

# COOKING UP COMMUNITY

by  
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and  
**NIC FINE**



A Change Moves publication

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*“Forge simple words  
That even children can understand  
Words which will enter every house  
Like the wind  
And fall like red hot embers  
On our people’s souls  
For in our land bullets  
Are beginning to flower”*

Jorge Rebello Angolan poet

## FOREWORD

Is it possible for communities to develop and strengthen themselves? Is it possible for people to move themselves from being victims of their circumstances, to powerful human beings that can deal with the many challenges they face? Can we as South Africans deal effectively with the challenges of crime, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, poverty and social disintegration?

My answer to all of these questions is: “Yes!” I can remember as a teenager, my father would say to me, “My child, I do not think that I will see liberation in my life time, but maybe you will see it in yours”. My father is now seventy five years old.

He has seen the liberation he thought would not be possible. This only came about through the mobilization of civil society, through the hope and belief of ordinary South Africans that it was possible to achieve the dream of a democratic government.

Today we have one of the best constitutions in the world. In order to build and strengthen our new democracy, there is once again a need to mobilise citizens, to work with government in building a society based on the wonderful principles laid down in our constitution. We are all responsible to make a contribution to strengthening our new democracy.

One of the methods of empowering civil society is through the community development approach. An important principle in community development is to work with people and not for people. The aim must be to truly empower people to find solutions to the problems they are confronted with. We can only achieve sustainable development through empowering people.

Another key principle is the development of partnerships. This allows for a multi-dimensional approach to the problems faced by communities. Partnerships add value to community development, by encouraging the sharing of skills and resources.

In order to bring about change in any community, one cannot work with one individual or one part of a system. The community development approach focuses on the whole system. Thus the problems faced by the youth in a community cannot be resolved by working only with the youth. The entire community has to be mobilized to work with the youth in order to bring about transformation.

The authors of this book explore these principles of community development in detail. They share their experiences in developing creative solutions in partnership with communities and other stakeholders. Welcome to *Cooking up Community*.

Soraya Solomon  
Executive Director, Nicro - National Office

**T**he majority of our communities still suffer from the neglect and marginalisation caused by the apartheid system. Since the dawn of democracy in 1994 many positive developments have taken place to eradicate the massive socio-economic backlog. Our new government has initiated a range of projects to empower youth, women, children, and the community at large.

Those of us who mistakenly thought that a new dispensation would have the capacity to address all our needs, have been rudely awakened. With our freedom has come a huge responsibility. A range of non-governmental organisations realised that they should use the space created by democracy, to form a partnership with local government and communities to tackle the mounting problems we are experiencing.

Change Moves is such an organisation. It has done sterling work in building the capacity of adult and youth leadership in our schools and community. This has been no easy task.

The facilitators demonstrated a deep commitment and energy to drive these initiatives. I have been honoured to work with these dedicated activists. They made a real difference to our school management, governing body, staff and students. One of the most important outcomes was bringing adult and youth leaders together.

The impact of the work done by Usiko – Hearts of Men in our community is clear. Through my involvement with the Bishop Lavis Police Forum I recently attended a graduation ceremony for young men in Bonteheuwel. I was amazed to see how these young men had grown and developed, from insecure, shy boys to confident young men taking charge of their lives.

There is a great need for this kind of work within all our communities if we want to make a difference to radically reduce crime and violence. This book will give readers a glimpse into the sterling work done by Change Moves, Usiko – Hearts of Men, and all those people who participated in their community-based projects.

**Ghairoonisha Cupido**  
**Principal, E.A.Janari Primary School**  
**Chairperson, Bishop Lavis Community Police Forum**  
**June 2003**

## **PREFACE**

### **Introducing the cooks – Nic and Mike**

#### **Crossing the divide and closing the gap**

His arm was stretched out towards me, his finger pointing directly in my face. I was being interrogated.

“So ja, Nic Fine, where were *you* when *we* were over *here* suffering? You left the country, neh? You were in England. You escaped, while *we* led the struggle. And now, you come back when it’s all over. Dis lekker ne?”

The room was silent as Charles, one of the institution heavyweights, planned his next move. I stood still, I listened and I waited. I was facilitating in Cape Town, in an awaiting trial facility for young men. It was day one of a staff team-building workshop, the beginning of a tough journey for all of us, with lots of straight talking to come. I’d just introduced myself and spoken about what they could expect from me and the process. As part of building a relationship with the group, I gave them an opportunity to ask me any questions they wanted before we moved on.

“So you wanted the koek, huh, and now,” he paused and smiled to himself, “you want to eat it.”

I thought to myself, “What is the question? What is there to answer to?” I decided there was no question; there was nothing to answer. An answer would be seen as justifying myself. They were waiting for my reply.

“And so, have I spoken the truth?” asked Charles, clearly enjoying himself.

I felt they needed to discover if I was comfortable with who I am, and if I was able to take the heat. That would give them confidence in me guiding them to be able to speak to each other directly and openly. That was the real focus of this workshop, not me and where I’ve come from, but them and where they’re going to. We were there to close the relationship and communication gap between staff, so they could work more effectively with the young men in their care. Bringing people together is what my work is all about.

“You’re absolutely right,” I said with a smile on my face, “I love my koek, and now I want to eat it!”

Charles threw his head back and roared with laughter. It was the cue for everyone else to laugh too.

“Any more questions, Charles?”

“No, no, no!” he cried. “Let’s move on, Nic, let the process begin!”



## **For our comrades who are not workers**

From Violet Plaaityjes - poet and domestic worker  
to Mike Abrams - drama worker and union organiser (1985)

Why comrade why?  
Can you tell me why,  
Why did you leave your featherbed  
For our thorn beds?  
Who are we?  
They call us communists,  
Terrorists,  
Slow thinkers!  
Do you know what they say?  
They say we stink like biltong  
Lekker you say  
Then I am a commie,  
A terrie,  
I shall join the slow thinkers  
But biltong I refuse because  
I share their thorn beds,  
Their tears,  
Their grievances  
To hell with biltong smellers  
To hell with slow thinkers  
To hell with commies or terries  
They're my comrades

## **Washing myself clean**

From Mike Abrams to Violet Plaaityjes (2002)  
Having lost my community I came seeking one  
In your thorn beds  
Pain generating hope  
Face to face  
Around the fire  
Seeking searching  
Planting rooting building burning  
In your thorn beds  
Power generating activating  
Assegai dancing  
I wash myself clean  
Finding my community  
Bound apart  
Unequal violent  
Brilliantly coloured  
South African



**F O N E**

**R**

**THE  
INGREDIENTS**

**A**

**R**

## THE CHALLENGE WE FACE

*“We are scared to go out at night. Our streets are no longer safe. Women are not safe. Men are not safe. Nobody is safe. We are the adults, the elders here, and we’ve lost control of our community. It’s crazy! And who do we fear? We fear our own youth, they are the ones doing all the damage. And yet they are the very young people we raised. It’s mad! We’ve lost control of our children, and now they control the streets. We can’t even walk our own streets after dark. Yes, we live in fear of our own children. They are destroying our community, and we’ve got to do something about it. We can’t carry on like this any more.”*

### Hope versus no hope

Have you heard this before? Where does this voice come from? This could easily be a resident from Nyanga, Mannenberg, Observatory, Houghton, Soweto, Hillbrow or Kwamashu. This was a voice of an elder, a resident from Oakland, an industrial centre close to San Francisco, California. She was speaking at a community meeting. The discussions that took place that night between residents planted the seeds for a powerful youth and community intervention, which made a profound difference, not only to the Oakland community, but to several other communities around the world.

It was simply about ordinary people standing up and saying: “Enough is enough. No more. This madness *has* to stop. This madness *is going to* stop.” Those courageous parents were determined to reclaim their streets, and to reclaim their youth. And after much struggle and effort they did. They didn’t just talk; they grappled with the issues and devised plans to transform their community. They identified what was missing for them, ie. safety on their streets and security in their homes. They also identified that a healthy relationship between elders and youth was missing. These were the gaps that they needed to fill.

It wasn’t a case of apportioning blame:

*“The youth of today are not like the youth of our day. Parents don’t take responsibility for their own children any more. If only the community would get involved, we’d be able to solve all this crime. If the police had a greater presence in our community, we would all feel safe.”*

## Talking versus doing

We can go on making such statements forever and ever, but nothing will change. The Oakland community had to get to grips with why parents were struggling, and why the youth was different from before. They had to see what was missing in the lives of both parents and youth, and then seek to create initiatives to fill those gaps. Only then, through sustained and focused action, would they be able to turn the situation around, to create safety and security for all.

We know from experience that there are many such people in South Africa today, people who are determined to transform their own living conditions and communities. These are people who stare hopelessness in the face, but are determined to transform no hope into hope, to stop the madness, just like their brothers and sisters in Oakland once did.

The urge to turn anger and frustration into something constructive, worthwhile and meaningful, to move from being a passive bystander to being an active participant, is what provides this book with its driving force.

## Into every home, into every heart

One of the gaps that we've identified between too much talk and too little action, is a shortage of practical ideas, community building recipes, which can be successfully translated into delivery.

