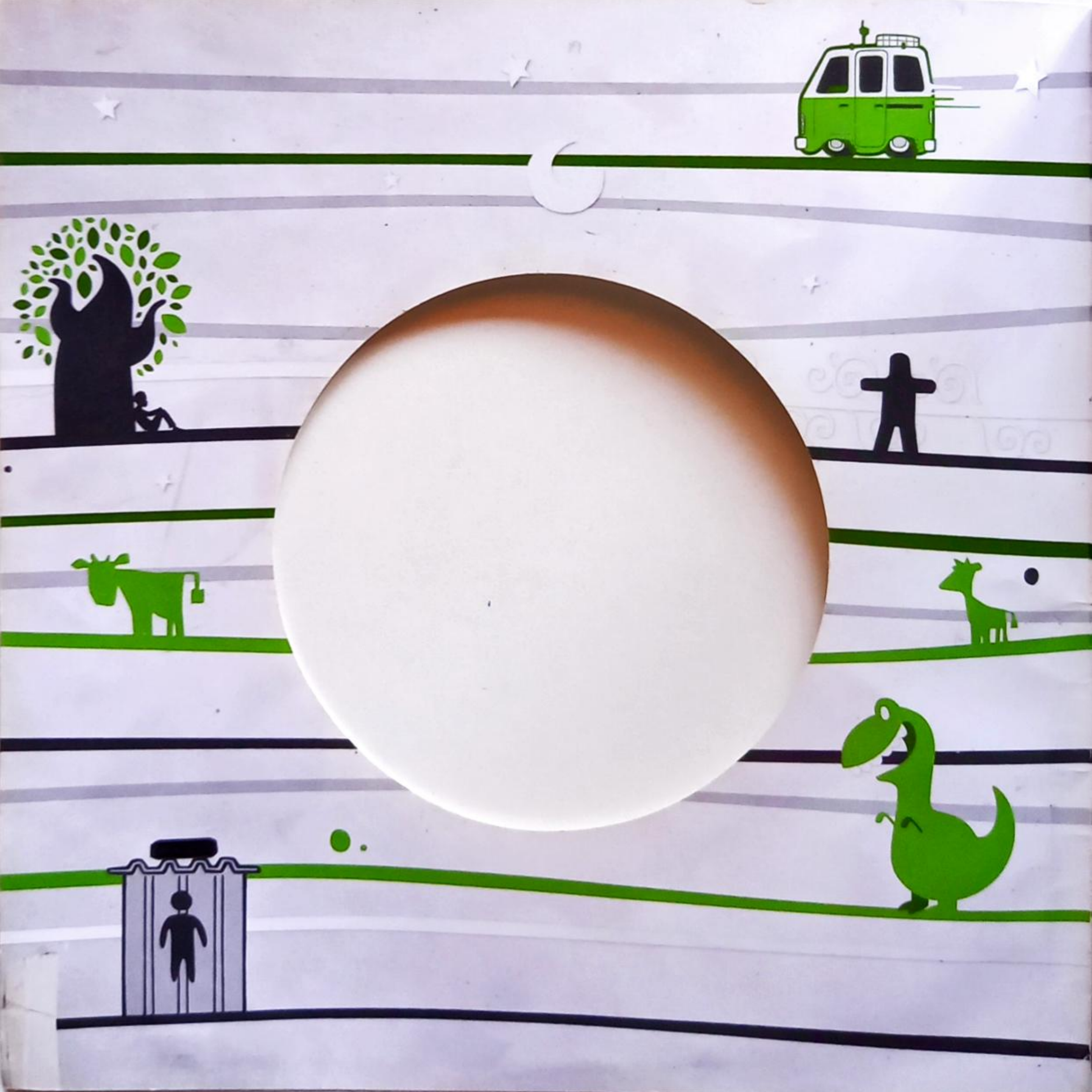
Stories of Change

A COMPILATION OF 11 SHORT STORIES



Stories of Change

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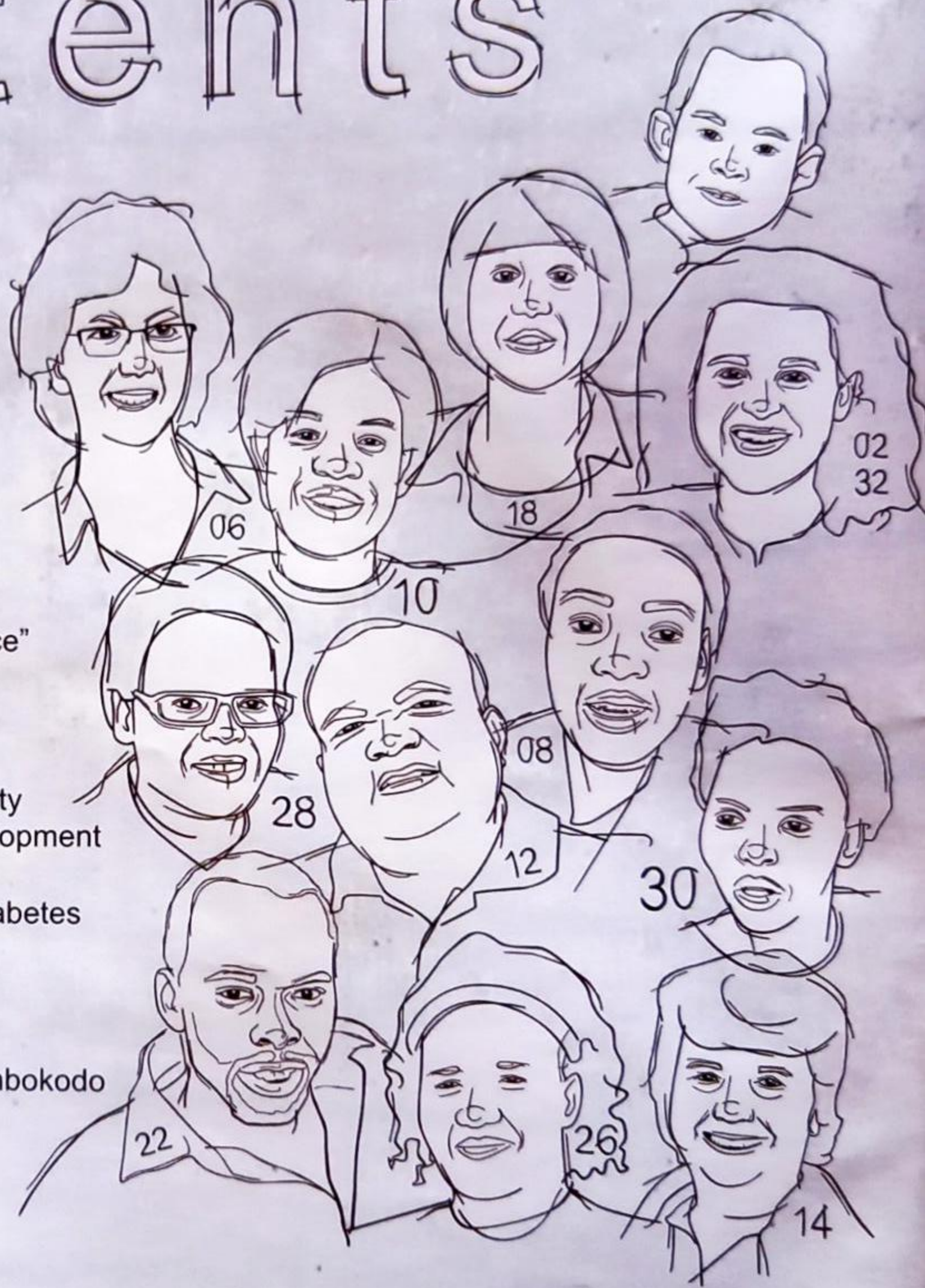


FOREWORD

What other way can you share or present the changes your work is bringing about except by expressing it through writing? Organisations are doing wonderful and inspiring work that brings about change from all different corners of our society. If you are not part of these daily changes and experiences, this work is not so visible and you can easily miss out.

Writing or putting out our stories or thoughts on paper is not always easy for some of us. This can be because of a lack in confidence; or for fear that we are not good enough or do not have enough words to tell our own stories through pen and paper. Actually, even when we try to write something, at times we find that our story does not really capture our audience; or our environment does not stimulate enough creativity to inspire us to write.

With all this happening, an idea emerged that was different from previous learnings at Oxfam Australia. A much deeper process was needed to assist some of our partners to clearly articulate impact as the result of their work. Participants were selected from six partner organisations that Oxfam Australia supports through the Joint Oxfam HIV and AIDS Program (JOHAP) and the Child Social Protection Program (CSPP). Participants varied in educational backgrounds; roles and responsibilities held from their individual organisations; context of where the operations were being implemented; experience in writing reports or any form of documentation; and English being first or second language.

It was agreed that it should be a process over a period of time with on-going support built in. This meant continuous engagement rather than a once-off activity. Writing is not easy, especially if you are not used to it, so by engaging people and building in ongoing support we hoped to ease the anxiety and build the commitment. Oxfam Australia accepted the process and supported it. As the process continued it confirmed that this was the right direction; that people have to start somewhere before one can say "now I can write that report" and share it with a broader audience.

