigerian proverb***



# Ikhala's ABCD Journey

**Sarah Hugow (Ikhala Trust Chairperson)**

*The room was abuzz with delegates, streaming in from all over the country. Many had met beforehand, over the years - there was an atmosphere of reunion. With feet twitching to the DJ's beat, the ABCD Festival was officially opened by the Chairperson of Ikhala Trust, Sarah Hugow. She traced Ikhala's journey with eloquence and style, weaving together a story of relationships, synergy, and innovation before declaring the Festival officially open....*



## 2007/8

- Bernie was invited to participate in the European Foundation's Conference in Brussels, where she met Susan Wilkinson-Maposa, who at the time worked at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business (Community Grantmaking and Social Investment Programme).
- Susan invited Ikhala Trust to pilot a method of 'Measuring and Valuing Community Contributions', as part of research published in: The Poor Philanthropist.
- Susan reintroduced Ikhala Trust to the Coady Institute through collaboration with Alison Mathie (Sarah and Bernie had met Gord Cunningham in 2005, at a meeting in Bhisho, with the National Development Agency (NDA) and Fort Hare University).
- A Case Study was developed by Susan and Alison, on the Jansenville Development Forum for inclusion in the book: "Clients to Citizens" a Coady publication.
- 4th Ikhala Grantee Conference held "Amplifying the voice of grassroots organisations"

## 2009

- 1st official ABCD workshop held at UCT Graduate School of Business.
- Launch of the "Clients to Citizens" book and Allan Fowler's "Civic Driven Change"

## 2010

- 1st official 4 day Asset Based Community Development workshop held in Port Elizabeth, facilitated by Brianne Peters (Coady Institute), assisted by Bernie.
- Coady facilitates an ABCD seminar held at NMMU.

## 2011

- ABCD workshops presented by Ninnette Eliasov as part of Ikhala's capacity-building programme, continues annually.
- Concept Note for an Action Research between Coady and Ikhala Trust approved.
- 7th Annual Grantee Conference: 'Link, Look, Listen and Learn – appreciating and value our assets' at St Luke's Port Elizabeth.

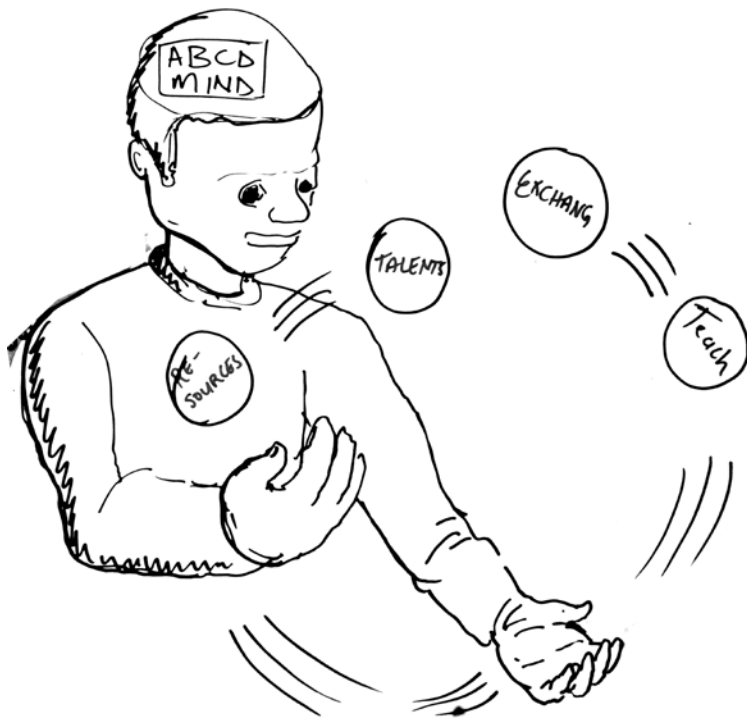
## 2012

- Bernie receives a bursary, to attend the: Mobilising Assets and Livelihoods and Markets Short Course at the Coady Institute in Canada
- Action Research with the Coady Institute is finalised and the documentary and publication: 'Voices in Harmony' is produced.
- Rapid Appraisal of Ikhala's ABCD Programme.

## TO DATE

- Since 2010, 617 people have attended Ikhala's 3 day ABCD training and 182 attended the 1 day Fundamentals.
- Inputs were given by Ikhala, to over 300 NMMU students since 2013.
- ABCD Toolkit produced by Ikhala Trust and Elamanzi and ABCD Training of Trainers launched in 2014.





The festivities continued, literally with a big bang, as Christine (Tina) Joubert - a music therapist, led the group in a lively drumming session. Some expectations were brainstormed in buzz groups, ie: get more information; sharing; inspiration; cultural exchange; socialising; transformation; successful implementation of ABCD; cracking hard nuts; making new friends; exchanging ideas; fun; creativity; back to basics; learning; networking and sharing positive and negative stories. With the scent of popcorn wafting through the air, groups rotated between Topic Tents for the rest of the day.