When we use the word 'community', we refer to a 'community of interest', which could be geographical (a specific neighbourhood) or, alternatively, a co-operative, a school, a church, a business, or a youth, sports or cultural organisation. Our focus is on community building and transformation; turning difficult situations around. When we are at work cooking up a sense of community, we always ask ourselves:

How can the work we do touch as many homes and hearts as possible?

What lies at the heart of the community?

How close can our intervention get to the heart of that specific community?

In a neighbourhood, how many households and individual residents can we reach?

In a business or organisation, how many members or employees can we reach?

What does it mean to work from the outside in, or from the inside out?

What must alter first – the individual, the community, or the circumstances – in order for transformation to occur?

This book is not about the *crisis* we are in. It's about *solutions*, meeting the challenge we face, with real, practical, on-the-ground deliverables, based on experience.

## THE IDEA WE HAD

### Our first step - identifying the missing ingredients

Have you ever felt a little frustrated with the meals you've been cooking up? Have you ever had a feeling that some essential ingredients are missing? In doing our work we often shared a feeling of frustration, a sense that many essential ingredients were missing.

Working with *youth*, we realised the vital role that adults play in the lives of young people – but we found adult participation in youth programmes to be rare.

Working with *young men*, we realised that older men have a vital role to play in guiding younger men – but we found that these older men were missing.

Working with *families*, we realised the importance of men and women, parents and children, working closely together – but we found a gap between the two.

Working with *schools*, we realised the critical role parents and community play in the life of the institution – but we found parent and community involvement in school-based programmes to be rare.

Working with *teachers* and *students*, we realised that both student and staff leadership need to work closely together for the benefit of the whole school – but we discovered a large gap between the two.

Working in the *community*, we realised that leaders need to stand together for the benefit of their community – but we observed too little co-operation and understanding amongst the leadership.

Working with *local government*, we realised how vital it is for service providers to work closely with local communities – but we discovered a lack of co-operation.

In order to cook up the community, we realised we had to involve as many role-players as possible, and we resolved to work on closing as many of the gaps as we could.

### Our second step - getting focused

Working in *community development*, we realised that we were spreading ourselves too thinly, spreading our resources over too many projects and communities, and that most of our work and programmes were disconnected from one another. We knew what this was costing us: we were running around from pillar to post, working in different communities and institutions on different projects, leading to frustration, burnout and exhaustion, and certainly lack of focus.

We saw an urgent need to focus ourselves and our resources much more effectively.

Observing the disconnectedness in our own work was a critical moment for us in changing our approach. It was clear to us that if we focused on one community and connected all the strands of our work together, we would most probably produce far better results. And so we took the decision to concentrate our development work in one place, in a specific, clearly identified neighbourhood. In partnership with the Department of Community Development (Unicity of Cape Town), a specific community was identified.

With the staffing and funding resources we had available, we decided we could deliver up to a maximum of three interventions within this one community.

### **Our third step - gathering the ingredients together**

In consultation with Community Development, local leadership and schools management, three key areas within the selected community were identified:

Closing the gap between local schools and the community, between staff and students, and between teachers and parents.

Closing the gap between local authority service providers and residents, and between community leaders themselves.

Closing the gap between men, their families and their community, and between younger men and older men.

Out of these focus areas three intervention strategies emerged:

*Go for Gold community leadership programme* - a one-year community intervention to build leadership and management. Participants would be drawn from organisations or elected by their streets as representatives. The emphasis would be on shifting attitudes, contributing to the abilities and skills of people, and mobilising the community through work-team projects and visible action.

*MAD (Making A Difference) schools leadership programme* – a one-year, whole-school intervention programme including students, staff and parents. The emphasis would be on improving the quality of learning and teaching while drawing the school and the community closer to each other. The programme would encourage the sharing of leadership and responsibility between adults and youth.

*Hearts of Men* - a one-year mentorship programme that would focus on personal reflection, growth and healing amongst men. Older men from the community would be encouraged to become mentors, assisting young men in making the transition from boyhood to manhood. They would also provide ongoing support for young men in taking responsibility for themselves and for making a contribution to their community.

We believed that cooking these ingredients together in one pot would create magic.

## THE TOOLS WE USED

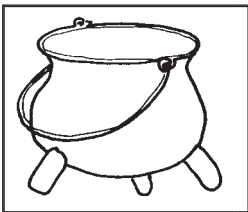
Just like cooks, who gather all their utensils together before they start cooking, we do the same. As community cooks, we also have our own tools of the trade. In order to choose what tools we needed, we identified four essential challenges we faced in our community-building process:

- *providing a coherent structure to hold and contain our work,*
- *working with resistance, conflicts and tough situations,*
- *creating a clear, safe and respectful working environment,*
- *strengthening relationships between people and between groups.*

We used four tools in our programme design and facilitation. Each of these tools represented to us a specific quality that we would need to introduce into our work, in order to meet the challenges mentioned above.

In order to develop a common understanding of the tools and how we were using them, we chose ancient implements, each containing within them essential human wisdom about communal life, each generating an energy that reflects one of nature's four basic elements – earth, fire, water, air:

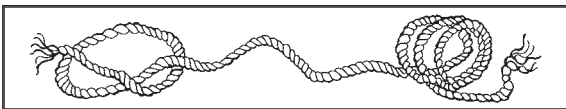
**The potjie - energy of earth:** *grounded, solid, a container for air, fire and water.*



**The assegai - energy of fire:** *bold, powerful, sharp, direct, inspiring action.*



**The rope - energy of water:** *soft, changeable, flexible, loose, secure.*

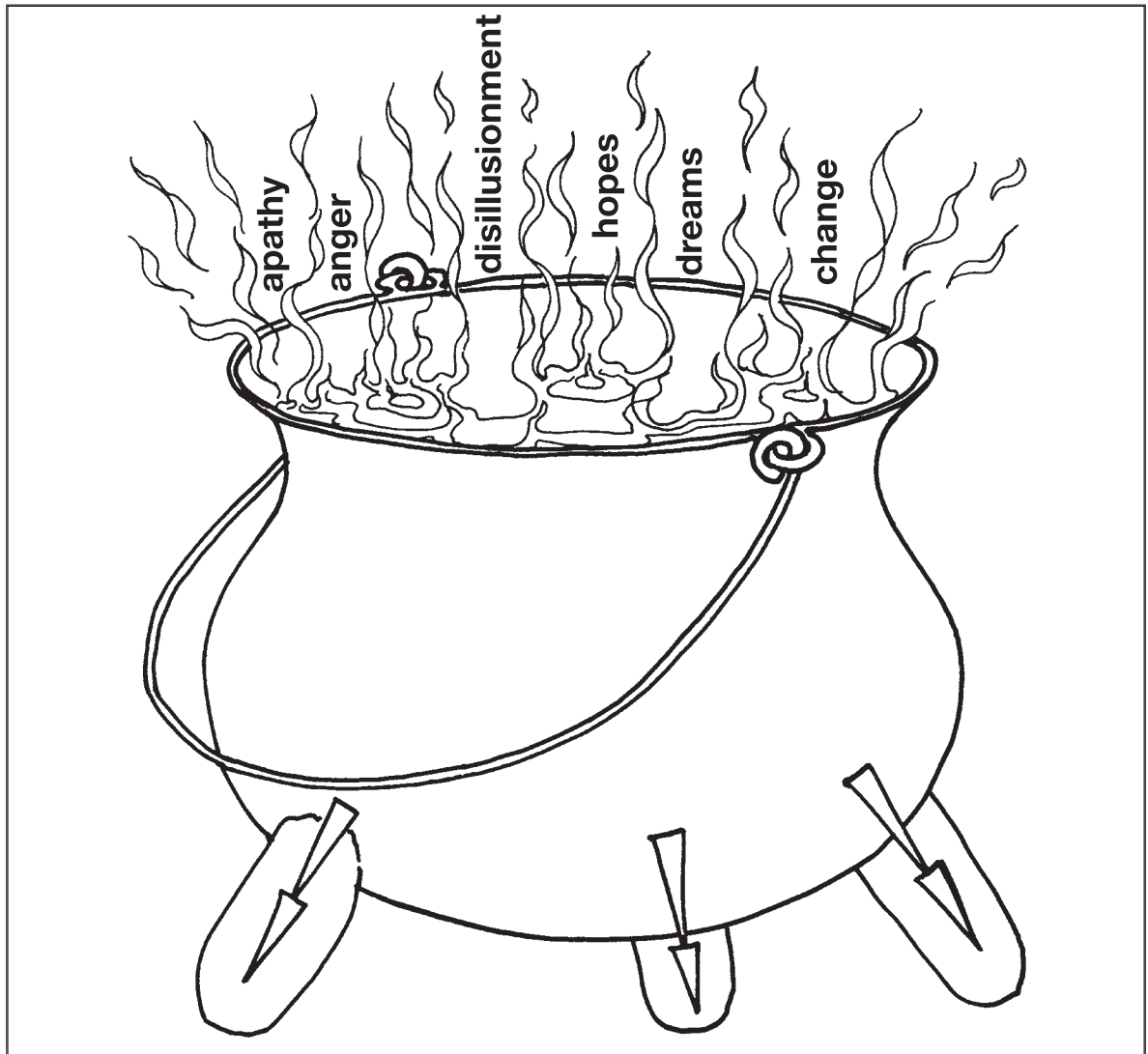


**The needle and thread - energy of air:** *light, connecting one to another, shared by all.*





## First tool:



### A potjie for containing and holding the work

The first item we selected in order to cook up a community was a strong container. As an image to work with, we chose the toughest container available – the potjie, an iron pot that can be placed directly on the hot coals in a fire. And what is good about potjies is that they come in all sizes, to suit different situations.