When the process began, everyone felt self-doubt, anxiety, confusion, excitement, enthusiasm. We all wondered where we were going with this. But as participants went through the process something triggered. People became excited to want to write. Stories began to flow.

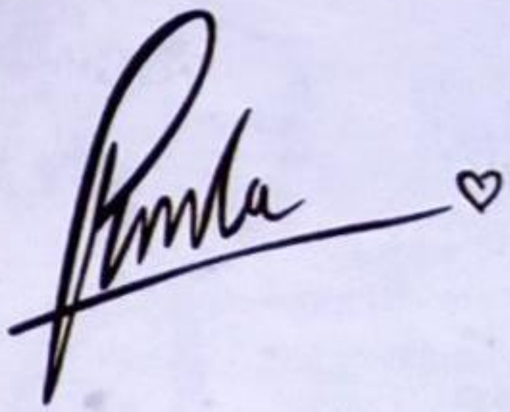
People started writing about what they experienced personally: a health condition they are living with, work experiences, what the process has revealed to them personally and professionally, sad stories and positive light stories. It was just amazing - the energy I experienced being in meetings face-to-face with the group, let alone reading their stories. I was filled with sad moments and feelings of happiness at the same time. Some stories were read with a smile, others with a tear.

Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to be part of your stories. I am deeply humbled and honoured that you opened up to the process and allowed it to take you wherever it would. I have enjoyed being part of the process and being party to reading your different writings. Thanks to Gladys Ryan who really made us all want to explore those hidden potentials and abilities within us. Her humility and encouragement in leading us made this easy and enjoyable.

I hope the process can take us further, as it is my long-term vision. We cannot stop now. This has allowed us to explore that actually, 'you can' write.

Continue the good work.

Written with Love



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Editorial

I like to start workshops with getting people to draw. While there may be some resistance, it's a good way to get people to lighten up, warm up and bring them to the same point. Drawing is a right brain activity and helps get people out of their linear way of thinking. One of the drawings which stuck out for me was Simon Rensburg's. His simply shows a person sitting under a tree – relaxing! He spoke about the importance of taking time out – to rest, contemplate… reflect.

In the workshop, too, Pumla spoke about the importance of reflection, particularly in organisations. Which is precisely what this work is about. If people do not spend time in reflection, it is difficult to write meaningful reports which are true to what is really happening in "the field". The journaling tool, if people get into the habit of using it, is a powerful way to do just this: reflect. More importantly it helps people remember their daily experiences and in time, messages begin to filter through – about what we are doing well, not so well, what we need to change, what is stonewalling us. Ultimately, we end up with meaningful information based on real experiences. This information must feed into the organisation – through meetings, discussion, planning and reports. Whether people are writing reports, taking photographs or using any other media, the journaling remains important. It provides the substance.

Why don't we simply teach people to write good reports?

This question raises another – what is a good report? Is it one with fancy writing? Many words? Lots of graphs and pictures? Of course these things can add value to a report, but they don't necessarily provide the substance. The substance is about the daily, lived experiences of the people doing the work. Those who are feeling, learning, being impacted on, teaching, sharing, worrying, enjoying. This particular approach does not focus simply on helping people write technically good reports because our intention, in this instance, is to allow the content, the substance, the 'me' in the reports to come out. It is important for people to start valuing – first - their voices, their experiences, their confusions, their wisdom, their learning. We hope that this will inform their organisations' experiences and ultimately lead to more meaningful reports and ways of reporting.

A word about Oxfam Australia's South Africa office

It has been my greatest privilege to work with this team of people. From the first bits of work I did for Colin to this work for this group, guided by the entire team's insight. When I was asked to do this, we agreed to a meeting to talk about why this approach (interrogative and reflective; not specifically technical report writing but rather the meat to those reports). The entire program team and I had a mini workshop to explore what it is we wanted. These were the major issues highlighted:

- There is a need for partners to see writing and planning and work as an integrated, flowing, creative process rather than a linear one
- There is a need for a different approach to writing
- There is a need to 'expand the depth of reporting'
- Organisations do not reflect the totality of their work – those elements that prove their impact – that give insight into the 'real' work
- There is a need for partners to be more reflective in their writing

What is important about this work and about working with Oxfam Australia's South Africa office is their commitment to exploring different ways of getting to the "truth" or finding things that work. They are committed to helping participants grow so that they can make a meaningful difference and they are interested in hearing the news behind the news, the experiences behind the words found in reports.

Which doesn't mean this process will not help people write their technical reports. It was accepted that the Communicating Simply process would be a creative rather than technical process; at the same time it is understood that these are not necessarily

separate processes or ways of working, but may complement each other. The process is essentially about bringing out the stories that add richness to the technical report writing - which focuses more on answering questions or talking to objectives. The Communicating Simply process may well impact on the technical aspects of the report writing, but this was not necessarily seen as the ultimate purpose.

The people in the process

It is a testimony to Pumla that this group works and 'fits' as well as it does. Her leadership and presence were acknowledged by one of the participants when reflecting on the process. For me, as facilitator of the process, and being the outsider, it is invaluable that I come into a group that is willing to learn and share. This was the case with this group. Despite the differences in age and education and the diverse experiences, people came with the intention of sharing and opening to new knowledge. I felt welcome and respected throughout. Participants supported each other and were willing to share their own knowledge in a non-threatening manner. They were engaged throughout.

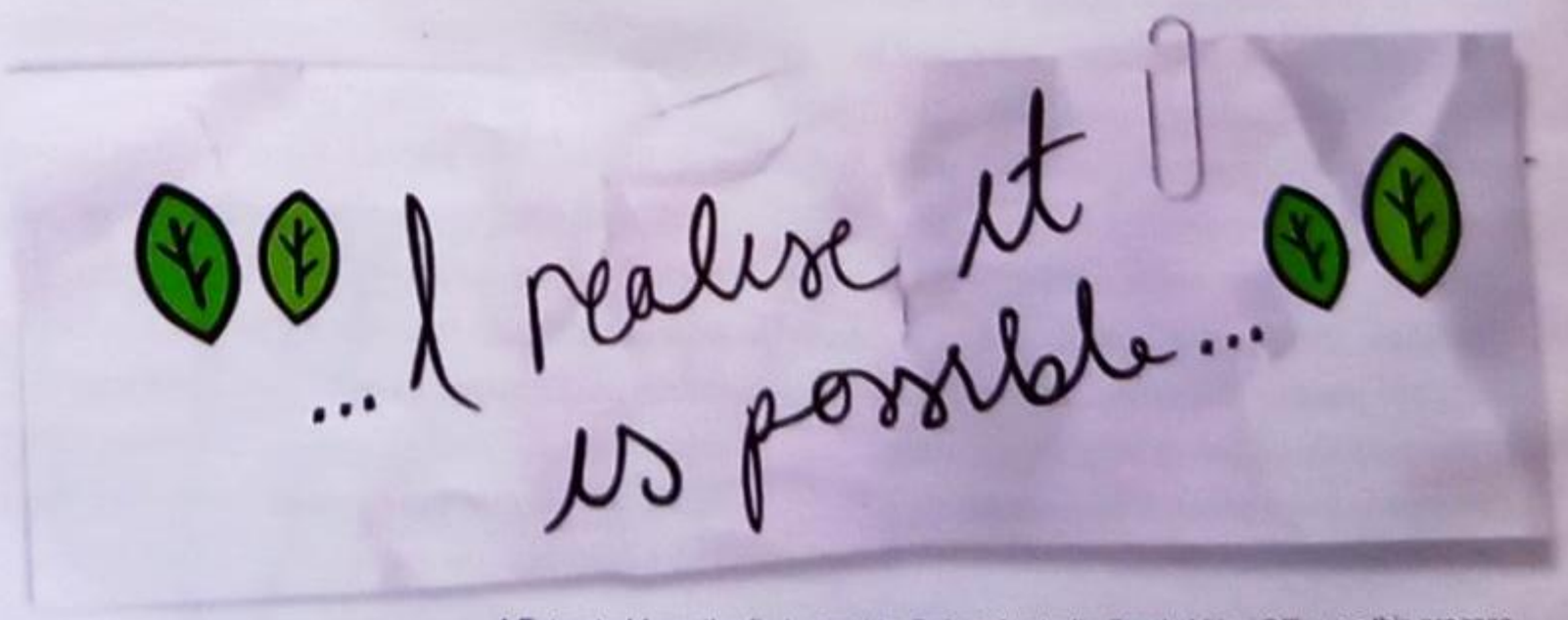
Our hopes

Perhaps the best way to describe what we hoped to achieve from this first phase is to say we wanted participants to see the link between their knowledge and what is finally written. It was about acknowledging that the personal is indeed political. If we can get participants to value the knowledge they bring into their work, this will go a long way to providing more richness and depth in reports (whatever form these may take). Coupled with this is helping them overcome their fear of writing or their belief that they cannot write or don't like to write. I am confident that if participants use their journals to free write and capture daily insights, they are well on their way to providing richer, deeper, more informative stories about their work.

This takes time; most people at first do not trust what comes out of their free writing. As an example, I will share an experience with Terry.

