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B-BBEE Level Four Contributor

ABCD Training Umthathi (trainees)

7th until 9th September 2016

Facilitators: Phumeza Mdingi and Anne Löffler

Assistance: Sanelisa Mtwalo

Venue: Umthathi Training Project (Extension 7)



Overview

Attendees

The course attendees were 33 people who have been trainees at Umthathi Training Project in Extension 7 of Grahamstown. The training was hosted by Umthathi organisation which approached us in July this year to train their recent Umthathi training group in Asset Based Community-led Development. The group members came from different areas in the Eastern Cape, such as Alice, Middledrift, Alexandria, Peddie, King Williams Town and from Grahamstown.

Purpose and goals of the training

The main objective of the ABCD course is to deepen awareness and understanding of the socio-economic drivers of development, the need-based context of development and how an ABCD approach can support community driven growth and prosperity. Learning outcomes include:

- To deepen understanding of ABCD as a paradigm (and differences to deficit-based approaches to development)
- Methods and tools which encourage critical thinking
- Independence from external help
- To unblock and unlock freedom of mind and appreciation of fundamental assets which people have to drive their own wellness (emotional, physical, social, occupational, financial) processes
- Promoting building community networks and reciprocal relationships with other households/ community members or initiatives to bring about change

Rising projects and initiatives:


- To motivate communal support
- Deepen understanding role as enabler
- Methods and tools to create project-asset inventories, visioning and first plans of action

Course-Overview

ABCD training workshop was hosted at Grahamstown Umthathi Training Project in Grahamstown from the 7th until the 9th September 2016. As the Umthathi trainees were only available for three days, we adapted our schedule of our standard 3.5 day course to one which could be facilitated within three full days. (The attendees came from different rural areas in the Eastern Cape and had attended an Umthathi gardening training for the first two days of the week). The course started on the first day with introductions and a brief overview of what the workshop is about. ABCD as a paradigm was then facilitated with a range of tools which promote critical thinking and positive energy. ABCD as a process was explored the following day drawing on the group's experiences of community driven development. Subsequently, ABCD-praxis tools were introduced, such as various forms of asset-inventories and mapping as well as visioning and planning on day three. The course concluded with the 'gallery walk' (group presentations), a reflection and discussion about the group's intentions moving forward.


Course Details

Day 1

Activity	Purpose
Introduction:	
Appreciative inquiry (partner work): 1) What makes you proud of the community you live in; 2) who is your role model?	To give a 'first taste' of ABCD (positive energy and what course is about). We asked it would have felt if we had asked them to share their problems with one another (creating heavy atmosphere, sad atmosphere, "a heavy start")
Glass half full or half empty?	To show differences between deficit-based thinking (glass half empty) and asset-based thinking (glass half-full).
Defining ABCD (including types of assets)	To introduce to the meaning behind Asset-Based-Community Development.
Course outline and week plan	
ABCD as a Paradigm:	
"Community A and Community B": group work and feedback 	The participants were divided into Community A and Community B. Community A was then described as lacking resources, capacity and opportunities and Community B as full of assets, skills and opportunities. Participants gave feedback on how it feels to be part of Community A or B. Subsequently, we disclosed that both are the same community. However, the perception (paradigm) and language used when describing the community were different. This was again to show differences between deficit-based and asset-based thinking, highlighting the importance of perception a situation ('lenses') and 'language' we use to describe a situation.
Types of Poverty: poverty of stomach, poverty of the mind, poverty of spirit.	To show that in order to change the situation of "poverty of stomach" (poverty we normally "see"), at first, mind shifting needs to take place

	from poverty of mind and spirit to abundance and freedom (antidotes).
Root Causes of Poverty: Group work and feedback	To exercise deepened critical thinking around the types of poverty and how they are interlinked. Both groups (remaining in community A and community B set-up) identified symptoms of poverty (no education, crime, teenage pregnancy etc.). With some assistance (asking "why") we could show how to 'dig' deeper to the underlying causes (root-causes) of poverty, which mainly are to be found in poverties of spirit and mind, and systemic factors.
<p>Ladder of inference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> group was asked to conclude from striking handbag things the owner of the handbag Story of Nokwanda (a woman attending a job interview and arriving to the appointment late, smelling like cigarettes and dirty fingernails), group discussion if participants would employ her Introduction of tool of ladder of inference 	<p>To emphasize how quickly we can make assumptions and jump into conclusions in development work and in our daily lives (sometimes based on very little information). We used random objects out of my and Phumeza's bags and other things belonging to our office. The group was asked who the owner of the bag could be. Group suggestions were: from a school child, a lady, Anne, bushman, security, and facilitator.</p> <p>To show that having quality information about both assets and needs and a fuller picture of reality will inform appropriate decisions and actions. Most of the participants mentioned that they would not employ her. However, one young woman made an interesting statement, saying that she would first ask Nokwanda why her appearance is inappropriate for an interview.</p>
<p>Movie Ladakh:</p> 	The movie shows how the Ladakh community lived without a cash economy for centuries, did not know 'poverty' but had an impressive quality and joy of life. Further, it shows how 'development' within nine years dramatically has begun to destroy local economy, community relations and self-reliance of residence. In our recap participants gave feedback on assets identified and what are they have observed what development has brought to Ladakh. Most responses referred to negative impacts of development. At this point it was important to emphasize that – even though 'well meant' development can have unintended detrimental impact, especially if it happens too fast as well as from 'outside in' (top down approach by externals).
Characteristics of ABCD	Drawing on Ladakh: 1) Appreciating and growing assets + looking after assets; 2) Social Capital (unity and social networks in communities which adds to quality of life and as one of the main catalysts for growth); 3) ethical leadership; 4) (re-) building local economy (ABCD tries to emphasise the local, and how to support each other for local economic growth).