The potjie became an important design tool for us, as we regarded creating an overall container as an essential part of our design process. It ensured that our intervention had a clear structure that could hold the change process, withstand the heat, and be strong enough to last. The overall structure of our design had to be able to contain the energy, the dreams, the dynamics and new relationships generated by the various interventions.

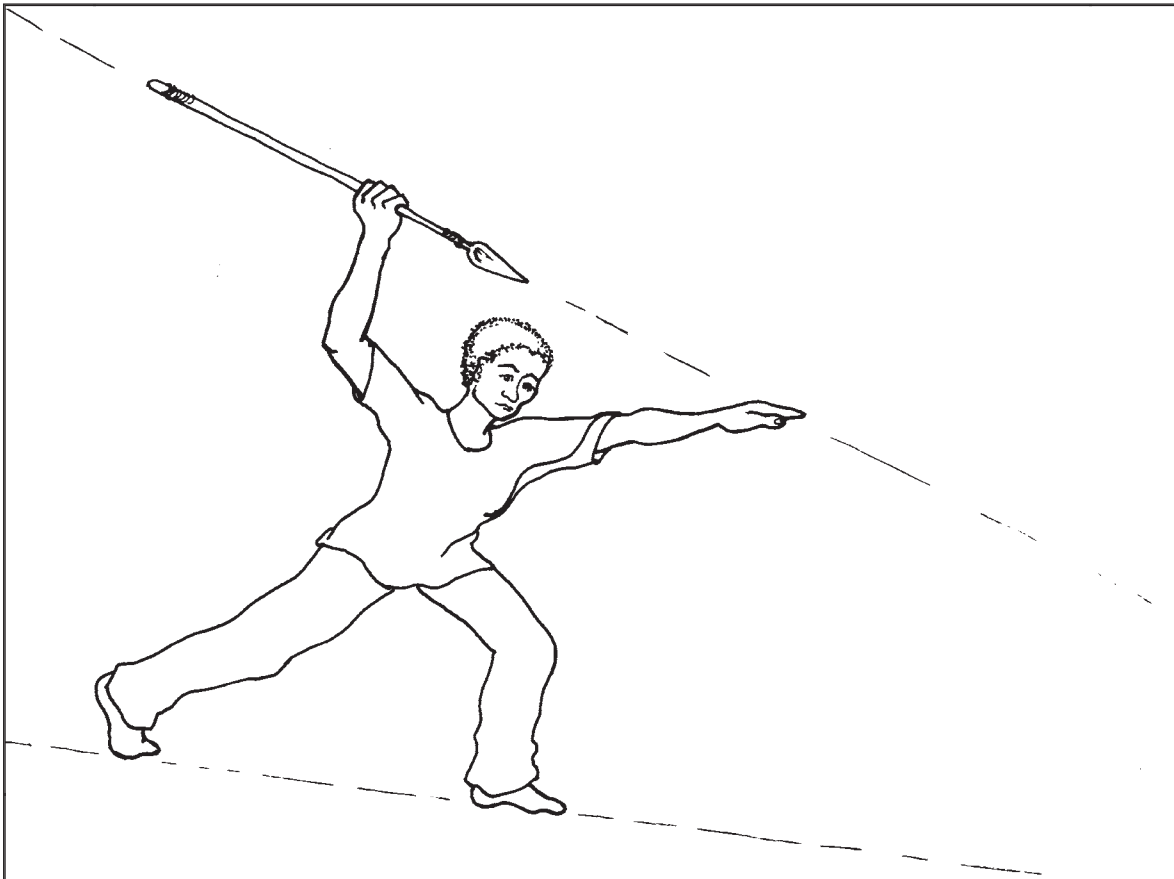
By selecting a specific geographical area in which to work, we were applying the 'potjie principle' – choosing a clearly identified area that would serve as a container for all of the different interventions.

The image of the potjie reminds us of collaborative and collective action. Potjies are designed to stand on three legs, which give the pot its stability. So although we were working with a variety of groups (community leadership, schools, boys and

men), and the interventions were being facilitated by different project teams, the whole process had a coherence. It was held together in one container in order to create the stability, just like three legs are attached to the one pot.

Once we had created a structure, we began to work with our other tools. For more information about this see programme structures and description of content displayed on pages 123 – 131 in Part Three.

## Second tool:

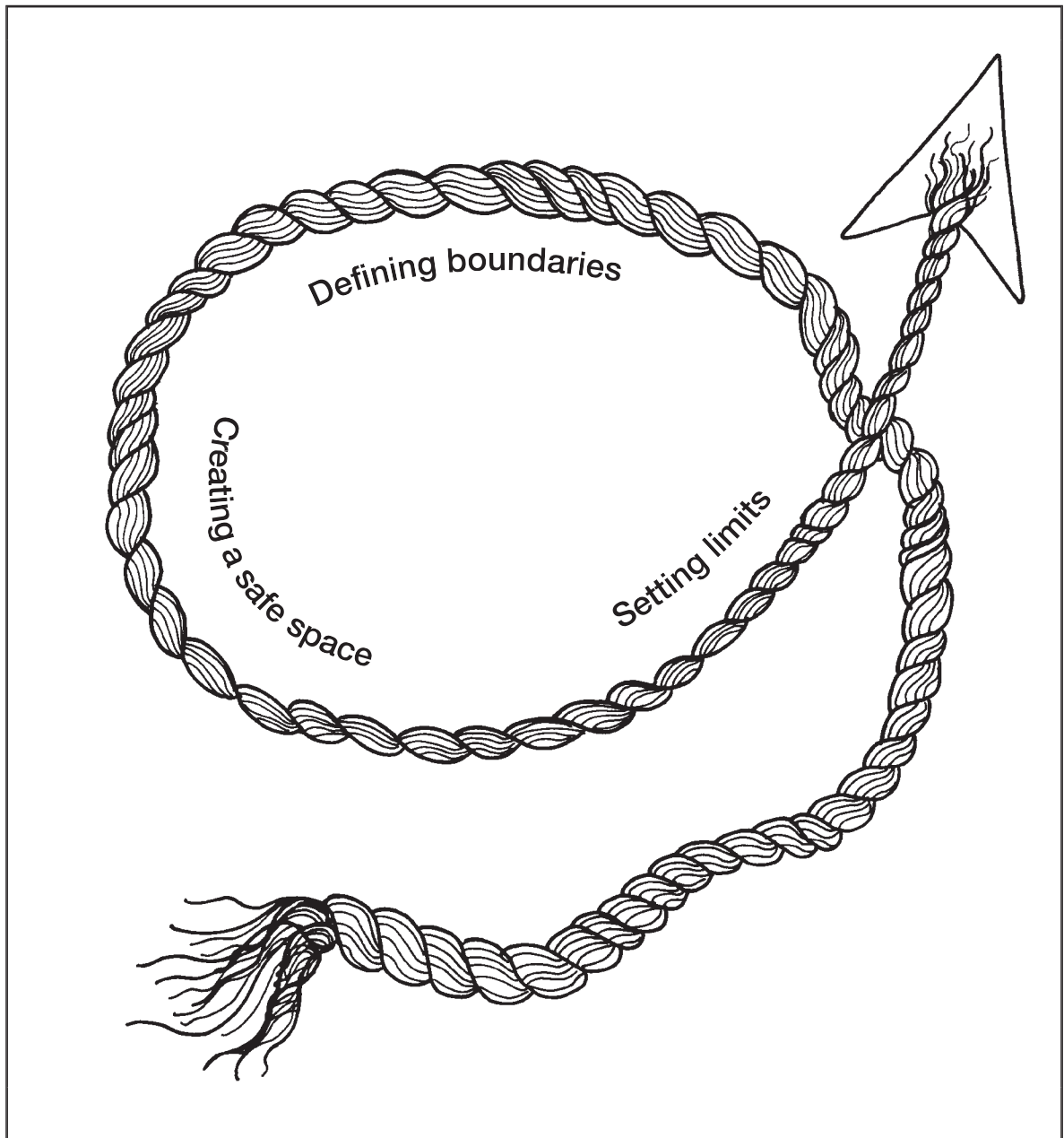


### **An assegai for working with resistance and tough situations**

An assegai is a powerful tool for warriors. It is sharp, direct, clear and precise. An assegai can fly through the air, and can be thrown over obstacles. It reminds us to keep our target in sight and to aim straight. It provides us with a symbol for sharp, pointed questions to be asked at the right moment, for cutting through stories, events and emotions, and for getting straight to the heart of the matter.

But an assegai is a dangerous tool. We take care to use it within a well-held, safe and secure working environment. It takes time to learn to use the assegai with confidence and clear intention. We do not use the assegai as a weapon to fight or win a battle. We use it as a sharp facilitation tool to gain insight and to keep moving forward in difficult situations. It is there to benefit the process, not to serve a particular or personal agenda.