Terry brings her honesty and willingness to learn to the table. She found free writing very difficult and attributes this to her own upbringing with its very rigid rules. She says she finds it difficult to let go and believes she is not "creative" despite – as Sue pointed out to her – having built an organization that has responded to community needs with very creative solutions.

Terry shared that nothing of value was coming out of a free writing task, "me and my work". I probed her on what was coming out and she shared about the dilemmas of being a working mother and putting her work before her family. Earlier she had referred to herself as a mother to her colleagues. I pointed out to her how invaluable a reflection on this aspect of working life might be to other people within Oxfam, and partners.[1]



1 Extracted from the first report to Oxfam Australia South Africa Office on this process

So it is these kinds of barriers people need to overcome - of not trusting their inner wisdom - which free writing allows to come out.

This booklet has a range of voices. It is so important that their first experience using these tools involved allowing whatever came from them to do so without dictating the content.

Terry ended up with an article about toilets, called "loo with a view" which provides a light hearted look at crèches and their conditions. Incidentally, in the second workshop, Terry said the following.

"It's much to my surprise that I realise it is possible to unleash some creativity in me; when we started I said I can't do this, I was brought up not to feel and I have realised that it is possible."

Phuti works for a community radio station. Phuti wanted to share that there are opportunities out there for people and that there are different ways to access them. Phuti worked hard on creating a piece that is short but important to their work and to others.

Sylvia's piece surprised us all. Sylvia is not a fieldworker; she is a receptionist. Her piece showed us how, in organisations, all are affected by the suffering of others. Her story about the little boy shows so much about her gentle and loving nature.

Simon wrote about free writing, the tool for journaling. His article was beautifully written and he has challenged others to start a writing club! Yay for Simon, sitting under the tree.

Sue spoke from the heart, giving us all insight into some of the difficulties people face. It's a beautiful piece.

Caroll shares an insightful and useful piece on an important issue, what she calls "founder's syndrome." Her piece is a challenge to others who might have different or similar insights about organisational issues.

Another insightful piece is the one on participatory development written by Naison. His piece speaks about the importance of involving people in their own development.

Desire shares about her own condition – diabetes – and how it has impacted on her work. It gives us a chance to think about chronic illnesses beyond HIV.

Myriam has brought out her 'nurse's hat' and talks about the importance of CPR. She takes us carefully through the steps involved. It is a reminder of how important it is for all of us to know about this valuable, potentially life saving skill.

And finally, Velisiwa gives us a different perspective on the work CATCH is doing. She helps us acknowledge the spirit of ubuntu or the African philosophy that "people are people because of/with other people". Her story points to the power of women.

My deepest gratitude to all the participants – writers all – for your commitment, hard work and open-heartedness. And to Oxfam Australia's South Africa office for providing this space and for believing in the value of allowing people's voices to come out. Thanks to Pumla for her gentle and strong presence.

Gladys Ryan & Luke
Communicating Simply

Who would have thought that early childhood development (ECD) work would include building toilets? To be operating legally, crèches are required to register with the Department of Health and Social Development. Once registered, the crèches may receive a grant from the department that goes towards food for the children, salaries for practitioners, and operational costs. Preparing for registration poses various challenges. Lack of assistance from social workers is the first one, followed by satisfying the various criteria for registration. This is where Thušanang comes in - and our involvement with toilets.

Thušanang Trust aims to have all the crèches that we work with running sustainable, stimulating programmes for children in a safe and nurturing environment. The first part is taken care of by training practitioners and committees. The environment is another matter. The crèches are housed in a variety of structures - beautiful brick buildings; a room in a house; wooden plank-and-sacking shacks; corrugated-iron shacks and buildings used as crèches during the week and churches over week-ends. Likewise, the toilet facilities vary greatly.

What comes first, the classroom or the toilets? There are crèches with municipal-built brick toilets and classrooms where the children are squashed into a shack

with no windows. Other crèches have brick classrooms but toilets slipping into the pit. Others still, have no toilet facilities at all (the boys probably love this as they stand at the edge of the playground looking out at the veld). My favourite is the "loo with a view" which we promptly destroyed by building a wall around it and covering it with a roof.

THE TOILET FACILITES VARY GREATLY

I had no idea that there were so many different toilets. The new "eco" loos are great and everyone knows about flush toilets and "long drops" or pit latrines, but the different designs and sizes can be really interesting.

One of the criteria for registration is that there must be one toilet for every twenty children and one toilet for four adults. The toilets built by the municipalities are very smart. Proper (shop bought) toilet pedestals and seats, but all adult size! The door handles are at a height that can only be reached by an adult. This means that they either have to be adapted, with steps and a child-sized seat, or new children's toilets have to be built. Some have a room with "potties" in, which is acceptable, and others a room with a number of cement cones with holes in the middle. They can be quite charming, if not ideal for teaching children about health and hygiene and that some things are done in private! Toilet routines are a part of the daily programme in the crèches. All difficult to do without adequate facilities!

The style of toilets being built is often donor-driven or dictated by the funding available. Is it really important to have a wall between each toilet, a door for each stall? Maybe.

Sometimes the toilets are built upwards, as in the case where the ground was too hard and rocky to dig the pit any deeper. This one really is a "throne room". There are steps going up to the two large rooms with a single pedestal in each room. All attempts to break the rock by the simple method of lighting a fire on the rocks and then pouring water over it failed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Building toilets in rural areas can sometimes be quite a challenging process. Starting with getting the building materials to the site, to finding builders who can get there or can find somewhere on site to sleep. The community will sometimes help by digging the pit. They were really disheartened at one crèche where the pit they dug was so big that we did not have the materials to use it, and they had to start all over again. When members of the community assist with building projects it also helps them take ownership of the project and makes them more interested in what is happening at the crèche. On the other hand, it sometimes slows down a project if we have to wait for people to be available to help.

When the building is completed, another step is taken care of in our efforts to achieve our aims. And so, Thušanang is building loos, with a view to providing an environment for the children that is conducive to setting the foundation for lifelong learning.

TERRY MORGAN

After a potentially life-threatening disease, I decided to apportion my life. I realised that I was neglecting certain aspects of life so I decided to make sure that there was always equal amounts of time for family, work and ME.

BARTER
ING
PHUTI NYAKA
MOLETSI COMMUNITY RADIO

"THE DOORS OF LEARNING SHALL BE OPEN TO ALL"

The Freedom Charter

After fifteen years of democracy, we must ask ourselves, "are the doors of learning truly open?"

The way I see it, we can say they are. As we look back, if you come from a poor background, in the past it was difficult to further your studies. In fact, there were many things you could not do. Nowadays there are many opportunities for people to improve their lives. One of these is the public- private-partnership initiated by former President Thabo Mbeki, where businesses work together with other groupings to achieve their aims and objectives.

Bartering is aimed at helping people improve their situations. It is the process of exchanging services. This process is essential - especially for people to further their studies. You can not fold your arms and say "I don't have money to further my studies" while there are many institutions and the departments which can help you.

Our organization, Moletsi Community Radio, has been involved in bartering since 2000. We partner with training colleges to train our people and in turn Moletsi Community Radio will give them free airtime to advertise what they do. Up to now, through this method, we have managed to train 20 staff members in different fields such journalism, editing, administrating and bookkeeping.

Bartering is not limited to community organizations only; it is also used in Government. The doctors from Cuba, for example, work in our country while South African student doctors further their studies in Cuba. This is an example of how bartering works between governments.

In South Africa there are very many child-headed families. The departments of health and social development are involved in a bartering relationship with these children (who have completed grade 12) through which they (the orphans who head households) are trained to be auxiliary nurses and social workers with the agreement that they work for the departments and receive salaries to support their families.

The Department of Labour also uses learnerships as a way of bartering with graduates for the period of a year. Through the education they get from the universities they worked for the department and gain valuable experience.

Working together as a nation we can always achieve more. If we can use the idea initiated by our former President Thabo Mbeki, of public-private partnerships that go hand-in-hand with bartering, we will succeed.

PHUTI NYAKA

I spend most of my time going out in the field, talking with partners in order to achieve their objectives.

I have realised that for me to have good communication with the people I work with, I must praise God and ask him to work with me, to give me wisdom and shower me with motivated spirit. During my spare time I go to Church.

RESTORED NEGLECTED CHILD

SYLVIA MASHALE
PALABORA FOUNDATION

Our lives begin to end the day we are silent about things that matter. Poverty, unemployment and death continue to be the greatest challenges in our daily lives. More children are left orphaned and vulnerable. Our society has forgotten about a very powerful word - Ubuntu. If you have never felt the pain, joys and frustration of humanity you might not know the true meaning of this six letter word.

This word came to my mind the other day when I met this little 11-year old orphaned boy. He is HIV positive and on antiretroviral (ARV) therapy. Fostered by his grandmother, it is her responsibility to take care of, support and love him. On a monthly basis he comes to our clinic to collect his ARVs, each time accompanied by a different family member, making it difficult to monitor whether or not he is taking his treatment accurately. On one occasion he even defaulted because no one was willing to accompany him for the monthly collection. Losing parents at such a young age is extremely traumatic for any child and it can create deep abandonment wounds.