# Topic Tents

## Topic Tent # 1

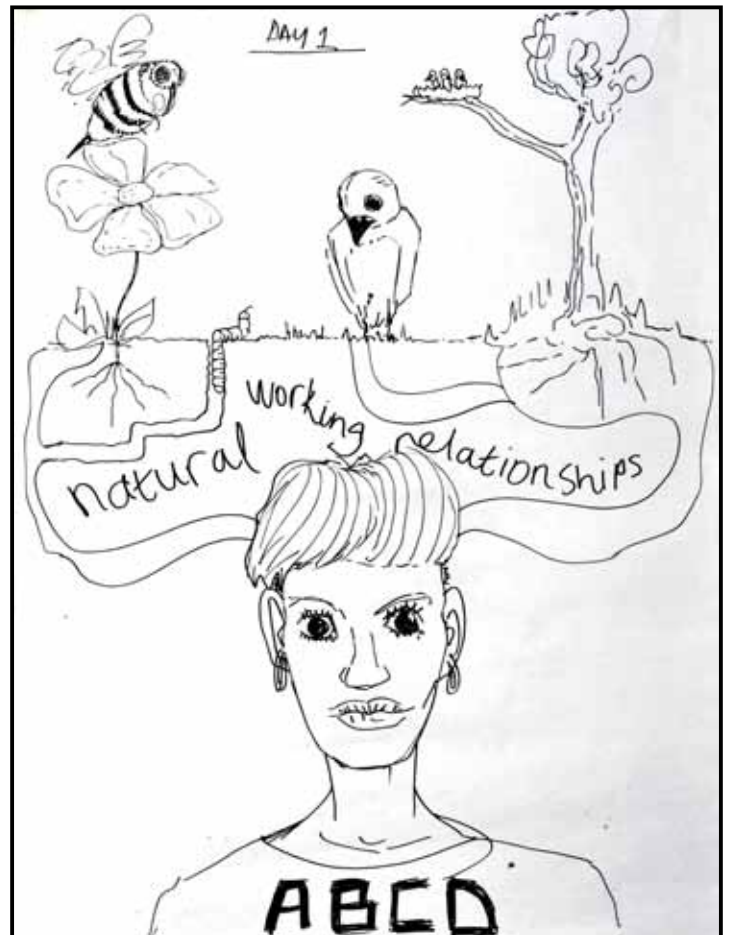
### Shifting Consciousness – ABCD in Practice

Ninnette Eliasov (Ikhala Trust Associate; co-Director of Elamanzi)

*Ikhala Trust and Elamanzi jointly produced an ABCD Toolkit, which has a strong element of paradigm shifting or consciousness building. Ninnette Eliasov, hosted a session on this topic. She was to share the platform with Father Oswald Musoni (Director of Caritas Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)), to give an example of ABCD in Practice. Unfortunately, Father Oswald in spite of sending a personal convoy to the embassy in Kinshasa, could not get a visa on time. The presentation was done based on a shared experience, of an ABCD process and subsequent review in the DRC.*

The presentation started with a definition of Consciousness and why it is important to shift paradigms or build consciousness (especially in a society where poverties of mind and spirit are major drivers of social and economic injustices). A story of an ABCD process was shared from the DRC - a torn country described in the legendary book 'Heart of Darkness' by Joseph Conrad. The ABCD process followed these steps:

- A community workshop started with Appreciative Inquiry and the question: what are we proud of? Some assets were highlighted like land, skills and good relationships. There was also some confusion and negativity from those focused on problems and needs.
- ABCD introduced as a way of thinking and seeing - ie, appreciating the glass 'half full' - starting with what we have. Simple methods (eg. storytelling) were used, to shift paradigms and prepare for group work...
- Small groups identified different kinds of assets in the village with women, men and youth working together. Inventories and maps of the human, social, physical/ natural and financial assets were completed. Groups presented their work in plenary, and additions were invited, concluding



the first day.

- The next day, after a review and consolidation session, a visioning and planning exercise was completed with women, men and youth working separately. Each group developed a shared vision, captured as a group picture ('leading image') and list of activities ('low hanging fruit') that could be implemented straight away, using what is readily available.
- Groups presented their work in plenary and everyone reflected on the two day ABCD workshop.

With this initial consultation complete, the local NGO (Caritas Goma) and donor partner (Caritas Australia) engaged in programme



design, crafting objectives and activities, that could best support local aspirations, through responsive investment. Importantly, partners were willing to:

- Shift their paradigm/ way of thinking, from a deeply needs or problem based orientation, to ABCD – committing 3 years to a revised programme;
- Frame new objectives and activities, that could best serve community interests;
- Change their language (eg. an HIV/AIDS programmes is reframed as a WELLNESS PROGRAMME and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) to a PEACE PROGRAMME);
- Create more transparent and authentic partnerships, with a strong culture of co-investment;
- Allocate budgets differently – less finance to capacity-building and procurement (as capacities and resources are readily

available locally), and more into asset-building, as assets will multiply over time.

- Embrace new roles outside of their 'core business' – eg. networking; brokering and market liaison. Everyone becomes a learning partner....

After one year of implementation, a review was facilitated, using simple methods that were creative and accessible, so that community partners could also lead this process. The review highlighted some of the main achievements so far, ie: quick uptake of activities, positive attitudes, more solidarity, asset growth, spontaneous saving schemes, gender reconciliation, healing and stronger partnerships. Some challenges were: theft of assets; resistance; gatekeeping; not everyone benefits at once; market access; organizational dynamics; habit/ business as usual and managing multi-stakeholder agendas and interests. As a result, recommendations were





collectively generated, to shape revisions for Year 2 of the programme.

The quick uptake and impact of the programme has been impressive so far, though not without challenges. What has been key, has been the willingness of all partners to shift their ways of thinking and even power dynamics in their relationships. It is this intention, that seems to be making all the difference....