## Third tool:

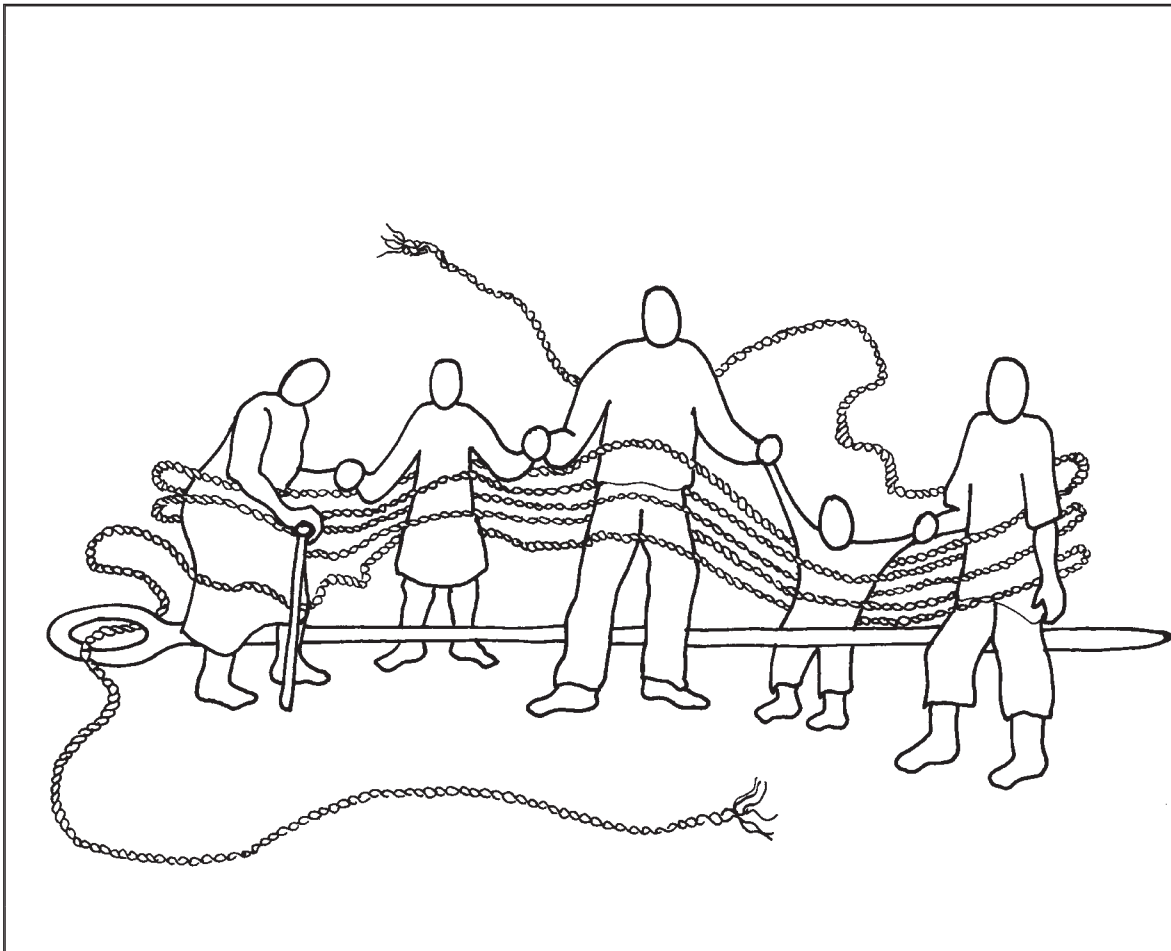


### **A rope for creating a clear, safe and respectful working environment**

Rope is strong, tough and flexible. It can be moulded into many different shapes. Rope can be used to set limits and create boundaries. It provides us with a symbol for securing and linking people, groups and processes to one another. We create circles, we link dreams to visions, goals and objectives. We pull people together and strengthen relationships. We use rope to hold people close and create a safe space for all.

We use rope in combination with the assegai, a sharp, direct tool within a supportive environment with clear boundaries. The two work well together. The rope brings some safety to the work of the assegai; it harnesses the 'fire energy' of this sharp tool. In turn, the assegai provides the spark which is sometimes missing when the safe space created by the 'water energy' of rope becomes too comfortable.

## Fourth tool:



### **A needle and thread for strengthening and sustaining relationships between people and groups**

You can hardly see the needle; it is easily lost or forgotten. Yet without it, cotton can't become cloth. We use it to weave thread, and to strengthen and add colour to fabric. For us it suggests symbols of acknowledgement, celebration and ritual, knitting people together culturally, spiritually and emotionally. It stitches, repairs and creates the fabric of society, the essence of community.

You hardly notice the thread. On its own it is thin and weak. But with continual stitching and weaving it gains strength and resilience. Needle and thread is a tool that only makes a difference when used over time, in a longer-term project. You hardly notice the difference it makes in the short term, but its effect becomes apparent when new ideas and strategies become incorporated into the everyday life and culture of a group, organisation or community.

When using needle and thread we focus on deepening the social, psychological, intellectual, cultural and emotional aspects of our work with people.

We use needle and thread in combination with rope. The rope provides the holding frame within which the thread can begin to be woven. For more information about the needle and thread see *The Spice of Life – working with needle and thread* on page 124 in Part Three.

## **THE PLACE WHERE WE COOKED**

### **The suburb – Greater Bonteheuwel**

Bonteheuwel is a well-established suburb of Cape Town, situated in an area referred to as the Cape Flats. Approximately 65,000 Coloured people live there and the residents are predominantly Afrikaans speaking. There were several reasons for our partners and for ourselves to focus on this specific suburb. The prevailing socio-economic conditions were particularly severe and we thought it would be easier to work within a community where the boundaries were clearly defined.

Together with local government and community leadership we identified the following challenges:

- to break the cycle of financial depletion in terms of service provision, roads and housing;
- to encourage residents with skills and experience to contribute their local community;
- to build communication and partnership between the community and local government;
- to develop a strong relationship between the community and its local schools;
- to provide a meaningful role for youth leadership within the community;
- to break the cycle of vandalism, gangsterism and social disintegration;
- to create reasonable levels of safety and security for all residents.

### **The precincts**

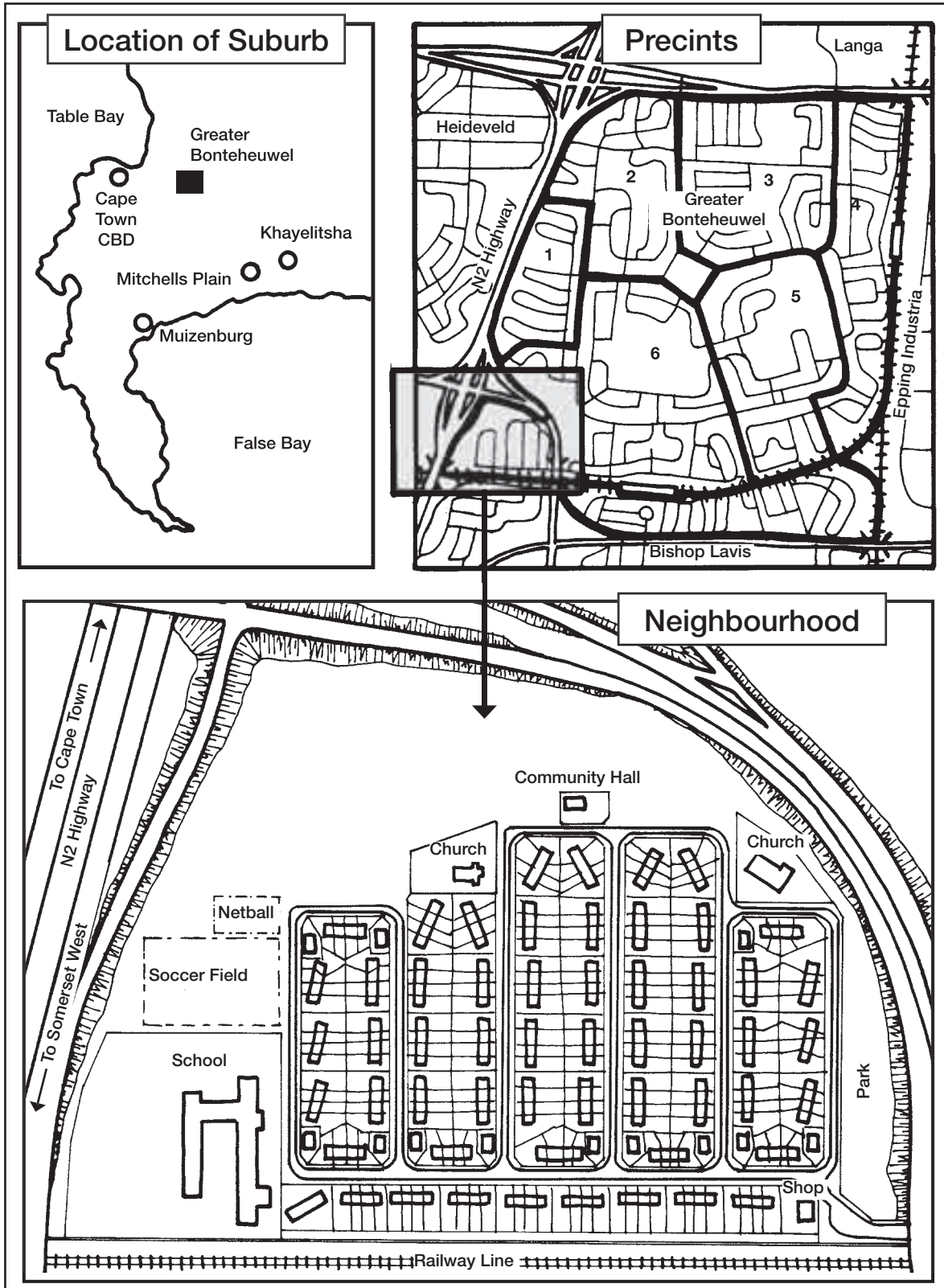
For service delivery and community development purposes, Bonteheuwel was divided into eight areas referred to as precincts. One precinct was identified for immediate intervention. Unemployment in this precinct is high and many families have gang affiliations. A sense of hopelessness is prevalent. It is a hard place to live, one of Cape Town's forgotten communities. For many years community leaders have struggled to overcome and to transform their circumstances.