When I saw him, I felt my temperature rising, my heart beating so fast that I couldn't hold back my tears. Besides looking sick, he was withdrawn, passive, always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen. The accompanying aunt said she couldn't bath him nor assist in anyway because she was tired of his behaviour. The grandmother had failed to seek health care services on time for his illness (severe sores all over his body), leaving him to suffer. Why, I asked myself?

"OUR SOCIETY HAS FORGOTTEN ABOUT A VERY POWERFUL WORD -UBUNTU"

It dawned on me that his behaviour is caused by abuse. The aunt showed little concern, sees the child as entirely bad, worthless and burdensome. And surely a child having to live with sores all over is an abused child!

As a parent, who is also taking care of my late sister's daughter as my own, I felt sore and angry. I felt helpless for this poor child, not knowing how he was coping at home.

It is often difficult for children to talk to others about their feelings. Who does this boy turn to when he needs someone to listen?

Children have the right to be taken seriously, to quality medical care, to special care for special needs, to safe and comfortable homes – and to be loved unconditionally. The boy's rights have been violated. Continuous criticism, blame and shouting might be what caused him to soil himself while he was waiting for the medical practitioner. I had to rush home to get him clothes to wear while a colleague bathed him.

The medical practitioner and HIV Counselling and Testing Coordinator recommended that his matter be referred to the social worker, who could intervene so the poor child could receive relevant social assistance.

Some family members contribute to discriminating against people who are HIV positive. People who are living with HIV are not dying of the condition, but because of a lack of information and knowledge on HIV. Some people still stigmatise and discriminate against people living with HIV, forgetting that the condition is one of the chronic conditions that need self-discipline and management.

Intensive information, education and communication on child care, treatment support, guardianship and children's rights were given to the family during the social worker's monitoring visit. The family was informed that random follow-up visits would be conducted to monitor the progress.

Our children are tomorrow's generation. We need to give them what is rightfully theirs – love, health, education, care, support and protection. What we do to them positively or negatively will deeply affect them always. Our children's happiness comes from knowing that they belong and are deeply loved by important people in their lives. Emotional wellbeing is more important than managing children's behaviour and making sure they are doing the right things.

When children live in a place of emotional wellbeing, they flourish and shine brightly. They glow with beauty, joy and love from inside out. Happiness comes from inner love and respect. This is what counts!

SYLVIA MASHALE

I like spending quality time with children. They are precious and gifts from God. I am fulfilled when I see them happy and smiling. Their smiling is infectious.

Creating my own space for exercising and reading inspirational books restores my health and humanity - "ubuntu"

FREED BY WRIT

Are you one of those fortunate few tasked to write reports for your organization, club or business? Are you by now completely bored and frustrated as you ponder about the next report coming up soon? Well, I am not a writer, and by no means can lay claims to such a title, but I might have just stumbled upon a tool that could rid you of the frustrating part of your writing chores. This tool, called free writing or journaling, has the potential to assist in making writing easier and fun as well.

At the beginning of January this year, Oxfam Australia in South Africa, invited a group of partners to a writing workshop. The facilitator introduced us to a concept called free writing. In the world of writers it is not a new concept, but to us as novices, it was. We did not know what to expect, and were all anxious about the idea, which is natural to anyone charting unknown waters. During the three days of the course we all gradually moved from scepticism to amazement as we began to discover how this technique of free writing had the capacity not only to positively impact on our day to day writing, but also on our lives in general.

FREE WRITING - MY PERSPECTIVE

The easiest way to explain free writing is your mind racing with a topic, instructing your hand to write as free and fast as possible, without commas, full stops, or taking grammar into account. It is like quickly writing consciously what bubbles up from your subconscious mind. At first it seemed that free writing was the opposite of conventional writing, but I was pleasantly surprised to discover that it rather enhanced it. It is like going to the same place for years, using the same route, but all of a sudden discovering another interesting route to the same destination.

After the free writing exercise was complete, I would then read through it slowly, and on a separate page, or at the bottom or back of the page, jot down the key ideas. Time after time I was amazed at the narrowness, or wide ranging loop of ideas that surfaced in the free writing. I want to sound a word of advice to those willing to try: you must try, and try, and try again, for it involves commitment and discipline. The more you practice and give free reign to the bubbling up of thoughts and ideas, the more you become freer from within yourself. The reason for this, I discovered, was my conventional mindset, used to doing things in a certain way, trying to battle the unconventional, till I got breakthrough.

WHAT BENEFITS DID I DERIVE FROM FREE WRITING ?

The benefits were at two levels - personal and professional.

PERSONAL

To gauge the effectiveness of this new tool called free writing, I started to look at areas in my own life, like family, a specific child, my reaction to certain things, my tolerance level or personal view of things and why I think so specifically. I chose an area, and started to free write about it. In some areas my perception of things remained the same. Some areas made me sit up and get a new perspective of an issue, a relative or my own life. I also used the free writing tool to look at my political perspective, and I came away with a lot of food for thought. In a nutshell, I was tremendously challenged in some areas of my life, and had

to make some adjustments, to my way of thinking and how I see things. Some things though, bore out my perception and I will revisit those again at some time in the future. What the tool also did for me was to give me an avenue to vent my frustrations on myself or someone or something, without having a literal confrontation, but in a sort of roundabout way. If you ever want to give yourself a serious or tongue-in-cheek visit, regarding any area or issue in your personal life, try this tool: free writing.

WORK

On a work level I had a similar experience. I looked at certain areas, programmes, performances of certain individuals, and planning and projections for the next five years. The free writing tool was once more employed and I was totally amazed at the stuff that bubbled up from beneath the surface. I was able to propose adjustments in areas that I had looked at earlier and thought were okay. Some programmes underwent changes for the better, and in other areas people performed better because of the changes that came about. With the five year projection experiment I gave my mind free reign, and came up with the most elaborate as well as most horrendous of ideas. You see, free writing is not about serious stuff all the time; it can also bring out the comedy in situations that allows us to laugh at ourselves. This is exactly the reason why I like this tool so much.

In conclusion I could best describe the tool of free writing by relating it to the old style of looking for diamonds. Prospectors used to go into the ground or river mouths, bring out soil, put it on a sieve, and pour water onto the soil to separate the mud from the stony particles. After more sorting and more water they would be left with some potentially good stones that would warrant closer inspection by an expert to determine the eventual value. Why do I use this analogy? The answer is simple. In all the mud and soil that free writing may bring to the surface concerning myself, my work or any other area, I know in there somewhere is potential for a gem. I throw down the gauntlet and challenge the person who has read up to this point to try it; you might be pleasantly surprised as this tool allows you to unearth precious gems coming from within yourself. A word of caution though, it will take commitment, discipline and determination to unearth it. Are you willing to try?

SIMON RENSBURG

I was born in the beautiful, laid-back city of East London, in the Eastern Cape Province. I am happily married to my wife, Lorna, and have three wonderful children: two girls, Jocelyn and Tenille, and one son, Shannon. I am also blessed with three beautiful grandchildren – Jaydene, Jarryd and Jaydin.

Currently, I am one of a few directors at the Haven Wellness Centre, an organisation doing wonderful work within the disadvantaged community of Parkridge and surrounds, trying to uplift and develop. I am a born-again believer and would like to think that I love the Lord and my fellow man. I obtained a diploma in Theological Studies through Teamwork Bible College. My hobbies are reading, singing, walking and watching rugby and cricket.

PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam

Sewage regularly spilling into streets, rubbish strewn all over the place, the children in the rubbish skip searching for who knows what – something worth keeping, something to eat? Here, dead dogs are thrown. Newborn babies even. A child swallows pills discarded by a psychiatric patient, and nearly dies. The children float pieces of wood, their boats, in a pavement river of sewage-polluted water. A woman staggers out of her house, blood streaming down her head, chopped by a violent partner. The children stare. They don't run away in the horror of it all. They have seen too much. They have witnessed death, murder, rape and chaos. I have heard of a ten year old boy who took part in the murder of a man. Child rape is frequent and mostly unreported. When reported, convictions do not often follow.

Toddlers with bare bottoms teeter on the side of the streets while taxis weave and speed past. Babies placed in informal crèches lie in dark shacks with filthy floors where a woman in charge seeks to make a living looking after them. There is no room outside the shack to take the babies into the sun. There is no stimulation for them inside with their caretaker. Do babies think? Do babies feel? This is what they have to get used to. It is the best the crèche mother can do to make a living. It is the best the working mothers can do when they get a prized job and have to leave their children.

THEY DON'T RUN AWAY IN THE HORROR OF IT ALL

Grannies take children into the surrounding middle class suburbs to search the black rubbish bags put out. Food found is consumed by the children. The grannies are old and frail. I sat with ten grannies one day and each one had lost a daughter to AIDS. What a burden for an old woman! She has struggled all her life and now, towards the end of it, a new challenge – orphaned children who look to her for sustenance and survival.