Day 2

Activity	Purpose
Recap Paradigms of Development	
Paradigms of Development	<p>Drawing from Ladakh and telling stories from own experiences made as an organization which only recently has shifted paradigm of interventions we re-emphasised the differences between deficit-based and asset-based approach to community development. The tool shows freedom and abundance which is felt when simply using available assets as a start for growth, how essential appreciative thinking and acting are, as well as the importance of unity among people when working toward a shared goal. Here, it was also highlighted that the needs-based thinking is still very predominant in the development field.</p>
Summary of topics discussed on day 1	<p>Lenses (paradigm), appreciating and using assets as foundation for growth, ladder of inference which shows the importance to ask questions for gaining the full picture of a situation (versus reacting out of one's comfort zone of the known and familiar), here also the story of the man in the dark cell as reminder in ladder of inference and as a reminder of different types of poverties (in this story: poverty of the mind)</p>
ABCD as a Process	
Electric Current	<p>As an icebreaker and as introduction to ABCD-“process”: Definition of “process” by using river-analogy: A healthy river (development process) has flow – flow of information, energy and creativity and is live giving. However, development processes can also flood (be too loaded, fast and demanding), or can stagnate and dry up and bring frustration and disillusionment. Highlighting that a good process is about maintaining a good flow and knowing when to speed up the work (as the process is stagnating) or when to slow down. This is not always easy in a development context which is pressurized and needs sometimes ‘quick’ deliverables.</p>
SEWA-Steps (steps of an ABCD process): Group work and feedback 	<p>SEWA (Self Employment Women’s Association/ India) – steps: The groups were given steps of an ABCD process and asked to arrange them in a logical order.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivating people 2. Asset Inventory and Mapping 3. Visioning and Planning 4. Mobilise Assets 5. Leverage

ABCD as a Practice: (Methods and tools of each SEWA/ ABCD step were explored in the following activities of day 2 and day 3)

- 1. **Motivating people:
Appreciative Inquiry – partner work:
sharing a success story**

Motivating others had already been touched on with appreciative inquiry on the first day and all the consciousness building exercises. Our participants were asked to share a success story with one another and to give reasons of what made this story a success. Appreciative inquiry in form of success stories form a good approach of unlocking ‘life giving’ forces in individuals as they motivate, ‘light’ minds and give positive inspiration and advice. People shared interesting and touching success stories about people in their home towns. We documented most of these stories.

- 2. **Asset Inventory and Mapping**
 - a. **Human Asset Inventory (solo time)**
 - b. **Social Asset Inventory: Family tree (group work)**



- c. **Mapping physical and natural assets (group work)**



- d. **Mapping Financial Assets: “The Leaky Bucket” (group work)**

The differences between an inventory (stock taking, a list) and mapping (makes visible relations, distances, and alternative routes) were brainstormed. Subsequently, the participants started working on reflecting their assets:

- a. The group were given solo time to reflect on own individual assets. After this exercise, they reported back how it felt to focus on own strengths

For all following exercises (asset inventories, visioning, planning and reflection) the participants worked in project groups (projects they have started recently) or formed groups according to their interests. People of most of the project groups came from the same area in the Eastern Cape.

- b. The family tree shows relationships with various individuals and/ or groups and other organisations.

- c. Mapping natural and physical assets of places where their projects are/ will be located (incl. roads, houses, clinics, dams, streams, trees, sport fields, woods etc.).

- d. The “Leaky Bucket” is a mapping tool for financial assets which helps with budgeting. The water-level in the bucket symbolizes liquidity. The groups reflected on the different organizational sources of inflows (e.g. fundraising, self-sustaining income generation). Then they looked at the ‘bucket-leaks’ which symbolize the expenditures. Here, they were encouraged to look at ways of ‘plugging the leaks’ – ways of saving in expenditures for example for increasing savings.