### **The neighbourhoods**

Two neighbourhoods situated within the precinct were selected. One of the neighbourhoods is a small community separated from Bonteheuwel by a railway line and motorway. There is only one entrance by road - via an archway under a bridge. Each of the designated 250 plots has up to three families living on it. A typical plot has a small, two-bedroomed brick house, a wooden structure and a zinc shack situated on it, with the latter two rented out to generate some income supplement each month. This neighbourhood is considered to be the poorest in Bonteheuwel.

## The schools

All the children resident in the selected community attend the Junior School which serves as a feeder to the High School. The Junior School is situated in the neighbourhood and serves as a focus to the local community. Over 95% of the children from the Junior go on to the High School, which is only a short walk away. The schools are predominantly Afrikaans speaking, although the High School attracts many Xhosa-speaking students, who commute from nearby areas.



## **THE PARTNERSHIPS WE CREATED**

### **First leg of the potjie:**

#### **Go for Gold (Community leadership programme)**

##### **Department of Community Development (Unicity of Cape Town)**

Two staff members were nominated to provide regular support to the group and its activities. They would co-facilitate and guide us in working with local government.

##### **Change Moves (CM)**

Community Development contracted CM, a training and organisational development co-operative, to facilitate this process. Mike Abrams and Liz de Wet from CM facilitated the community-based training. During the weekly sessions they focused on working together to heal the past, resolve conflicts, develop common goals and plans, as well as implement projects. Change Moves provided ongoing support sessions once the initial training was complete.

##### **Community leadership**

Leaders came from a range of civic organisations active in the area, the primary school and street representatives. Men and women, old and young, Muslim and Christian, employed and unemployed, sport and political activists – there were 26 people from across the precinct, either elected by their organisations or chosen by residents on a particular street. They were leaders who wanted to make life better, but had been unable to work together.

We thought it important to create partnerships with community leaders because:

- A principle of people-centred development is to respect and strengthen what people have already accomplished
- People need leaders to guide and assist them through change processes
- Leaders provide a focus for activities and action
- Leaders need to encourage others to stand up and take a lead in community life
- Leaders need to create a culture of active involvement in change processes
- These processes need a group of champions to be successful

### **Second leg of the potjie:**

#### **MAD (Schools leadership programme)**

##### **Change Moves**

The Open Society Foundation of South Africa funded CM to implement the MAD programme in two high and two primary schools over a period of two years. Mike Abrams and Nic Fine facilitated these schools-based interventions. During each of the year-long programmes they focused on community building between and amongst staff and learners, conflict resolution, development of leadership, and project planning and implementation. They provided ongoing project support to staff and student leadership.



## **Participating schools**

The primary schools had around 15 members of staff and approximately 350 learners. The high schools varied between 25 staff and 900 learners, to 40 staff and 1,300 learners. All these schools were struggling in tough circumstances: crime, violence, gangsterism, poverty, HIV/Aids, poor facilities, lack of resources and community support.

### **Staff (includes teachers and support staff)**

Staff were suffering from stress and were facing lots of uncertainty and change, resulting from new policies and new curriculum, election of new governing bodies, and the redeployment of educators. There were too few staff to too many learners. Support and guidance were needed in managing an educational institution in difficult circumstances.

### **Learners**

Learners were often lacking parental supervision and encouragement at home, and living in overcrowded conditions. Most students lacked personal financial resources, and many students came to school hungry and insufficiently clothed. Learners needed increased adult support, and encouragement to get involved in school and community leadership.

### **Parents**

Most parents were living in tough economic and social circumstances. We found that parents were struggling to come to terms with school governance through School Governing Bodies (SGB). They needed skills, knowledge and confidence to enable effective participation in school governance. Most of the schools we worked in were experiencing a severe lack of parent involvement and support.

### **Community**

In most cases the community did not see the school as a resource and asset for the whole community. Because of this the school was often not protected by the community from theft and damage. The high schools experienced very little community support.

We thought it important to create partnerships with schools because:

- We identified the schools as the largest institutions within the chosen precinct.
- The youth spend between six and eight hours a day in school.
- The schools are the primary holding ground and focus for most youth.
- The schools, operating in extreme conditions, needed support.
- Young people needed lots of encouragement to stay in education.
- They also needed to experience a sense of belonging to their school.

## **Third leg of the potjie: Hearts of Men (Mentorship for young men)**

### **Usiko – Hearts of Men**

Usiko, a small non-governmental organisation (NGO), provided the research, fundraising and training out of which grew the Hearts of Men programme initiative. Cordaid (Dutch Government funding agency) funded three years of work in one precinct. The Department of Community Safety (Western Cape Provincial Govern-



ment) funded one year of initial work in a second precinct. Nic Fine, Lionel Arnolds and Des van Niekerk formed the core staff team. They focused on co-ordinating and facilitating the men and boys' training, developing a powerful community-based support circle of men, and providing for ongoing programme and staff development.

### **The boys**

We selected 21 young men (per programme), who were considered at high risk of dropping out of education. They were between 13 and 17 years of age, residing in the chosen precinct, and attending schools participating in MAD. Our focus was to give support to the boys in their transition from Grade 7 (final year in junior school) to Grade 8 (first year in high school), identified as a vulnerable period with a high drop-out rate.

### **The men**

Most were recruited from the precinct and were offered intensive mentorship training. We aimed to select between 10 and 15 mentors per programme. We focused on activating and capacitating both old and young men to take a leadership stand, so that they would be seen as community builders, as opposed to community destroyers. We gave ongoing support to the older men in their work with younger men.

### **The community**

We worked to encourage adults within the precinct to provide structures through which young people could encourage youth participation and leadership.

We felt it was critical to mobilise older men in the community to work with boys, and to create positive role models. We wanted to recreate the role older men have traditionally played in guiding young men from boyhood into manhood through a rite of passage.

We wanted to provide a challenge to all the men who participated in the programme, to rediscover what it is to be a man, and what it takes to build and nurture a sense of family and community.

We thought it important to focus on men's issues, and to create a strong partnership between boys and men because:

- The greatest physical threat to men and women in South Africa today is posed by men.
- Men control the gangs, commit most of the crime and fill our prisons.
- Too many young men and women have children before they are ready.
- Too many of our men are absent fathers, and so many boys and girls are fatherless.
- Too many mothers and grandmothers are left to parent children all on their own.