Sometimes it seems that children are stunned by what they see and experience. A girl, 13 years, has experienced three deaths in her family in a year. She comes to Girls' Club the day her mother dies. And she comes the next day to another club. And the day after that she is one of the junior peer educators who is excited to go away to the forest in Stutterheim on a weekend camp. She smiles every day. Is she in shock? She pays no attention to our ministrations to comfort her. When will she crack? She comes back the next week, still smiling.

Children labour and that's not all bad. They sweep, fetch water, wash clothes, but often have the burdensome responsibility of caring for younger siblings - toddlers and babies. Four year old girls carry babies on their backs. Children are sent to buy alcohol for adults. A little boy, perhaps five years old, stands between two warring alcoholic parents. His arms are up in an attempt to keep them away from each other. This boy has a father. The majority of children have no contact with theirs.

THERE IS NO ROOM OUTSIDE THE SHACK TO TAKE THE BABIES INTO THE SUN

Marginalisation of a community, high unemployment and ensuing poverty lead to depression, teenage pregnancy, teenage suicide, HIV infection, alcoholism and violence. Here the children live and grow. Here the nursery for the future generation grows. Raped children grow with anger; and unhealthy beliefs which remain unresolved their entire lifetime.

The Minister of Social Development scores an "A" in the Mail & Guardian end of year report. He has done a good job – improved legislation, grants, investigations. All this seems to get lost on its way down to Mzamomhle. Too many layers of government structure and human resource challenges. Under-developed and poorly supported local councillors ensure an unhealthy, unchallenged status quo. Too few skills in a place like Mzamomhle. Too many people living in shacks only good enough for dogs. Bureaucracy, political in-fighting and a defunct community ward committee offers little hope of change.

The alienation of the community from the broader environment is unhealthy. Ward councillors stand guard over their territory. It is good that vulnerable people are protected from those who would exploit them. But the authority of the perceived powerful over the vulnerable in this informal settlement means that no one bucks the system. Residents are trapped. Ward councillors are overwhelmed, stressed and caught up in endless political speak and futile meetings.

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS THAT CHILDREN ARE STUNNED BY WHAT THEY SEE AND EXPERIENCE

And the children? Their forefathers and mothers endured and struggled against apartheid. Their ancestors were alienated by colonialists who conned men in to the mines and deprived children of paternal role models. The rights of black children have been eroded down the ages in our nation. Why are these rights so ignored?

Women who have pushed babies into the world and wondered what was to become of their offspring, know these rights. But they are too harassed, too vexed, too stigmatized by lack of education and poverty to put up a fight for them. Mothers who are willing and able could take up the cudgel on behalf of the willing, but not presently able, mothers. Mothers, like the ones who marched to Pretoria in the fifties, could take action. Now free of apartheid and poverty, they are able. But are they willing? Willing, until the fathers wake up and free themselves from that which traps them now? On behalf of the children of our nation. A nation of children who, following the tune of the pied piper, may be led away and lost forever.

REFLECTIONS ON MY WORK AFTER WATCHING "DEAD POETS SOCIETY"

Seize the day! Do I? Do I take hold of the day, clutch it, cling to it, squeeze it? Squeeze the life out of it - like a tube of toothpaste - to the last bit at the bottom. Do I wake up rejoicing at the possibilities of a new day, excited at discovering that underneath "my work" lies a reality of dreams, freedoms, new adventures?

The father of sociology famously said "Things are not what they seem…" My working world is more than workshops, support groups, clubs, food. And there is the challenge.

Underneath "my work" are riches; the richness of humanity - deep, detailed, complex and colourful. Worth seizing, worth holding on to. But what do I do with it? How do I seize a reality I can't see?

Conformity is comforting. It cradles me, shields me in my work as a development practitioner. There are traditions, conventions, nuances of language like a banner over my head in a sacred place which could blunt my thinking and cripple my creativity. Conformity whispers "don't stand on a table, don't rock the boat. You may miss out".

"THINGS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM…"

Dare to find new ground! Look at things in a new way. There's got to be more, I urge myself.

Who is in charge? Who controls? Who do they control? Why do they control? What does this control look like? How is it experienced? What gain is there to the controller? Do the controlled gain anything? What sacrifice has to be made? Who will make it? Who will sustain the change?

These are the questions I ask myself as I watch the movie and think about my work.

Captain, my captain! When you leave the room with the picture of the boys standing on their desks cheering you on your way, what will happen? Will your words still ring in the ears of those who listened to you:

"Live deep and suck out the marrow of life"

"Sail beyond the sunset"

"Constantly look at things in a different way"

"Dare to find new ground"

"There is something inside you of great value"

"Words and ideas can change the world"

"The power of play goes on and you may contribute a verse"

I ask myself further questions: Is there a sacredness in our work as NGOs? Do we enter that sacred space, as do the students in the movie, at our peril? Are we the custodians of a sacred knowledge that has the power to punish or absolve? Even labelling those we walk alongside "beneficiaries" gives us power. Because we are also the beneficiaries!

IS THERE A SACREDNESS IN OUR WORK AS NGOS?

Think about that Sue! It just might be that I have to rip a page or two from the book I study.

SUE DAVIES

As an ex social worker, now employed in the development field, I feel an exhilaration to be alive on this beautiful and terrible planet. For me, every day is a challenge and an adventure, a privileged opportunity to walk alongside the poor and brave people of Mzamomhle. I need to live another 50 years to accomplish all I would like to. This would mean that I need to live to 114 years.

PHOTO © Matthew Willman | Oxfam

Founder's Syndrome:

THE CHALLENGES. THE HARVEST ... THE END?

Carell Warmberg
THE HAVEN WELLNESS CENTRE

What can Founder's Syndrome mean to an organization? Could it be the beginning of an end? The means to an end? Or simply... The End? How does it affect the life of an organization – in this instance, our own organization that has become the nucleus of the community; this Haven that has brought light and life to an otherwise dark and dreary existence? How will current and future donors embrace our vision and goals? How do we subtly change the mindset of people to embrace change and accept that everybody has a gift to harvest and that their opinions and contributions are equally important? As a person who has been the casualty of this phenomenon, I would like to share my reflections on it.

This thing called Founder's Syndrome

Founders Syndrome refers to a situation where an organization has been operating primarily according to the personality of a prominent person within - the founder - rather than working towards its overall mission. The person usually goes on to become the first executive director of the new venture and takes a very strong role (often the leading role) in the initial organization and its activities, and in dealing with the board of directors. It is an organizational challenge and not a problem of the person in the prominent position.

I have been the casualty of this syndrome twice in my working career, where projects that seek to provide programmes that benefit communities were started by someone with a strong vision for providing a much needed service to the community. In both instances the founders had extreme difficulty handing over or sharing responsibilities with peers or managers, who had been specifically placed in strategic positions to provide this support. They could just not make this transition and as a result, services and programmes continued according to the personality of the founder, sometimes at the expense of other much needed interventions or programmes.

This does not always have a negative influence on the organization; we must admit that more often than not these founders are dynamic, driven, and decisive. They have a clear vision of what their organization can be. They know their stakeholders' needs and are passionate about meeting those needs.

Nobody wants to see the organization fail in its efforts to bring about change that is so important to the communities that we serve, and therefore, we go along with the ideas or bring about slow and subtle changes that will not jeopardize the programme or the organization, and cleverly manage our way through it and ensure a "win-win" situation. The organization however, experiences many of the same challenges over and over again. For example, the staff turnover is very high; no clear decisions can be made and taken by managers if these don't fit in with the ideas of the founder; staff members do not feel valued; and the organization struggles from one crisis to another. This, I am sure, is not and has never been the intention of the founder, who will never in a million years set out to damage the organization. It is as if the person cannot see the impact of his or her actions and instead, becomes defensive or anxious and often resorts to blaming others when negative things happen. In the meantime, the project evolves into a little giant as the needs become more and different, and somewhat more complicated from both the recipient and the donor. This has far reaching implications for the organization, its clients and sponsors.

A typical example would be the development of a proposal, sourcing and securing funds, and in midstream, the founder feels there are different needs that should be addressed instead and decides, unilaterally, that the programme will be changed, without considering the consequences of this action.

Another example: I have found that founders are often highly sceptical about planning, policies, and procedures and just want to get the work done. They tend to make reactive, crisis-driven decisions with little input from others, and react to most problems with the comment "if only I had more money", or by depending on whomever seems most

loyal. They find it very difficult to let go of the strategies that worked to quickly grow the organization, despite evidence that the organization can no longer absorb this rapid growth without major changes.

The reality is, though, that in order to continue to meet the needs of our clients, the organization must evolve through a particular life-cycle change, and this cannot be achieved without first establishing a stable administrative infrastructure. Developing this infrastructure often requires a change in the nature of the founder's leadership from that of a highly reactive, individualistic style to a more proactive, consensus-oriented style.

At the Haven, our experiences led us to the following conclusions and advice we would like to share.

Change From Within

It is hoped that eventually founders will realize that they must change the way they operate. One way of addressing this challenge is for them to attend capacity building programmes around leadership, where they can develop their leadership styles and grow. The important thing is to acknowledge that they must change from within and for the rest, must be supported by peers. Once they have acknowledged their shortcomings and need for change, they will be able to appreciate plans, input and support from their peers and staff and realize that ultimately, this will make the organization more responsive to the needs of the clients and donors; make proactive decisions based on capacity, funding available, and the mission of the organization; value staff and members of management for their individual expertise and feedback; and sustain strong credibility amongst clients and donors. Most importantly, they need to be able to ask for and accept help, and take time to reflect and learn, and be patient with themselves and others.