*Consciousness was upon  
him before he could get  
out of the way*  
**- Kingsley Amis**

**Some of highlights and themes coming from this topic tent discussion were:**

- The importance of timing and readiness for change (ie, people will only shift their mindsets if and when they wish to);
- What to do about people who are resistant and who may disturb or obstruct good processes. How can you bring them on board, as they could often benefit the most?
- Understand how institutions work and how to navigate different spaces and organizational cultures, when engaging different stakeholders.
- Focus on opportunities and maximize these;
- The importance of relationships, human connections are ultimately what development is about;
- Be creative, eg. use social grants and stipends, as seed capital, to start small businesses;
- The importance of NGOs/ support agencies letting go of control and giving space for people to drive their own development,
- Be self aware – are you a gatekeeper or a gateway?



## Topic Tent # 2

### Appreciating and Valuing the Role of Different Stakeholders in ABCD

Brianne Peters (Coady Institute), Sarah Hugow (Chairperson, Ikhala Trust)

*This topic tent was suggested as a multi-stakeholder space, for sharing of diverse experiences of ABCD and discussing the different roles that associations and institutions might play. It also built on discussions, ignited at the ABCD Festival in Blackpool, UK.*

The topic tent started by simply asking the question: “Why ABCD”? Participants put down as many reasons as they wanted to about what attracts them personally. After sharing, groups discussed these motivators, and the commonalities and differences. The session then divided into five groups to explore the following:

- How has working with an ABCD/appreciative lens/approach changed the way I work with other stakeholders? How has it changed the way my organization works with these stakeholders?
- Do we all understand ABCD the same way? What are we actually talking about? Can we come up with a common definition of ABCD in a South African context?
- What has worked well in our experiences of using an asset-based/appreciative approach? What have we struggled with?

These questions raised even more questions. Groups then had a chance to self select what areas they wanted to explore in more detail.

#### What is ABCD: Participant Responses

A philosophy and practice that creates wellness; mind shifting (rather than handouts that destroy us); development managed by yourself; relationship-building and collaboration; an approach that is led and implemented by those at the grassroots; identifying and knowing the assets you have to work with; moves people from clients and recipients to citizens and producers; values individuals and communities; mapping internal assets; building on what people have, what they know and where they are – not imposing what we think; it is for ‘the poor’ and ‘the rich’....



#### Why ABCD: Participant Responses

ABCD reminds us of our natural assets; we bring own ideas; equips us with tools, awakens potential; empowers communities to live a healthy life and work together; assists transformation; gives a clearer idea of how to use resources we have; brings independence; feels good to focus on strengths; unlocks positive energy; motivates us to connect with our creativity; unites people; develops youth; shifts and challenges power dynamics and holders of power; promotes ownership; makes









more sense for me personally and at work; gives more knowledge and tools; is dignifying; expands frontiers and possibilities; is self - sustaining; brings us back to our roots; is a chance to review ourselves; taught me not to wait for government but do for myself; gives hope and inspiration; deficit approach has failed - need something fresh.

There were several aspects of this conversation that were interesting, especially how the questions about ABCD have changed in South Africa over the years. Many people in the room are past ABCD training and awareness and have matured as practitioners. It is natural that they find themselves in a deeper and more reflective space than before. There is also more energy behind ABCD and a growing movement as interest grows. Sensitisation efforts have certainly brought together a more diverse cross section of role players. However, some critical questions and doubts have also come with experience. Some spoke about the challenges they have had when trying to communicate ABCD with their peers. Others felt a need to define ABCD as a set of principles that makes most sense in the South African context.

Provocative themes were introduced by the facilitators looking at how ABCD addressed the “bigger structural issues” facing South Africa, and the world, today, like: poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change. Many felt that an ABCD lens has the potential to change power relations and break down barriers (eg. between “donors” and “beneficiaries”). It can shine the light on what everyone brings to the table in a

more balanced and mutually-reinforcing way.