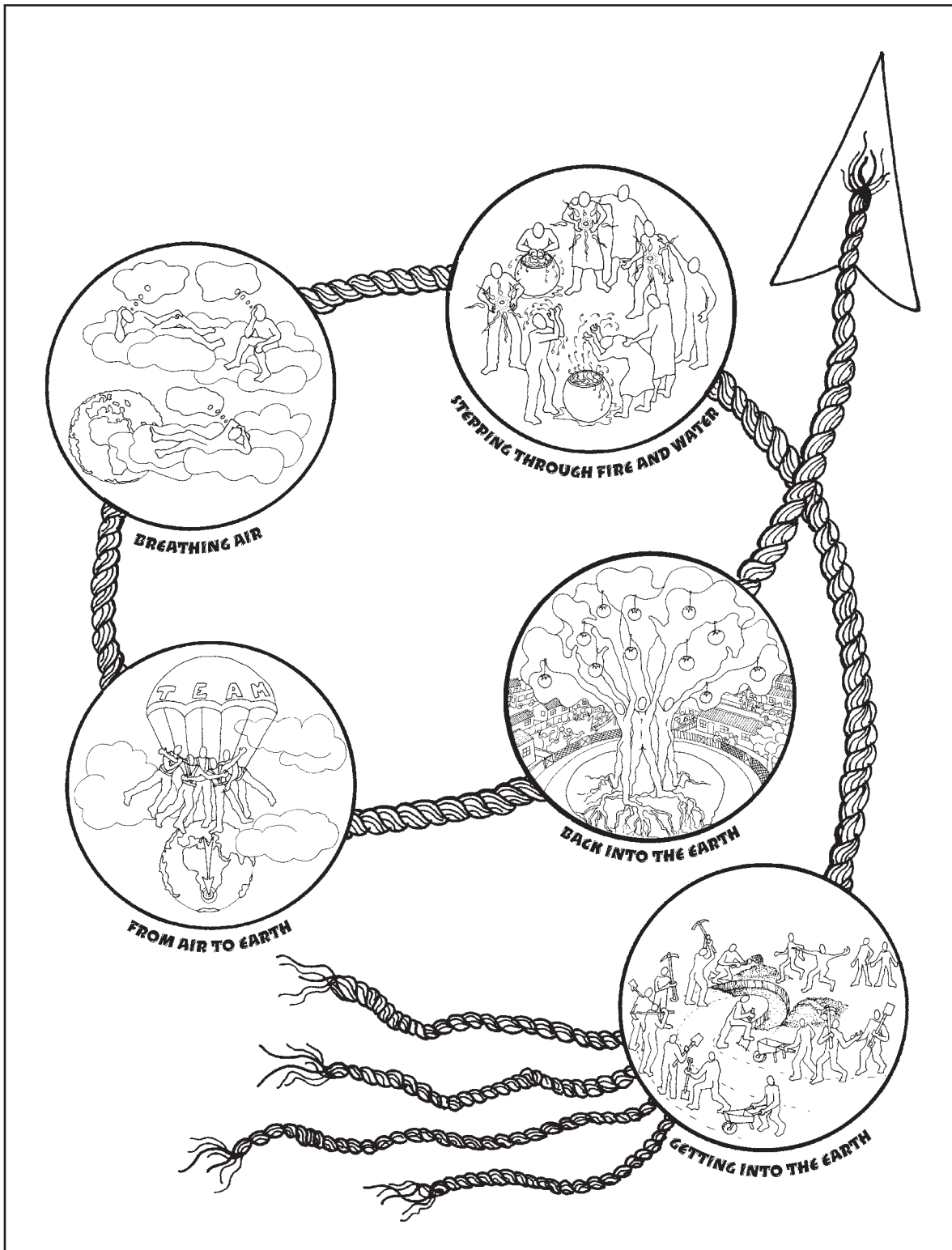
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**THE FIVE  
COURSE MEAL**

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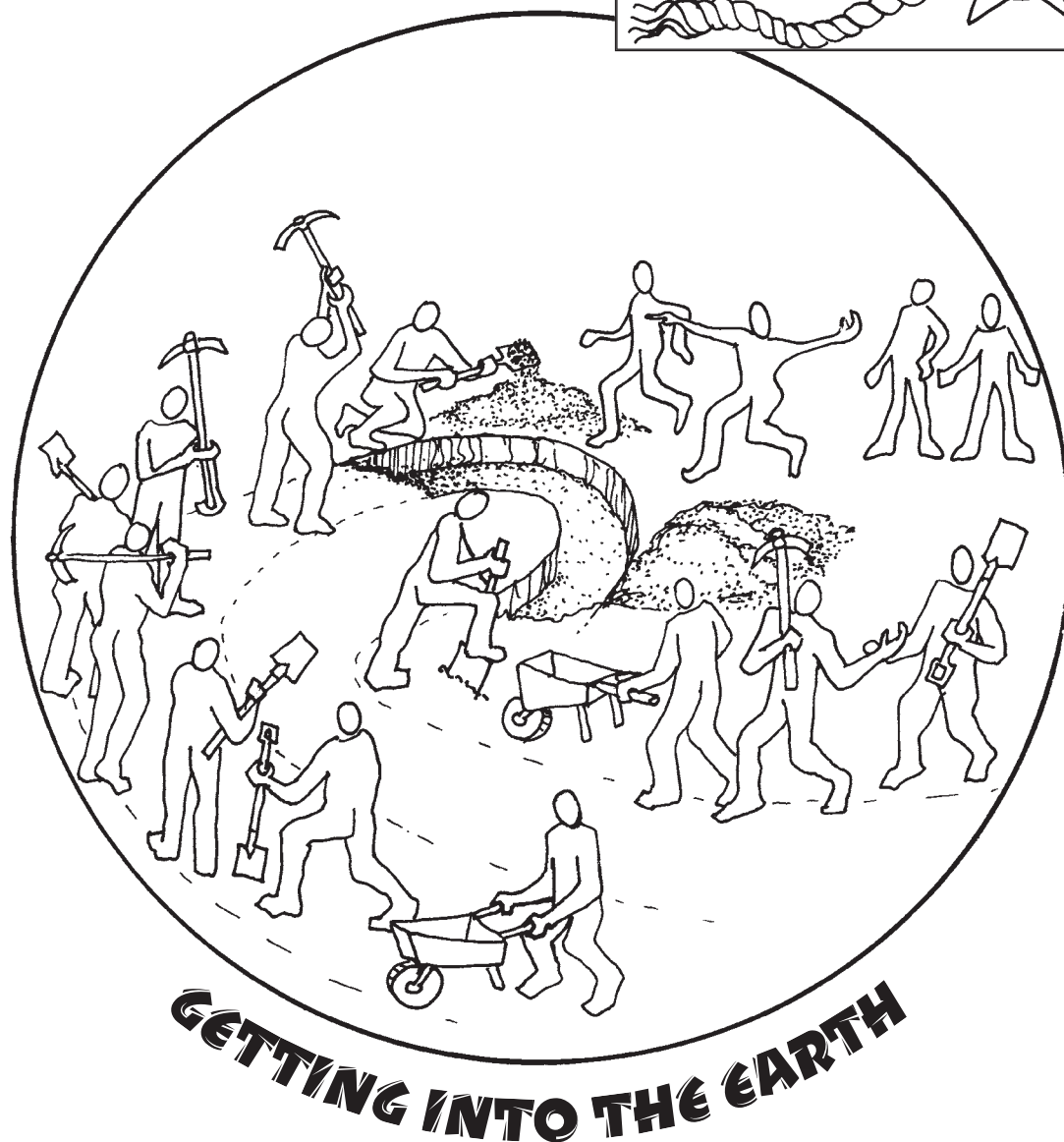
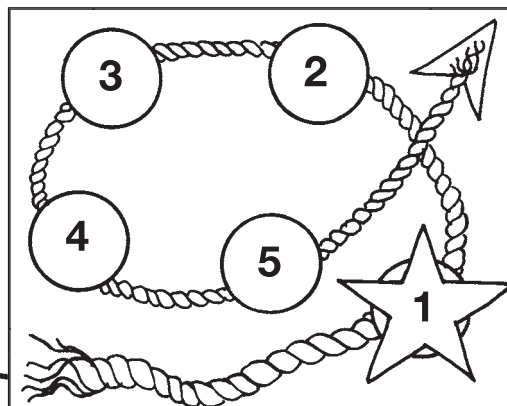


In this part of the book we share stories from our three different interventions. Although each had its own specific focus, all three programmes followed a similar process.

In *The five course meal* we take you through the various phases of this process. At the end of each *course* we have a *tools* section, where we indicate how we approached each phase.

To respect confidentiality, in writing these stories we have changed the names of all the participants, and have also refrained from naming a specific neighbourhood or school.

## THE FIRST COURSE:



## GETTING INTO THE EARTH

### GETTING CONNECTED

The connectedness of people to each other is what creates and builds community. When we are disconnected and out of touch, our sense of community becomes fractured. In *Getting into the earth*, we take the first step in community building, identifying the gaps that exist between people – as individuals, in groups, and within communities - and start the process of closing these gaps.

## Going back to the beginning

“So you are looking for men in this community to become mentors? And where do you think you are going to find them? There are no good men in this community! Don’t you know that all men are useless?”

She laughed, and all the other women in the room laughed. The room was full of women; there were very few men.

“Well, there are two good men here,” I said, gesturing to the elderly gentlemen in the room, “and if you would be kind enough to include me, then we have three.”

More laughter.

“Yes, okay, I admit there are a few good men around, just a few, but certainly not enough to become mentors for the boys. These two gentlemen are old. Where are all the younger men? If you want mentors, then ask the women. We will do the job for you, we will mentor the boys.”

“But the whole idea of this programme is that we find the men, and that we connect them to the boys. We can’t carry on like this, leaving all the responsibility of holding these young men to the mothers, aunties and grandmothers. For too long now women have carried this load. Surely it is time for men to come back into the lives of our boys. We need to bring the men back into mentoring.”

“If you want something *talked* about ask a man, but if you want something *done*, then you must ask a woman!”

More laughter. The women were clearly having fun. They needed to laugh. What was being said in that room gave us a good picture of how things stood between women and men in that community. The perceptions of the women were very clear.

“How long can we go on saying that all men are useless? Do we realise the damage this kind of talk causes to men and to boys? The boys grow up hearing the women they admire and love say that ‘all men are useless’! Men who are trying to make a contribution are also hearing that all men are useless. There is no encouragement and support for these men. They just get branded and labelled with all the others. When you hear something over and over again, you start to believe that it’s true, ‘that all men are truly useless’. Some young men go out to prove that they are useless, that what we say about them is true.”

The room was still. One of the older men took over.