Shared Strategy & Planning

The development of a shared vision and mission and a participatory strategic planning process will go a long way to eliminating this dreaded "founders syndrome" and providing a valued service to self and others. It is very important to conduct an annual evaluation as part of the strategic planning process to measure performance and discuss succession planning, cash flow situations, etc.

Don't be Part of The Problem!

To others within the organization: don't take on the traits of the crisis-driven founder and staff, or worse yet, just "numb out." Meet consistently and make decisions based on mission, planning, and affordability - not on urgency. Support the founder with ongoing coaching until s/he feels safe and understands the reason for change, and is able to accept assistance along the way.

It is equally important that an impartial board should be strongly involved in the strategic planning processes, financial management and evaluation to ensure that the organization becomes and remains viable and proactive. Trust becomes a great factor in this transition, as is the ability to delegate to staff members while helping them understand the purpose of tasks, and getting their input.

It is not about Me

Harsh, but true. It's hard sometimes to acknowledge that regardless of how much we put into nurturing the organization we founded, in the long run, none of that really matters. It's not about our emotional needs - regardless of what those are. It's not about what we've sacrificed to make it all work, or the recognition/gratitude we think we should get. It's about the community, which is why we created this gift in the first place. If we have not prepared the organization to survive and thrive without our presence - and we therefore cannot even think of leaving as the organization would crumble without us - then we have somehow made it about us,

rather than about the community. A sound transition plan, mutually developed with board and staff, will ensure the organization is sustained. Hopefully, the founder stays too and goes on to see the organization become a stable and well-respected organization - an organization with a resilient and far-sighted leader who embraces change and, most importantly, knows how to manage it.

It may be the founder's greatest gift to convert a dream to reality by inspiring others with the ability to keep the dream real and help them achieve their own dreams too! It's not about me!

Once you have birthed it. It is no longer your baby

Just as it is with our own children, once they are born, they are their own person. We can guide our children, teach them, nurture them - but our son or daughter is a person in his/her own right. As is "our" organization. It's not ours. It is its own thing. We don't own it. The world doesn't owe us anything for having founded the organization. We gave up our lives to create the organization we founded. We went without sleep, sweated blood, and in our case, even went into debt. But the sad truth is that nobody owes us anything for doing that. We did it because we cared.

Once you give a gift, it's no longer yours We have created this amazing gift for our community. Now that it is used and depended upon by others - now that we have given this gift to the community, it is no longer ours. It belongs to the community. That's the definition of our gift.

As a founder, you owe the community your organization serves the obligation to ensure that the child you gave birth to is capable of living on its own and benefiting the world into eternity. Just as we have the obligation in real life to make plans for the future of our children in the event something happens to us, we owe the community the pledge that we will do the same for the gift we have given them.

Carroll Warmberg

My love for reading has somehow shaped who I have become. This has awakened within me an appetite for travel, seeing how the other side of the world lives, and then applying these experiences in the work that I do. Playing golf and accompanying my husband on his travels of golf, continue to influence my character and disposition. Running for fun gives me that alone time to ponder and dream and plan for both personal and work life.

THE DYNAMICS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

NAISON NDZINAVATONGA
THUSANANG TRUST

The concept of community participation in development gained prominence in development discourse in the seventies and since then the subject has grown dramatically. What was initially a radical critique of development has quickly become a staple for development practice. The incorporation of locals in development projects has become common practice.

This concept came out of the realization that the top-down approach to development had serious consequences for project sustainability. This top-down approach was heavily influenced by models of dependency, and interventions based on rescue solutions in times of crisis and emergency.

MOST NGOS CONSIDER THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE POOR AS THEIR MAIN GOAL

Development efforts were often prescriptive and dictated to people what the organizations thought the people's problems were and how to solve them. Community participation has now been adopted by many organizations and is viewed as a panacea for the sustainability of community projects. Thusanang Trust has been using this approach in its development projects with the people in the Mopani and Capricorn districts in the Limpopo province of South Africa.

There is widespread recognition in rural development that NGOs play a significant role in helping the rural poor to break out of their condition of poverty through sustainable projects. NGOs have become important agents promoting beneficiary participation in the development process. Referring to the Mopani District in the Limpopo Province of South Africa, one villager remarked that,

"NGOs like Thusanang Association and Trust have been valuing our input as a community during both development planning and management phases." Such comments are indicative of the importance of community participation in sustainable development.

In rural development initiatives the world over, particularly in developing societies, most NGOs consider the empowerment of the poor as their major goal and objective. In fact, empowerment has become so common in development jargon to levels that almost anyone in the development arena views it as a pre-requisite for achieving sustainable development. Thusanang, for example, views empowerment as a process that enables people, particularly the poor, to confront and deal with the factors that cause their suffering. The organisation deems active participation by the poor in their development process an essential pre-condition to empowerment. Important to note here is that this participation is not only in the implementation stage of projects but also in the conceptualization, design, monitoring and evaluation stages.

NGOS SIMPLY SUPPLY THE EXPERTISE, STARTING CAPITAL AND EQUIPMENT, WHILE THE PEOPLE PROVIDE THE LABOUR

Many NGOs have argued that they have developed highly effective participatory processes to increase participation of the poor in their own development and in analyzing and acting upon their situations through their own eyes and not as defined by outside agencies. NGOs simply supply the expertise and starting capital and equipment, while the people provide the labour. Thusanang sees its role as facilitative and has left implementation to the beneficiaries, who know best what they need and ultimately how to plan and manage. NGOs need not direct or tell the people what to do but rather listen to what the people want and then help them achieve their goals and aspirations.

What is important to note in this participatory development matrix is that it is multi-dimensional. It takes on board the state, NGOs and the community. Thusanang recognizes that there is a symbiotic relationship amongst these stakeholders but the gist of the participatory development model is the people (beneficiaries) themselves. The organization accepts that these very same communities are the reason for being of both the state and the NGOs. It would be naïve to argue that state involvement in social development is superfluous and that local communities in developing societies can solve the serious problems of poverty and deprivation wholly on their own efforts. It is equally naïve to assume that a cosy relationship exists amongst these stakeholders and that political elites, professionals, and administrators can readily agree to the devolution of their authority to ordinary people. With regards to the state, it is one of the fundamental stakeholders in the community participation matrix for sustainable rural development. Thusanang Trust thrives to be as inclusive as possible and views The State as a critical partner in development. It values the input

of The State in programme implementation, despite differences of opinion, sometimes, on the way forward. However, in as much as The State has a crucial role to play, Thusanang strongly maintains its sovereignty as an independent entity and its programmes are neither state nor stakeholder run.

★ THE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE IN DEVELOPMENT IS STIFLED ★

Partnerships between the state and the NGOs in rural development sometimes lead to misunderstandings around programme implementation, with the NGOs feeling the state may be sitting on development programmes while state employees feel NGOs are demeaning them by taking over their activities. Consequently the participation of people in development is stifled.

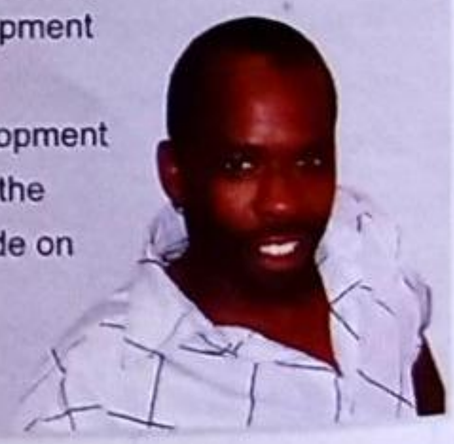
However, where NGOs are on their own, they may encounter problems in mobilizing people to participate in development initiatives. This is particularly true when the project is not initiated by the people themselves. Spontaneous mobilization of the people can only happen when they (people) themselves initiated the idea. However, this is difficult given that many projects are donor-driven. This is because an already designed project is usually the prerequisite for funding.