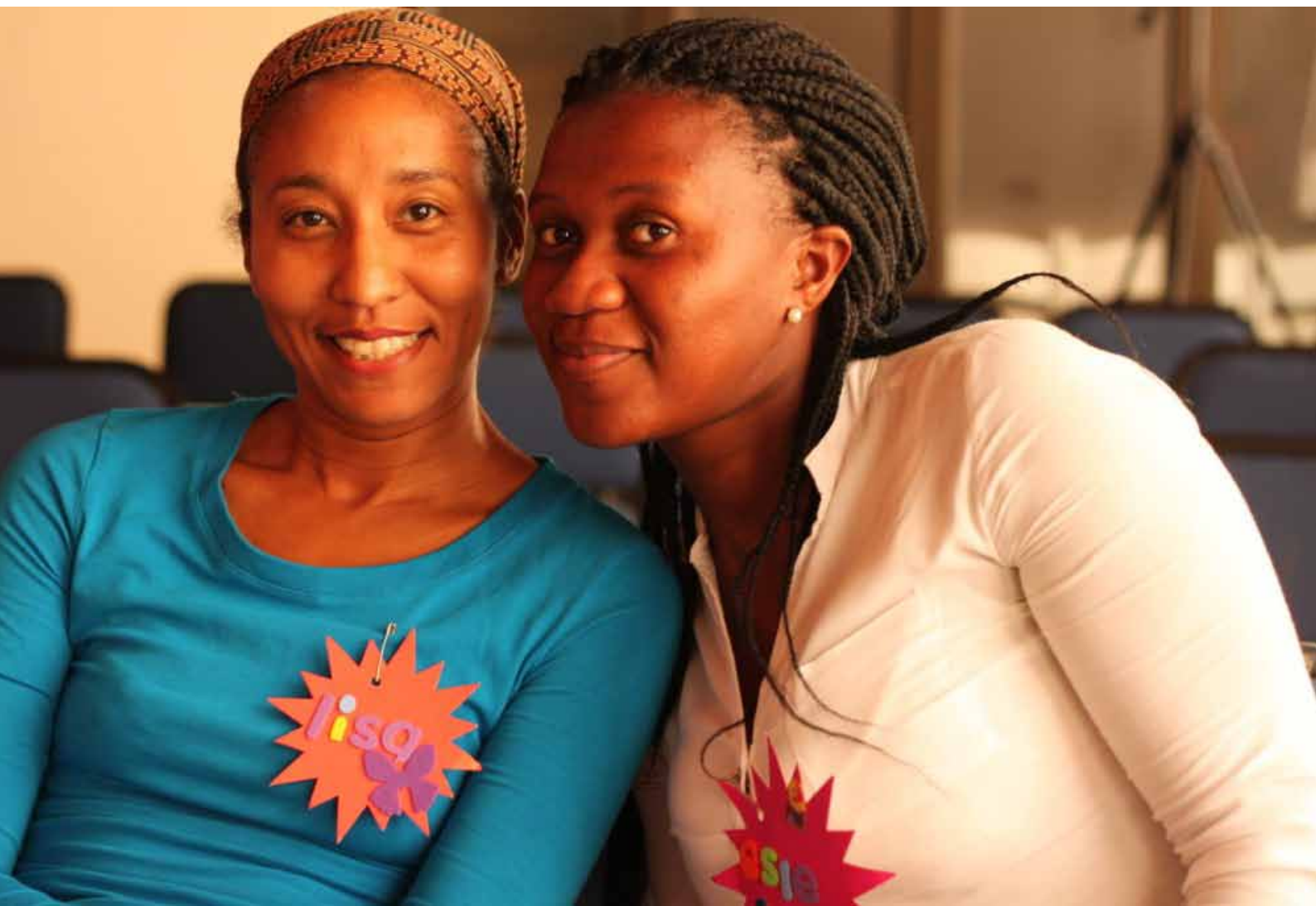
The dialogue also consistently raised this point: is ABCD an approach or set of tools for the so-called “poor”, or principles that all citizens can embrace? For some, ABCD is simply the way they live their life. They don’t worry about reporting or collecting evidence of what works. Nor are they bothered about what ‘it’ is called. Others are “gappers,” people who believe in community driven development, and are often engaged on a volunteer level, but are also accountable as professionals. They seek evidence of change, which is equally important.

#### The highlights recurring through the different sessions were summarised as:

- ABCD is a mindshift and a mindset;
- It is not for everyone;
- It is important to remember who we are as South Africans;
- ABCD in South Africa is maturing;
- How does ABCD get sustained over time?
- How does it challenge the bigger structural issues? On its own, is ABCD sufficient?;
- How can we measure economic and social impacts, as a result of an ABCD approach?
- How can we support a community of practitioners?

Many left this topic tent with more questions than answers and a wish to deepen the conversation...

*People who say it cannot be done, should not interrupt those who are doing it – George Bernard Shaw*



## Topic Tent # 3

### Youth Driving the Development Agenda

Bongiwe Ndakisa (Kwenzekile Community Development Centre), Bonga Gwengula (Imbasa Community Centre), Shaun Burnett (an intern from Scotland) and Olwethu Sizani from the Technical Support and Dialogue Platform (TSDP)

*The dialogue was hosted by youth from KCDC, Imbasa and TSDP. It focused on how youth can work hand in hand with elders and other community members, to drive change together. The session was loosely structured, starting with a short introduction and audio from George the Poet, to kickstart the conversation:*

**A child is not a portion of an adult.  
It's not a partial being.  
A child is an absolute person,  
An entire life.....  
Many children are given less than  
children deserve;  
Such is the world they entered at  
birth.  
But all it takes is one friend ... one  
friend  
Who's willing to go to the ends of  
the earth....**

(extracted from: The End of the Earth  
by George the Poet)

Three themes were explored: Youth employment; Creating Healthy Communities and Youth Education. Roles were assigned: the youth, the wise and the stewards (ie. those in communities with the skills to bring the youth and wise together). Each discussed these topics from their different perspectives ...

#### Youth Employment

What the wise said: create employment locally (eg. piggery); think globally, act locally; don't wait for government - get up and start; community cafeteria; local businesses; have ways of accessing government opportunities; do a skills audit of young people; do an asset inventory; more training....

What the youth said: create jobs for youth using resources we have; organise sports activities at municipal facilities; value indigenous knowledge (eg. youth can tell and write stories); equip youth with necessary skills; address feelings of hopelessness; youth





must read, understand and question (explore themselves); more accessible education: Youth Development Centres; share knowledge and skills...

### Creating Healthy Communities

What the wise said: safe; no crime; disease free; health centres; food security; education access (ie. skills training, universities, schools and early childhood education); jobs or economic opportunities; transport (infrastructure); spiritual health; traditional leaders; healthy natural environment; sports and recreation; strong networks.

What the youth said: supportive and caring relationships; co-operation; shared vision; loving and caring people; learning, teaching and sharing; value indigenous knowledge; non-discriminatory communication; safety; respect; creating change; being prepared to go the distance; energetic; take risks; no resistance; equipped with skills; an informed community.

### Youth Education

What the wise said: education that is relevant and responsive to current and future needs; a culture of reading; career guidance at an early age – parents to have a paradigm shift in terms of further education and training (FET) versus University education; education relating to the socio-economic (macro) context.