Day 3

Activity	Purpose
Visioning and Planning	
Trust-Walk (ice-breaker)	<p>The visioning and planning module was introduced by the ice-breaker called “Trust-walk”: In pairs, people were asked to take their partner for a walk outside but the partner should close their eyes (‘blind walk’). After a while, the roles were swapped and the leader was now the one who was ‘blind’ and being led. Subsequently, the group gave feedback how it felt to walk with and without a vision. The importance of visioning then was highlighted and the risks that come when we do not have a vision and depend on others to lead.</p>
Visioning and Planning    	<p>After defining “vision” (leading image, long-term) the group was given advice on how to create a shared vision and both teams were given time to develop their visions.</p> <p>Subsequently, we introduced the method of “Low hanging fruits”. It shows a tree with fruits where we start harvesting first the ‘low-hanging’ fruits because they are the easiest to reach. They are an allegory for objectives, which – in ways of planning – form the first milestones along the way to the vision. These objectives are easy to accomplish as they involve assets people already have. It was highlighted that when investing these it will be tangible to “harvest” first small successes and build leverage at the same time. Finally, the teams developed their ‘low hanging fruits’.</p>
Adaptions/ Variations/ Moving Forward	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan • Summary and discussion asset versus needs based approaches to Community Development • Creative Tension 	<p>After the groups had finished working on their ‘low hanging fruits’ we gave advice on how to draw action plans for each of their goals (with time frames, people who are responsible, assets available, partners etc.).</p> <p>In the context of being now aware of ‘what they have got’, what aspirations to follow and what would be the first easy-to-reach goals we had a brief discussion about what can influence their project processes. Here, we applied a situation from day two as an example to discuss how to keep focused and keep up ABCD spirit in a predominantly needs-based environment (see chapter reflections for more details).</p> <p>The ABCD workshop was concluded by acknowledging tensions which can arise when our visions and current reality are far apart and how important it is to hold the tension creatively (“Creative Tension”) whilst changing their situation bringing vision into reality. In this context, we did re-consider again the flow of an ABCD development process which is never straight and takes time</p>

Gallery Walk

The group work was concluded with the “Gallery Walk” whereby the two teams presented their asset-inventories, visions and “low-hanging” fruits.



Closure

Reflection and Evaluation

The asset-inventory work groups gathered for the last time in this workshop to reflect and give feedback regarding the following questions:

- Has anything shifted or changed for us since Monday? If yes, what?
- What are the three most important lessons learnt?
- How can we use what we have learnt?
- What are the next ('baby'-) steps?

Furthermore, each individual was handed-out an evaluation-form to assess the course-work (methods, content, and facilitation).

(Please find feedback summaries in the following section “Reflection”).

Celebration

To conclude the hard-work of all participants who attended the course regularly we handed over personal certificates.

Reflection

This course went very well, despite the high number of participants (we are used to work with maximum 25 people per training) and the shortage of time.

However, there was an incident in the morning of day two which we found very disturbing at first but then saw a great opportunity for discussing ‘reality’ of practicing ABCD in a predominantly needs-based environment: Just after we had done our recap of our activities and their main goods of messages from yesterday we finished the module ‘paradigm’ with looking at in what ways do asset and deficit-based approaches to community development differ from one another. Then, a young dedicated student researcher from the Rhodes Environmental Learning Research Centre appeared during tea break and appealed to everyone to take part in her research survey which is about bringing positive change to communities. The intention was, that the participants answer a questionnaire which was searching about the issues people respond to with their projects and what constraints do they encounter here (we checked the questionnaire). The young researcher informed the group that with the research results the Department will draw conclusions on what training ‘they’ would need. Subsequently, the research group will design a training plan and organize the training for them.

Phumeza and I were extremely shocked as we just had put lots of energy into our activities around paradigm shifting for this group. And 'now' this young researcher, who actually just meant well, would bring back focus on "deficits", "constraints" and problems and offers to bring back training which the Research Centre has concluded needs to happen for 'these' people. Interestingly, we just had resumed with the group that one of the main features of needs-based approaches is that external groups define 'what is improvement for communities' – whereas at an asset-based development level people define themselves the desirable change. Instead of intervening immediately, Phumeza suggested to keep working and 'eye-opening' with the group. We decided to bring this situation into a broader discussion on our last workshop day, right after we could equip everyone with everything of what ABCD is about and can be put into practice: So, as one of our last activities and in the context of being now aware of 'what one has got', what aspirations one follows and what would be the first easy to reach goals we had a brief discussion about what possible influence on project processes could arise. Further, we asked the group for their opinion about the research-survey and the possible outcome (training list and funds for it) – if they found it rather a needs- or asset-based approach to 'develop' their communities. And our participants all found it very needs-based! We discussed ways of how respond to circumstances like this in the future (e.g. appreciating external help, re-visit their asset-inventories, visions and plans to see if training makes 'sense', making decisions/ selective choices, involve externals in these and explain why certain training indeed would help and why other would not).

We found the final discussion very affirming and honest and wish the Umthathi trainees the very best in taking forward their projects successfully and in reaching their "low hanging fruits"!