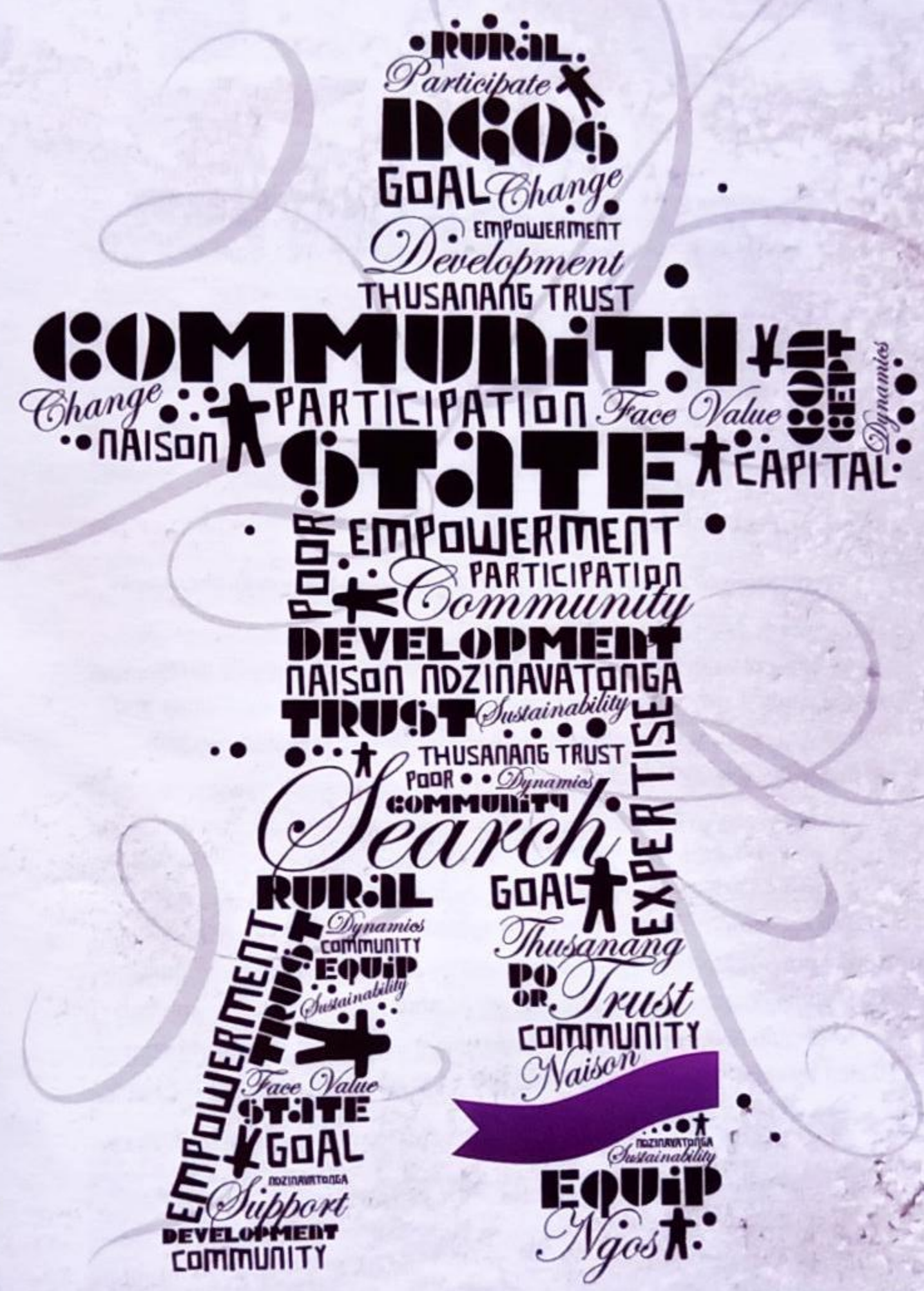
What it therefore means is that organizations always design programmes first for them to get funding and then implement these programmes with communities. The donor would in turn expect a report on the expenditure of the finances per agreed activity, a scenario that makes it difficult for organizations to be flexible. This situation does not allow organizations to accord the communities an opportunity to spontaneously mobilize themselves for a community cause. This precondition to access funding from donors has been a stumbling block to people participation.

Above all, the concept of community participation is not an easy philosophy and development stakeholders have been taking it at face value. It is underscored by such simplicity that one can easily be tempted away from a deeper search of what it really stands for.

NAISON NDZINAVATONGA

I have extensive expertise in development issues. I worked with various organisations that deal with community development. Currently, I am a community development coordinator at Thusanang. I hold a masters of social science in development, which I obtained at Fort Hare University, where I studied about community participation and project sustainability. I believe in sustainable development in communities. Sustainable development comes only when the communities decide on their destiny.

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LIVING & WORKING WITH DIABETES

DESIRE NOKELE

Department of Social Responsibility of the Arch-diocese of Grahamstown

Living and working with diabetes has affected many aspects in my life, such as my lifestyle, diet and relationships with family, friends and colleagues. It is a condition that I have learned to love and live with regardless of the threat of death.

A few years ago, constant fatigue, stomach pains and irregular visits to the toilet forced me to eventually go to my local clinic and see a doctor. After running a variety of tests, he explained my condition. Although I did not understand the terminology at the time, he assured me that a lifestyle change and healthy diet would improve my condition and that having diabetes did not mean that I was going to die any time soon. I felt relieved, but not too satisfied as I have had encounters with people who told me that the "sugar disease" is a silent killer.

Irregular eating habits coupled with high levels of stress could be said to have influenced my condition, getting it to this serious point.

As a single mother of three young boys I feared if my condition would deteriorate, who would look after them. I told myself that I would follow the instructions that the doctor gave me, not only to stay healthy for

myself, but for my friends and family too. This meant that I had to let go of my old habits and adjust to my new lifestyle: a life that includes regular visits to a heath practitioner, eating right and taking my prescribed medication on a daily basis. It includes injecting insulin in my blood to give me energy and to regulate my blood sugar level.

A few years after my diagnosis, two siblings of mine died as a result of the same condition and now I was well aware that we had a family history of diabetes. This led me to influence my children and people around me to follow my lifestyle of eating healthy food and to let go of certain habits that could possibly result in diabetes. I am now knowledgeable about diabetic disorders and happy to disclose the condition to any individual as it could have an impact on their lives.

I am fortunate to be employed by an organisation that is involved in bringing about awareness about life-threatening diseases and building networks of support to disadvantaged communities. My employer realizes and knows when I need to go for checkups and when I get ill as a result of the condition. I am being supported by my colleagues all the time and get stronger everyday.

Life-threatening diseases do not control who we are but allow us to look at life from a different perspective; they allow us to improve our lifestyles for the better and to maintain good health. Living positive has also influenced others to follow my example.

DESIRE NOKELE

At first I wanted to become a nurse, but that dream didn't come true. However now, by God's grace, I am working with people that make me happy. I am a happy person and I love to care for and support people. In my spare time I take myself out and window shop and spoil myself. Joy allows me to enjoy my moments and to live a healthy lifestyle.

Knowing About CPR

Myriam Shai
Palabora Foundation

People believe that CPR is the responsibility of health care professionals. We see this at accident scenes, where people may be losing their lives in front of other people who are just standing, watching and waiting for the paramedic's arrival. The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA is encouraging every citizen to learn how to offer CPR. A basic knowledge of CPR can mean the difference between life and death.

What is CPR?

C: Cardio means "of the heart"
P: Pulmonary means "of the lungs"; and
R: Resuscitation is a medical word that means "to revive"- or bring back to life.
Sometimes CPR can help a person who has stopped breathing, and whose heart may have stopped beating, to stay alive.

People who handle emergencies – such as police officers, firefighters, paramedics, doctors, and nurses – are trained to do CPR. Many other people – like lifeguards, teachers, childcare workers, and even parents - know how to do CPR, too.

A person giving CPR – called a rescuer - will give it to someone who is not breathing on his or her own. This is called artificial respiration, mouth-to-mouth rescue breathing, or mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. CPR is an emergency procedure performed on someone who has stopped breathing or whose heart has stopped beating. It is better to offer CPR imperfectly than not at all, and learning how to do it is easy.

A heart attack may result from any number of factors, such as heart conditions, lung problems or accidents. There is no telling where a problem could occur, and CPR can be performed anywhere.

The ABC of CPR

The ABC is a reminder to the rescuer of the steps to be followed:

a: Airway

Look for any danger nearby, for example objects or reptiles. Stay calm and call for help from passersby, and secondary assistance telephonically from paramedics. Assess if the person is breathing by listening and feeling for air entry in ten seconds, and if not, open the airway (position the casualty for breathing by tilting the neck backwards with the chin up).

Myriam Shai

I like to serve needy people in a way that will bring joy to them and in me. I also like to pay support visits to all unwell people and enjoy meeting new people and seeing new places. I like singing in our church, organising women and youth for health information and church fundraising.

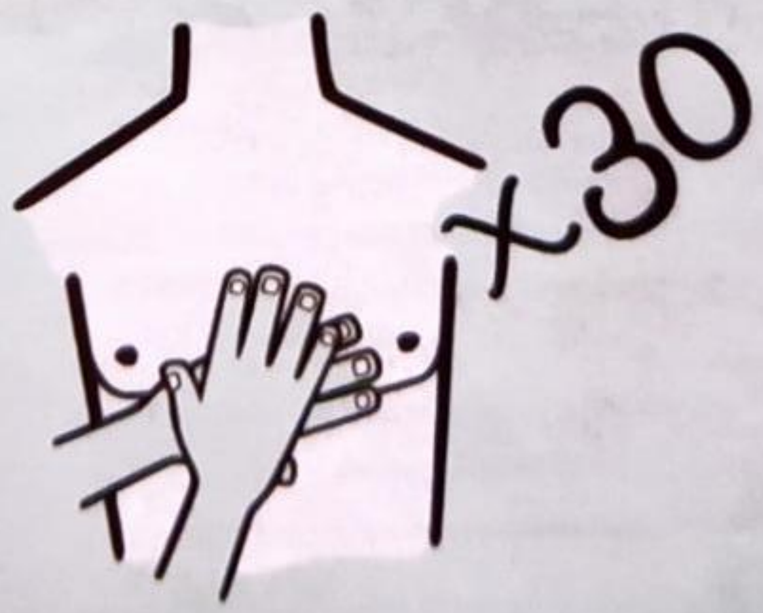
b: Breath

Two blows of strong breath; feel for the pulse from the carotid artery (neck artery below the ears); if there is no pulse, go to the next step.

c: Cardiac Massage

Put your hands palm down, one on top of the other, on mid-chest, between breast nipples; Give 30 chest compressions alternating with two blows of breath in-between.