What the youth said: start with what you have – build with what you know; listen; drive your own processes (take ownership); bridge the gap between old school and new school; guidance, leadership, mentorship; volunteerism (gain experience); motivate others; address the lack of role models; more activators; validation / affirmation; alumni must give back; do what you love – find your passion; get back to basics.

The sessions highlighted some possibilities that open up when the youth and wise come together. This is not always easy and the role of skilled stewards can help to harness the energies, talents and skills of the youth and infuse this with the experience and wisdom of the older generation. Some time was spent looking at qualities of stewards and how they can be activated.

**Qualities of Stewards:** people who think out of the box; they create space for the youth; balance information; find opportunities and adopt an “it can be done!” attitude; connect people; build networks for better collaboration; are unselfish; responsible; caring; good listeners; brave; a people’s person; get to the bottom of things; quick thinkers; resourceful; they deliver; are knowledgeable; lead by example; trusted; creative; empathetic; and role models for others. They must know where to find assistance (be similar to an advice office); find accessible and approachable people; build bridges; have a track record; build trusting relationships based on shared values and must know that they are Stewards! They must also be discerning and careful not to become targets of opportunists and criminals.



What was most interesting from this session, was:

- The realisation by many 'stewards' in the workshop that their skills are important;
- A realisation that the gap in thinking between young and wise was actually very small;
- The dialogue between youth and the wise was different in each group but there was an overall feeling that they could find ways to come together...
- The wise need the youth and the youth need the wise - in between, stewards play the 'gapper' role;
- There was initially some who felt youth are lazy and do not want to take advantage of opportunities presenting to them, but through dialogue this was resolved ....

What seemed to be clear to everyone is the importance of youth activation within a supportive, caring environment where wise elders and stewards are willing to bridge the generation gap.

***"The (youth) session was very interesting in the sense that discussions between the young and the wise were very informative and answered a lot of questions about the disconnection between the two...As an organisation we feel that conversations between the young and wise need to continue so that we can use the wisdom of the wise and the energy of the young to build better communities."***  
(Bongi Ndakisa, KCDC)

***"It was a pleasure to be part of the youth topic tent team. Of particular interest was the realisation that many of the dilemmas faced by young people in South Africa are similar to those in Scotland. ... I found the dialogue between the young and wise of great importance, showing that many of the ideas and values are shared. Moving forward, we must find ways to create dialogue amongst all people in communities to drive change together".***  
(Shaun Burnett, community builder, Scotland)



## Topic Tent # 4

### ABCD Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

There was particular interest from a smaller group to explore ABCD in terms of research, monitoring and evaluation. Legal-Wise, the TSDP and University of Johannesburg have recently produced a study looking at ABCD, Monitoring and Evaluation. This spontaneous topic tent was led by Professor Hanna Nel from the University of Johannesburg and highlighted these important themes:

- ABCD is not only about the poor shifting 'their' consciousness – we should all be doing that;
- Funders want things to be quantified (eg. people, numbers) and there is less space for the qualitative;
- Realisation that government and corporates have the same struggles when embracing ABCD;
- How do we monitor and evaluate ABCD? Is it possible to have standardised templates and tools?
- Who should we send to assess progress?
- What were things like before exposure to ABCD and what does it look like afterwards?
- We should exchange stories ('good' and 'bad') in order to learn and share;
- Define community;
- What do we mean by readiness for change?
- Shift power relations – ABCD has a social justice agenda.

***“As someone “new” to ABCD, I found the festival very interesting: it was good to meet people in the same field, it was good to see how the principles are applied elsewhere, it was good to compare our own situation, and it was immensely good that I left with many questions I’d never thought of beforehand. One of the large challenges (being included in the M&E group), seems to be quantitative reporting on ABCD projects. I’d like to see some form of standardisation around that, or a concerted group-effort towards standardisation....It also came up during the festival that the ABCD ‘community’ would like to create linkages and a sense of belonging, both on a national and international scale. An online system that could accommodate such linkages would be a very useful learning and sharing tool”.***  
(David Fourie, Tarka Development Group)

*The next day had a different flow with guest speakers, a panel discussion and more celebration with Pedro Espi-Sanchis and the esteemed Queen of Xhosa Music, Madosini. They ran a music workshop and also blessed the group at Ikhala's Annual Grantee Dinner that evening with a live performance.*

*We can live without religion and meditation, but we cannot survive without human affection*

**– Dalai Lama**







# Ithuba Agricultural Enterprise

## - A Story of Resilience and Success

### Sibusiso Dlamini (CEO, Ithuba Agricultural Enterprise)

*For some, ABCD is a development approach that offers an alternative to a problem based model. Others seek to shine the light on what active citizens in communities are already doing with little or no assistance from outside. The Amangcolosi community in Kranskop, KZN is an example of such. They are an organized community of almost 400 households who have successfully reclaimed land taken from them during apartheid and after a decade of hard work and sacrifice have transformed this asset into the lucrative Ithuba Agricultural Enterprise. Mr Sibusiso Dlamini, who grew up in this community, is a young and dynamic entrepreneur and Ithuba's CEO. He shared their fascinating story ....*

The Amangcolosi community from Kranskop, Kwa-Zulu Natal, gathered in the early 1990s to decide how to get their forefather's land back, after being forcefully removed, during Apartheid. They approached the Department of Land Affairs and submitted a claim with 376 claimants. In 2004, they were awarded land restoration rights over 12 independent 'white' owned farms and in July 2005 received

approximately 10 000 hectares, but without any financial compensation. The Amangcolosi Community Trust was established, to protect the land. The Ithuba Agricultural Enterprise is a subsidiary, a community owned farm business, that aims to create jobs and generate profits and dividends. The company is wholly owned by the Trust and almost 400 beneficiary households.