“We are always focusing on what is wrong with our men. Maybe it is time to put our focus on the good men amongst us. We must encourage them. We are always saying that there are no good role models for our young men, but what are we doing to create these role models? We must stop all this criticism.”

Time was running out. I wanted to leave this meeting with a way forward.

“I appreciate you all coming tonight and giving up your valuable time. The fact that it is mainly women who have come tonight really tells us what the challenge in this community is. One of the key aims of Hearts of Men is to mobilise and encourage men to step forward. Yes, we are working on the assumption that there are men in the community who are waiting for such an opportunity - to connect with other men and to make a contribution in the lives of younger men. That is why we are here having this conversation. We really do believe that good men are out there. We also know from tonight that the women of this community are critical in passing the

word around, inviting men to step forward.”

The women accepted that they would take on the job, alongside the men present, of identifying other men.

“So we’re agreeing to continue with these presentations. Let us increase the number of men attending, week by week, and ask each of them to bring a neighbour, a friend or a work colleague along. Slowly let us see this room changing from nearly all women to being a room full of men. Then we can begin the mentor training. Then we can recruit boys into the programme.”

We drew up a list of local groups and organisations to approach. We included religious, sporting and cultural bodies, as well as the neighbourhood watch. We agreed that personal approaches, making individual contact with men, worked best.

“Mrs Williams, you had the first word so we think you should have the last word. Is there something you would like to say to close the meeting?”

“I have been sitting here thinking about what we’ve said. We just get frustrated and angry by the actions of some men. I’m here tonight because I want to see this situation change. I’ve been working in this community for over 30 years, and as Head of this school that serves all the children of this community, I do see a desperate need for us to focus on the young boys, many of whom have no dads at home, whose older brothers are gangsters. And to close this meeting I would like to say that I know that all men are not useless. I am married to a wonderful man. He is waiting outside right now in his bakkie, as he always does, to see me safely home after dark. He is always a reminder to me that *all* men are not useless. Instead, it would have been more accurate if I had opened the meeting by saying rather that *most* men are useless! Goodnight.”

The room collapsed into laughter once more and we all stepped out into the night. I made a point of going over to greet and acknowledge the man sitting in the bakkie parked outside.

The strategy of identifying men began to work, and slowly, week by week, the faces in the room changed as more and more men joined our conversations. Together with the community and schools we began to identify the kind of boys who could benefit from the programme. For many boys, a high-risk period was when they moved from primary to high school, between the ages of 13 and 16. Most boys from this community dropped out of school during this transition phase. Once we’d identified our target group, the women supporting our process were able to take a step back and allow the men to take the programme forward.

We were ready to begin with mentor training for men.

## **Working with men**

*Most men don't have a life. Instead, we have just learned to pretend. Much of what men do is an outer show, kept up for protection ... By the time he becomes a man, he is like a tiger raised in a zoo - confused and numb, with huge energies untapped. He feels that there must be more, but does not know what that more is. So he spends his life pretending to be happy - to himself, his friends and his family.*

- Steve Biddulph (Manhood)

One of the facilitators during the mentor training read out a piece written by an Australian, but as we were all about to discover, it could just as easily have been written by one of our men.

The men were asked to think about the statement - what feelings it evoked, how it related to their own experience. The conversations that took place between the men proved that we were hungry to connect with one another and to share our life experiences.

The training took the men on a journey back to childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood. They travelled out of the city into the wilderness, to experience some of what the boys would experience. They shared their joy and their pain, their hope and their despair with each other. They shared their tears and their laughter with each other, all as part of their preparation for working with the boys.

The men faced up to and grappled with many questions:

What are you most proud of as a man? What is one of the best things a man/men have done for you? What is one of the worst things a man/men have done to you? What was the loudest message you got from your father about being a man?

Who are you? Where are you now? Where have you come from? Where are you heading? Where are you stuck?

Who can't you forgive? Who can't forgive you? Who have you given up on? Who has given up on you?

All questions the boys would have to face, and in facing these tough questions, the boys would need a guide to support them - someone who had already faced these questions. Someone who understood where the younger man was coming from.

Our mentors were not men who provided answers. They were just men who were prepared to explore what it meant to be a man, and to guide others in finding their own answers.

Our mentors were men who were committed to assisting other men in developing a personal sense of power and pride within themselves, and a sense of freedom and joy in their lives.

As I witnessed the men's training, I appreciated the need for older men to play and laugh together, to have fun together in a way that does no harm to others, but strengthens the bond between men. This was the first link in the chain we needed to strengthen - *men to men* - before we could move on to the second link - *boys to men*.



## **MEN IN THE CIRCLE - a poem by Alfred Gough (a mentor)**

In an empty school room  
Men gather  
The community is poor  
But something is different  
In this circle of men

They are here to learn  
About themselves so that  
They may help guide the  
Young men in their journey  
From boyhood to manhood  
A tradition that was lost for  
A very long time

A friendship grows  
Between the men  
Allowing the pain that each man  
Carries to be spoken  
Perhaps for the first time  
As the men speak their pain  
Others are touched deeply  
And all take a step  
To heal the pain of many hard years  
Of living

A deepening caring for each other  
A willingness to share  
Allows the gold that hides  
In each man to shine

A group of men who  
Are willing to care for  
The community  
Instead of tearing it apart  
Men have a heart that has not  
Been seen for generations  
In this group if you are  
Awake you may catch sight  
Of this gold that is in every man  
Is in every boy

I thank those who created this circle  
So men may heal  
So men may be who they really are  
Thank you for holding us  
Thank you for the safe place.

## Into the hearts of men

During the men and boys' training, time spent in a wilderness area formed a vital part of the programme. Through the process of connecting with the open spaces and with the land, we found a way into our own interior. While we connected to the land, we connected to ourselves. For most of the men and boys it was a unique opportunity to spend time in uninhabited quiet spaces, far away from the familiar urban environment. It was a time to sit alone, often in silence, and to listen. Being in the wilderness provided for a time of reflection and healing. It also provided a place to dream and to visualise a future that could be different from the past. It was an opportunity for us to become rooted within ourselves.

## Reflections on a journey into myself

*- extracts from a letter written by Anthony Daniels, on his return from a Hearts of Men wilderness experience in the Groot Winterhoek Mountains, Western Cape 2001*

Over the weekend I have begun the process of healing, healing myself from damage caused me by others and exacerbated by my own inability to speak up and express my emotions. To share my pain with those close enough to respect me, to understand and help me deal with it.

I never knew I had such a wealth of positive memories of my childhood. The few I did share represent a fraction of the contents of my warehouse. Listening to the other guys talking just triggered more and more memories. I just sat there smiling, as I could relate to aspects of each story that was brought forward. When I lie awake at night my mind is hungrily searching for more memories which, though deeply buried, eventually spill out and further feed my spirit. The powerfully positive images of my childhood reinforced my belief in goodness. It became clear that I have been focusing on the negatives to such an extent that it began to overshadow the good things in my life, leading to depression, self-doubt and withdrawal from relationships and people. An inability to show love and affection.

The solo experience has been the most powerful and moving of all I have had in my short lifetime. I can truly say that I have climbed the highest mountains, I reached my mountain top and that I am free, free at last. I have been able to reach deep inside myself, locate and extract my hurts, bring them out in the open, look them square in the eyes and see them for what they are. Those buried emotions and feelings that have been holding me back, preventing me from reaching my true potential as a well rounded human being in touch with myself, my environment and able to show the love I really feel for others, especially for those dear to me.

I felt an astounding closeness to nature, I realised that what I share with the earth was overwhelming in its majesty and beauty. The closeness my ancestors had with the earth I shared in that instant. Emotions so deep

I had to scream out my joy in acknowledgment of my heritage as an African man whose forefathers roamed these same plains and mountains, drinking from life's fountain. Then I felt free, at one with nature, and at peace with myself. I realised that I am one with nature. I am of the universe. The universe is in me. In that instant I was a king, all-powerful, loved and respected. I was a king because my ancestors I could see loving and living the earth, like I was doing at that point.

The moon signified the cleansing of my soul, and in the night it brought light and a sense of quiet warmth. I could see clearly the jagged edges of the mountain tops, the humps of rocks strewn around, the low bushes and flowers waving at me in the slight breeze. Even in darkness there is light. It brought reassurance that the dawn of a new day is imminent in the same way the door to a new tomorrow will open for me. With the rise of the moon the thought struck me that, yes, time is eternal and therefore life is eternal, for as the moon dips and rises like a boat on the sea, time points forever the forward march of mankind who has no control over time, only its own destiny. Similarly, I only have control over my time on the earth and therefore should prepare my offspring to carry the beacon of the heritage of my ancestors into the future with pride.

I cried because I could accurately pinpoint the one missing part of my life that has had the biggest impact on how my life unfolded, was shaped and came to be: That for me to be a man, I need to be acknowledged by other men as a man. More important, I need to be acknowledged by my father as a man. This is what I have been yearning for all my life. Yearning for the warmth of a fatherly hug, to be taken by the hand and led on the path to manhood by the man from whose loins I was brought forth. The man who held, and still holds, the keys to my manhood. I asked myself, and him, whether he loved and still loves me.