If there is assistance, a cycle of 30 compressions and two blows could be continued until professional rescuers take over or breathing returns.



Successful CPR

The person may show these signs: coughing, body movement or normal breathing. Stay at the person's side until paramedics arrive, comforting and allaying fears. Be ready to start CPR again, if it becomes necessary.

For cardiac arrest, every minute counts because once the heart stops, the brain will be permanently damaged if the blood supply is not restored within three to five minutes. Correctly performed CPR may re-start normal heart action and circulation.

Community members need employees and childminders to be well informed on how to give CPR, about medical emergencies, and telephone number for emergency services **(10177)** in order to save lives.

Wathint Abafazi Wathint Imbokodo

Veliswa Fumba CATCH Projects

Masiphathisane Action Forum is a group made up of youth peer educators, HIV support group members, disabled and grannies. Initiated by CATCH projects, the group meets once or twice a month, identifying challenges and planning possible actions.

We are all women and we meet at night at the CATCH offices. CATCH provides us with a nice meal and transport. The things that we do are the things that will benefit our community.

We trained members of the group around HIV and AIDS to educate others in their own homes. We have also had cleaning campaigns whereby we collect all the rubbish. We asked our community newspaper, GO, to publicize this, which they did, and the community saw what we were doing and joined in.

Ever since then, the community has got their own cleaning group who collects rubbish fortnightly. (The municipality, who is responsible for this, sometimes doesn't collect the rubbish).

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

THE FIRE

Recently, we had a big, bad fire in our community. It burnt down 42 shacks and killed two people! The people whose shacks burnt down lost everything!

We decided that we would all collect some things to help those people. We collected clothing, blankets, kitchen goods, furniture, appliances such as kettles and irons, crockery and cutlery. People donated from their own homes and gave generously.

One Saturday afternoon we met up and went together to visit these homes and pass on the goods.

The people had heard about our visit and were waiting for us. When we arrived they started singing: *U Catch akalelanga uguqe ngamadolo*, which means "Catch is not asleep; they are just on their knee." What they meant was that CATCH was not sitting back but doing something about our community. People came towards us, surrounding us and joining the CATCH group. It was very moving.

As they were singing, people came out of their houses, following the crowd and joining in the singing!

We introduced ourselves, telling people about what we do and why we exist. The people who had lost their houses were very

excited and the welcome they gave us was very warm. One of the CATCH members gave a short speech.

THESE WOMEN ARE NOT AFRAID

In closure, someone from the fire victims stood up and gave a word of gratitude to all those who had contributed. They said they were happy that there were people doing such wonderful things in the community.

We all went home and everyone was happy that they had done something good.

These women are not afraid. They are prepared to do hard things because they have the heart for Mzamomhle. They are brave women and that's why we say, "Wathint' abafazi, wathint' imbokodo"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Wathinta bafazi, wathintha imbokodo:

(This phrase was used in "the struggle" against apartheid and loosely translates to "You have struck a woman; you have struck a rock")

Veliswa Fumba

I love spending my special time with my son, Lutho, even if it's going to the zoo together, shopping, watching the movies or going to church.

I want to give him the life I didn't have – a good, stable home, good education.... I want him to trust me and know that I support him in the things he does, like sports, drama or singing at school. In everything I do, my son comes first.

Veliswa is employed by CATCH but is also a member of the community where this forum is located. She says she is the "driver of the bus", with the intention of letting go sometime and allowing community members to "drive the bus".

Photo © Mbulelo Willian Oxtail

Conclusion

Where do we go from here? There are many possibilities. Most important, though, is to give this particular process and this group a chance to use the tools they have learnt and the momentum and courage to continue writing, and more time to build on what has been done.

An important question is how do we measure the outcomes of this process? How do we know we have achieved something worthwhile? This booklet is a clear testimony to that: this team has taken up the challenge to simply write. They have also written articles that are personal, challenging, light-hearted and thought-provoking. And they have done this with commitment and bravery! This in itself is a major achievement.

For the long-term, though, there is more this process can yield. A readiness and confidence to write about issues of interest to others and of importance to organisations – the challenges, the successes, the things that baffle, the learning, the growing, the vulnerabilities, the things that others can learn from; and ultimately a difference in the depth of reporting – in whatever form this takes.

We want to know that people will continue to use these tools in their personal and work spaces. We want to see that they acknowledge and honour their experiences more, and that this can be seen in what they contribute to their organisations and communities.

We need to keep the momentum going and provide the space for this to continue. This process could have far-reaching results for the participants and for other partners of Oxfam Australia.

A salute to the writers and Oxfam Australia's South Africa Office. Aluta Continua!

Gladys Ryan

Facilitator and Editor

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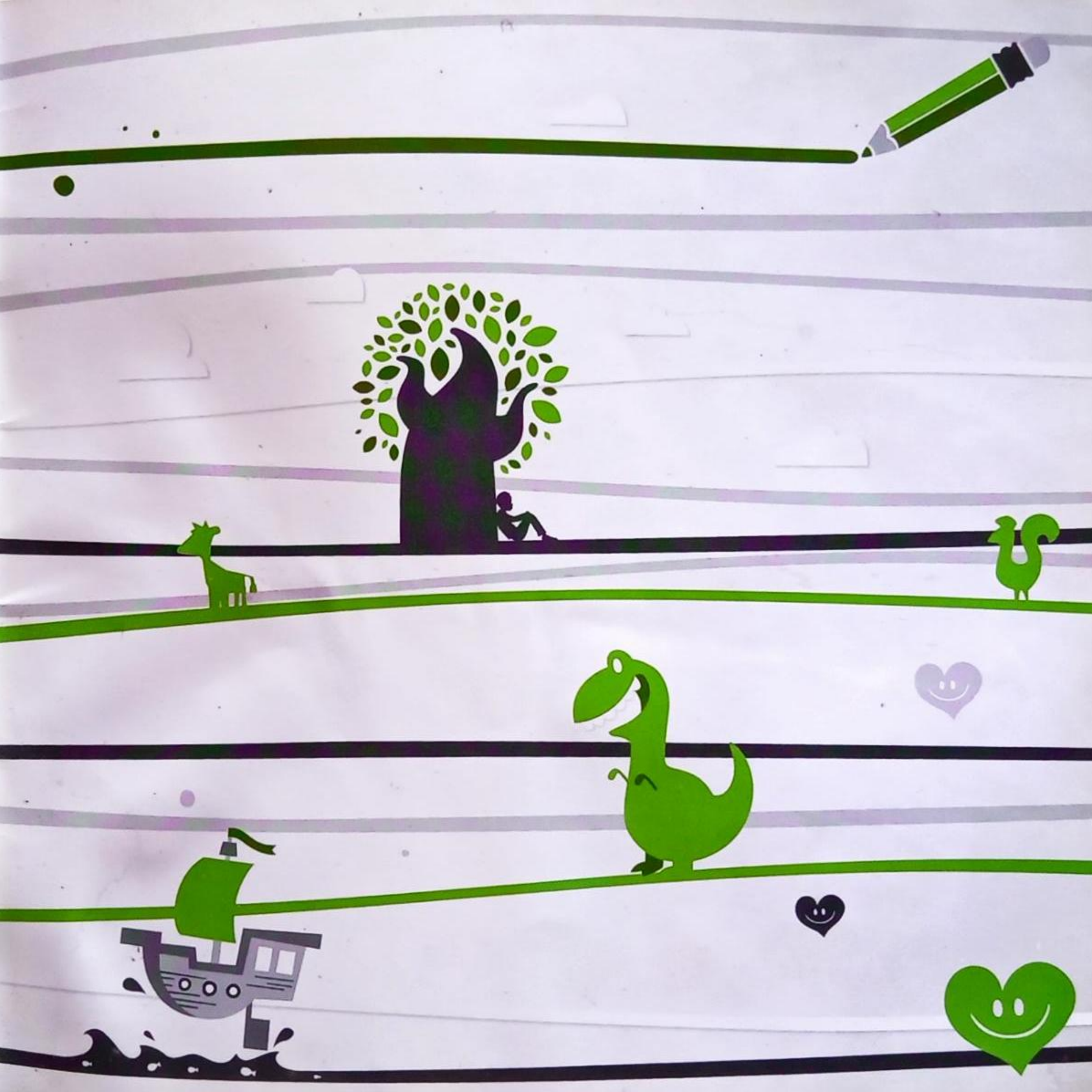

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