The farm started to cultivate sugar cane, assisted by Chister Holding Company and other companies, who offered mentoring. With the assistance of Mascor, Greytown – the farm later purchased R7 million worth of equipment on credit. Banks did not initially approve any loans, but were later convinced, as the farm's credibility grew. They could then employ staff. A Business Plan was also developed and together with the Constitution, was used for guidance.

In the first few years, the company focused on servicing the loan and keeping the business going. After 5 years, it showed profits for the first time. No dividends were initially paid, until 2009 when each household received R3000 at the end of the year. These have increased by R500 annually and currently dividends are approximately R6000 per family. The land is divided into the following commercial activities:

- rain fed sugarcane (1 850 hectares)
- timber (3 000 hectares)
- white maize (100 hectares)
- kiwi fruit (3 hectares)
- chillies (2 hectares)
- leather leaf fern (1 hectare)
- cattle grazing (1 150 hectares)



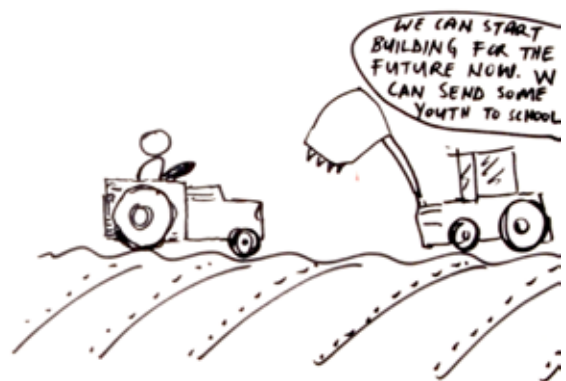


The farm employs 430 people, including the Trust beneficiaries and skilled workers from outside. Leaders have cleverly convinced graduates from the community, who left to live in other areas, to return home, by offering incentives and competitive salaries. Mr Dlamini himself, was living in Johannesburg as a successful accountant. He was head hunted by his community, who offered a competitive package. The company also invests in bursary schemes, to grow their resource pool, which over the years has born fruit.

Ithuba is by far the largest employer in Kranskop, recognised by government and commercial partners. Some impressive achievements have been:

- Paying off the capital debt;
- Purchasing its own trucks and tractors;
- Purchasing a vehicle for Inkosi (Chief);
- Expanding to cattle farming;
- Setting up a company website:  
[www.ithubaagriculture.co.za](http://www.ithubaagriculture.co.za)
- Publishing regular newsletters about Ithuba's activities;
- Establishing an eco-tourism campsite;
- Reinvesting profits from the business to finance computer classes; a communal garden; chicken project; 18 soccer clubs (organised as a football association); netball clubs; additional classrooms and a computer lab at the local school; church; water project; construction of 26 homes; vegetable gardens; electrification; cattle dips; recreational park and bursary schemes.

The community have worked hard to grow the farm, sacrificing short term gain for long term benefits. The journey has not been easy and there have been many challenges as well. The previous owners neglected the land for a few years during the settlement period, so it was severely degraded when transferred back to the community. There has been theft, livestock trespassing; human resource issues and difficult community dynamics and labour issues (eg. managing 'a negative group'). Leaders have continuously become more capacitated over the years and have educated themselves and others. Importantly, everyone has remained committed to the vision and their constitution which has helped build peace internally.



Ithuba has recently celebrated its 10th anniversary and generates approximately R50 million in revenue annually. The key to success has been a self management model with a strict practice of good governance.



The business is run on strict professional lines with jobs advertised on a competitive basis. Those who do not perform are re-deployed or ultimately fired, even if they are Trust members. Committee members who do not perform are also asked to step down to avoid 'dead weight' in the structure. Good governance is valued highly and the Trust has a strict policy: whatever needs to be said, must be said at a meeting – no gossip or slander is entertained outside. What is said in the boardroom, stays in the boardroom. The farm recently bought a neighbouring Mondi farm with government assistance, to expand their timber production. The future is looking bright....

*The Ithuba story sparked much interest as well as controversy. Questions were asked about leadership, salary scales, gender balance and environmental impacts. Whilst Ithuba's financial success is impressive, heavy reliance on agri-business (particularly Timber production), can have dire environmental consequences. Timber is particularly water intensive, yet there is a drought in KZN and nationally. Ithuba's story has shined the light on a key question which hits at the core of development in any form:*

***How can communities drive development for lasting social, economic and ecological benefits?***

*Mr Dlamini humbly and frankly responded to the questions. He also shared his own insights, having been exposed to ABCD for the first time at this Festival. He realized that although Ithuba is a success story of community driven development, the way in which profits are being reinvested has ironically been needs based and top down. As a result, some sponsored projects have not been sustainable. Beneficiaries are also waiting for Trustees to give and there is a danger of dependency. This seems to be a paradox given that Trustees, company Directors and beneficiaries are all members of the same community. So the fact that citizens drive their own development does not necessarily mean that the approach or results will be most empowering, or sustainable. If the Amangcolosi community could infuse an ABCD paradigm into its own philosophy, strategy and culture, the ripple effects are likely to be amplified.*

*This will be an exciting space to watch....*





# Community Voices

## – Panel Input

Convened by: Andy de la Mare, Ikhala Trustee

Panelists: Notizi Vanda (founder Jansenville Development Forum); Thandokazi Ndabane (Othandwandi HBC); Gareth Ciki (Sophakama Project); Nombeko Buyana (Msendo Woodlot Project); Nomahlubi Apleni and Sheila Xawuka (Calabash Trust)

*The brief given to the panellists was for them to share their own stories – stories of resilience. What made them become involved in community work, what they are currently doing and what keeps them going despite all the challenges?*

Andy introduced each speaker and gave a brief background to the panel discussion. He invited each panellist to briefly share their story. Some spoke at a very personal level, whilst others focussed more on how they have been assisted or inspired by others to achieve what they have over the years.

The common thread running through the stories was passion – passion for community development; for making a difference; for learning; trying; persevering and seeing to it that others do well. All panellists also shared a passion for success.

There were instances too where the panellists voiced some of their challenges and disappointments. Some experienced other stakeholders as disruptive or arrogant. Some felt there was little appreciation of the small efforts made by communities to help themselves. They experienced criticism and imposition. Some tried to change what communities were doing or imposed bureaucracy and took all the credit.

The panellists also highlighted the fact that in many instances, financial support that was well intended often caused a lot of confusion. This led to unhappiness or conflict amongst members and ultimately the collapse of their organisation.



Another critical issue raised was around leadership. Who leads, who follows and what happens when leaders leave? The importance of cultivating a second leadership layer was highlighted and the need for better support, especially for young, emerging leaders.

The conversation lasted about an hour with Andy translating and interjecting for clarity. The panellists, despite not having experience in this

kind of interviewing process did well and once the nerves had settled, enjoyed their time on the stage, even though the session was short.

People in the audience could identify with what was shared and applauded the panellists for their honesty and courage.

*"The ABCD Festival was so interesting, entertaining and informative. I learnt so much from people who were telling their stories about how they started their co-operatives/ projects and (this) made me realise that anything you want in your life is possible. I also learnt that you can build something out of nothing. I am pleased to report that the ABCD Festival was highly interactive and led to lots of interesting discussions, and it was well organised. ABCD is a useful tool that people can adopt"*  
**- Fundiswa Mtonjana, OR Tambo Ntinga Development Agency**





# A Journey Inwards

**Dr Govindsamy (Jeff) Govender, Famhealth Medipark**

Dr Jeff Govender is the founder of the impressive Famhealth Medipark Centre situated in Gelvandale, Port Elizabeth. The brief given to him as keynote speaker that evening was to tell the story of Famhealth and his other amazing achievements and share why he cares so much about others. Dr Govender's address was elaborate and deeply moving. His profound insights are shared in detail so that others can learn from a remarkable citizen in action...



Dr Govender started his presentation, by recognising family, colleagues and friends and giving kudos to them for his accomplishments. Yet, as he shared his story, it was clear that he is a gentle giant making a difference in this world...

Dr Govender started at the beginning - at his roots which shaped his character and values. He said this of his "beautiful parents" – Shunmugan and Gonapushanie:

*Our father loved his family and committed to us in a very meaningful way. He took a consistent interest in his children's education and was visionary. From a young age, he supported his mother and 5 sisters - dad was disciplined, focused and extremely hard working, as a head waiter for most of his life. He always had a firm and gentle hand, and made us feel very secure. Dad was deeply meticulous and was a leader in various organisations, serving as the Chairperson of the Chatsworth High School Education Committee and Captain of the local Football Club for many years. Our mother excelled at school but had to leave after Grade 9. She was caring, compassionate, hard working and well liked. She sacrificed and always put the needs of others first. She hand washed our clothes until she was 43 years old, when I finally bought her a washing machine. My childhood was not financially easy but we grew up close with many special memories and discipline and education was at the centre...*





Jeff was blessed to have a firm and solid foundation. In High School, he was head prefect and completed a Rotary Leadership Course. He went on to medical school in 1981 and opened a medical practice in Zimdahl Street in Gelvandale. After gaining the trust and loyal support of residents for 25 years, the vision for Famhealth was born: to have the best possible healthcare services in the heart of a healthy, peaceful and prosperous community...

It took 2 years to negotiate the private purchase of 2 erfes with a dilapidated building. After nearly two years of planning and around the clock construction, Famhealth Medical Centre was launched on 29 November 2008. This process was not without challenges. There were numerous break-ins, theft; unauthorised entry; accosting of site workers and financial hurdles. These were overcome through faith, courage and the generosity of trusting friends who gave substantial loans at the 11th hour, without hesitation.

Famhealth's philosophy is based on the recognition that healthcare does not exist in a vacuum. There is a firm belief that all forms of positive activities – both social and economic have a beneficial impact on the hearts and

minds of communities, especially the children. Famhealth brings together multi-disciplinary services with development activities and has become a beacon that currently has: a family doctor (General Practitioner: Dr G. Govender (Jeff); Klinikare Pharmacy; optometrist; psychologist; blood testing; gymnasium for men & women; computer Centre (in partnership with NMMU); Northern Areas People's Development Initiative office; hair salon; coffee shop; four Autobanks and two Conference venues seating 120 - 200 people.

So why care?

Dr Govender's answer was simple and true:

*To care about fellow citizens boils down to the philosophy that life is purposeful. Whilst we are here to enjoy the benefits of this world, we also have an obligation to make a positive contribution. When we give we receive and when we receive we must give – this is the law of nature. To achieve our purpose each one of us must know who they are, point their heart in the right direction, and with one small simple step at a time, they will find their way...*



**In closing, Dr Govender shared his vision for our society:**

- A values based education and culture where all citizens are socialised to make a contribution;
- Holding on to traditions that have worked;
- Peaceful and prosperous communities, that are empowered and self - sufficient;
- An active civil society with a collaborative network of NGO's;
- Sustainable ways of living;
- Respect - unity in diversity;
- Harmonious and peaceful co-existence;
- Strong partnerships, where we are interdependent and accountable to one another (without abdicating our respective roles and responsibilities);
- A future where all citizens are agents of change – whilst being rewarded for their efforts.

In quoting Professor Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize recipient, he emphasised that no one is inherently 'poor' or inferior. It is the oppressive systems in our culture that make it so. Because it is difficult to change bureaucracy, we must look at united citizens for answers – even a little can go a long way...

*Sitting in the audience, listening to this rich and detailed story, it seemed that Dr Govender's humility and unwavering commitment, is a big part of his success.*

*Imagine if every citizen gave, according to their means and abilities - how abundant this world would be*



*He who risks only within the confines of his current achievements will never know the unlimited nature of his capability - **James Arthur Ray***



## Reflections

The last day gave us an opportunity to reflect on our experience and some of the highlights, lowpoints and what might change when we go home. ... We all left with much food for thought.

Yet, after all the discussions, questions and engagements, there was one big question still hanging in the air. What really is ABCD?

Is ABCD a paradigm or type of consciousness? Is it a process? A development method? A philosophy? Or a way of life? Is it just for community development practitioners and stakeholders, who work with socially or economically depressed communities ('the poor')? Or is it a way of encouraging all citizens to take responsibility for themselves and others?

We did not come out of the festival with one single definition. ABCD possibly embraces all of these.

What everyone did seem to agree on is that this approach is about having an appreciative lens in work and life. It is about seeing the glass half full rather than half empty. It is to value other human beings, as well as the planet that sustains us. When applied to the Development Field, where diverse individuals and entities intersect, there is great potential to bring all these elements dramatically together. Whether for programmes and projects, to redress imbalances and injustices, or cultivate knowledge and skills, development seems to make most sense, when the people directly affected are valued and heard. People are

the drivers of change, and it is logical that self organisation is most sustainable. Importantly, when people invest in their own development, relationships with others can be more balanced and equitable. It is co-investors who co-create.

ABCD is not necessarily the best word for what we are talking about – acronyms and jargons never are. But whatever terminology we choose to apply, we are talking about an alternative to the conventional problem based methodologies which have come to dominate. In spite of the many good intentions underpinning them, such problem based approaches have labelled people as 'poor', 'deficient' and 'needy'. This has consequences for the people who are labelled and for those who perpetuate this type of language. It undermines our worthiness and creates dependency on 'experts' who bring solutions. These are often faulty and self serving, and there have been far too many failures and wasted investments in the name of development for this culture to continue.

ABCD places responsibility where it should lie. It seems to be a more positive and impactful way for us to engage - not just with each other but also with ourselves. ABCD is also dignifying and reminds us of our common humanity – as fellow citizens finding our way.

Ikhala closed the session with a challenge for someone to take up the baton and keep the conversation going. Perhaps through a national event to expand the dialogue. Who will take the next step?







"Thanks to the Ikhala Trust team for putting on a great few days. It was especially heart-warming to see the wide range of people who are actively engaged with ABCD in many different contexts. To me the most important issue going forward is to make people aware that ABCD is not a "THING" that is done to a community, but rather a way of life, a way of looking at and becoming - that ultimately leads to better people enabling better communities. And it is a way of life for ALL - not just those traditionally seen as "poor".

**- Janine Ward,  
Community Facilitator**



"Local stories that we can relate to under conditions that we understand are immensely valuable. We come to the fundamental realisation that "it can be done", despite the often overwhelming challenges we face. The ABCD Festival hosted by the Ikhala Trust skillfully included people from far and wide to share their stories and instill much hope and enthusiasm for what is possible. ABCD people are a unique bunch and when we decide to collaborate, there is no stopping us – this was clearly evident in the coming together to make music that resonated with every heartbeat in the room. We are most grateful to Ikhala Trust for their warm hospitality and a humbling experience. We look forward to many more festivals to celebrate our successes together!"

**- Lesley Haynes,  
LegalWise**

"The festival was wonderful! ABCD (type) people form a very unique community with characteristics of enthusiasm, energy and openness... They address social issues which really make a difference to people's lives. The work of Ikhala Trust is also admirable and I'm proud to be associated with them!"

**- Professor Hanna Nel,  
University of Johannesburg**

"It was my first time to attend such an event and I did not (initially) understand it. I was so impressed and groomed by the musical instruments that were played and the presence of Madosini really impressed me. ...also the unity, I will never forget that. At the festival, we were together as one."

**- Thembi Kedama,  
CDW Ward 32**





“There is undoubtedly a community of practice growing in South Africa, that appreciates assets as a powerful tool for change. It was such an honor to be amongst people that have taken it upon themselves to bring about change in their communities by appreciating and using what already exists. The Ikhala Trust can be truly proud of this landmark achievement”.

- **Mamo Mohapi,**  
**CS Mott Foundation**

“It was invigorating - a very powerful confirmation for me that I am doing the right work. I loved the deep discussions and all the exploring, challenging assumptions and unpacking systems together. I found this very rich and stimulating.”

- **Mary Humphreys,**  
**Raphael Centre**



“the ABCD seed is germinating and growing, and I can’t wait to see the fruits of it all”

- **Chris Engelbrecht,**  
**Ikhala Trust (Trustee)**





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