I asked and was answered as follows: The mere fact that he took part in the mystical act and process of conceiving me is the ultimate act of love. There is no greater gift a man can give his son than life, because through it he gives of himself. He therefore lives in his son. I am of my father. My father is in me. My son is of me. I am in him. Once again I shouted. I shouted out my love for my father for the whole world to know. I shouted out my acknowledgement of the love my father had, and still has, for me.

As these thoughts floated through my mind and each new piece was revealed and the puzzle completed, nature spoke again. For each revelation a new shooting star exploded and shot across my bow. I once again stood in awe in the face of the forces of nature putting up a fireworks display in honour of my search for truth in myself. This made me realise the universality of my truths.

I shouted some more to dispel very clearly the notion that I can only be what others want me to be - that I need to bow to the demands of society, the society that judges shows of emotion in men, the society that cripples me and men generally as a result, the society that seeks comfort in conformity and perpetuates the myths of man as warrior and warrior only. The myth that portrays man as hunter gatherer, man as fighter, man as defender of his own, killing the notion of man as lover, friend, father, uncle, brother and companion. If it is true that man is the leader of his family, the question begs to be asked: How can a man lead without loving his family? Because then he leads by fear and terror, and will receive not respect and loyalty, but rejection and disdain.

In the company of men I found truth, honesty and brotherhood. I found solace in the knowledge that like me, these men are struggling with the same issues and are on the same journey to discover themselves. I found strength and inspiration in the knowledge that we are journeying together and are beginning to find answers together, as men. The respect, support and understanding shown in these circles, has made me realise the beauty of being a man, the beauty of being loved by and loving other men for who they are. I have really found love in myself, for myself and for others. The welcome note on my cell phone when it says ‘I’m beautiful, dammit’, will come alive in my actions. I have found that I am a human being before all else. In answer to Shakespeare’s question, ‘I just need to be the best human being I can possibly be’.

### **“Ons glo in ons jeug”**

These were the words on a large banner, painted in bright colours, hanging on the back wall of the stage. The primary school hall was packed. It was quite an occasion. We were celebrating the first group of boys leaving for the mountains on a 10-day intensive wilderness experience. Together the programme co-ordinators, school staff and community leaders had discussed ways in which we could mark the boys’ departure. For most of these boys it would be their first time out of their community and away from their homes. We thought it important that the whole school, parents, families and the wider community be involved. The boys who were leaving had to realise that they mattered, that they were worthy of all this attention, and that their imminent departure was cause for excitement and celebration. These young men were being noticed and acknowledged, some for the very first time.

### **Boys to school - school to boys**

The students, who were sitting on the floor, were asked to open a pathway down the centre of the hall, leaving just enough space for someone to pass through the middle. They did so, and it was like the parting of the sea, as the space opened up in the middle. The selected 21 boys lined up at the back of the hall behind the audience. Their names were called out one by one. Each boy had to walk through the throng of students and make his way up onto the stage in front. Each boy was cheered as he made the journey through the hall. Some of the boys spoke on behalf of the whole group and thanked the staff and all the students for their wonderful support. It had made

them feel special, and they said they didn't want to let anyone down. They were going away to do their best and to discover things about themselves that they didn't know – they were excited.

### **Boys to staff - staff to boys**

Each boy received a special message sealed in an envelope, from a different member of staff. The messages were to be opened and read when the boys were in the kombi leaving Cape Town. Each message contained a blessing and words of encouragement.

### **School to school**

Staff from the high school were there to give their personal messages to the high school students and to bid them farewell. Student leaders from the high school also spoke. This was significant as it was the first time a combined ceremony had been held between the two schools. This was a unique opportunity for both schools to connect with each other - important as they both served the youth from the same community.

### **Mentors to boys**

Each boy then received a bead threaded on a thong from one of the mentors. They were told that they would receive a different colour bead for every day in the wilderness – 10 in all. Every bead had its own significance and represented a special quality.

### **Community to boys – the departure**

The first part of the ceremony was now complete. Now they had to make the journey on foot through their community to the archway under the bridge, which clearly marked the exit from the neighbourhood. The banner was lifted from the wall and mounted onto sticks. A band was waiting outside to lead the procession through the streets. The 21 boys walked in front, with the banner held by the mentors, raised above them. The whole school marched behind the boys. With the band in front, the school behind and the pavements lined with residents, the boys truly got a sense that they were being made visible in their community. The words written on the banner were now coming to life, becoming a reality for them. Yes it was true, this community did believe in its youth. They could now see that the community really did care. Everyone on that day was literally 'walking the talk'. When we reached the bridge the procession stopped. The music stopped. Last goodbyes were said. The boys walked alone through the archway to the vehicles waiting on the other side. They climbed into the two kombis and were gone.

### **Boys to prison – a surprise visit**

The boys were to make a surprise stop on their way to the wilderness; a visit to somewhere.

It turned out to be a prison. It was a reality check for them. They met with some older men who were serving long sentences. These men shared their stories of prison life and hardship with the boys, and told them what they had done to get themselves behind bars. They told the boys how they regretted what they had done, and encouraged them to use the opportunities they had to avoid having to make their own journey to prison one day. They discovered that one of these men had grown up in their neighbourhood and knew their families.

### **Men to boys – boys to men**

And the next stop was the mountains - back into the wilderness.

## Schools leadership – a huge challenge

### Revolving doors – the reality

We were coming to the end of the first year of facilitating the MAD schools leadership programme. During the completion ceremony at one of our partner schools, a visiting principal from another high school asked us if we would be prepared to do a presentation to his staff. He felt his school could do with such an intervention. We did a series of presentations and eventually spent a year in his school.

Literally, as we entered this school to begin our programme, the principal left. He was suffering from stress and would be away for six months on sick leave. On one of our visits we witnessed a parent aggressively confronting him in the school corridor and hurling abuse at him. He was visibly shocked and upset. He was a man who had grown up in the community where the parent lived. He spoke with sadness at the lack of respect and relationship between the school and the community. He felt there was a significant gap that needed to be filled.

On another occasion the Hearts of Men staff team organised an initial meeting and programme presentation with the principal of a primary school. We were checking to see if they were keen for any of their learners to join the programme. On arriving for the presentation the staff were informed that the principal would be away from school for two weeks. The reason given for his absence was personal safety. He had received threats to his life from gangsters operating in the neighbourhood surrounding the school. Here was a community at war with itself, presenting a threat to its own school. Here was a community depriving its own children of a future.

### Chasing bullets – the crisis

We were meeting with a member of the Safe Schools<sup>1</sup> staff team.

“Hey, you’re a difficult man to get hold of,” we said.

“It’s true, but yo, man, I’m stressed out. I’m sorry, guys, but I never know what I’ll be doing from day to day, sometimes from minute to minute. I’ll have a plan, and then something happens. I’m always on call. So I will be sitting in a meeting and my phone rings, and I have to answer it. People get irritated with me. Why don’t I switch my phone off? But if a crisis happens in school I have to be there – it’s my job. If a kid has just been shot, I can’t say ‘sorry, man, can’t come, I’m sitting in a meeting’. People don’t understand, they think we don’t care ‘cause we’re always walking out of meetings, we cancel meetings, we’re late. But I tell you we’re working as hard as we can.”

“Hey broer, that sounds tough. We’re glad to be seeing you today, thanks for your time.”

“Thanks to you guys for coming in. What would you like to discuss?”

We shared our ideas with him. We described what we had to offer. Through our work experience and contacts in the field, we already appreciated the conditions under

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<sup>1</sup> Safe Schools is a project of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). Team members are now allocated to the various education management development clinics. When we were working alongside their team during 2000-2001, they were organised as one specialist unit operating from the WCED Head Office. Their brief was to create a safe learning environment within Western Cape schools. They promoted structural, as well as developmental, school safety initiatives.



which schools were operating, and the limitations of the Safe Schools team in terms of the sheer number of schools they were expected to cover in the Western Cape. The proposal we shared that day was designed as a response to the crisis we witnessed within schools.

“Yo, that’s great. So you guys are offering to spend a whole year focusing on two schools. That is something we could never do, given our staff capacity, and the huge number of schools we have to service. The most we spend in any one school would be two to three weeks, and that is normally after some crisis. The minute another disaster happens we’re off again. And so it goes on, always chasing.”

### **The numbers game – the pressure**

We met with one of the Safe Schools programme facilitators. We were reflecting on some of the observations we had made during our presentations in two schools and comparing notes.

She started.

“Well, the theory behind what we are doing looks good. An individual staff member is selected to represent the school on a training course. The assumption is that they will return to their staff teams with specific knowledge and skills, for example conflict resolution. The idea is that they’ll then start a training process amongst their staff. In this way the knowledge, skills and hopefully, the practice, i.e. a conflict-resolution structure, will become firmly established within that particular school. It’s the usual ‘teach one, teach all approach’ - we call it the ‘cascade effect’. But the problem is, it’s not working.”

We responded.

“That’s what we’ve observed. The difficulty is that the cascade approach – ‘teach one, teach all’ - makes a lot of assumptions, one being that the chosen teacher will be able to train fellow teachers. It was also assumed that colleagues will accept training from a peer, and that the staff team will accept, for example, the conflict resolution model that is being suggested. It also assumes that the staff teams are ready to be trained in a particular area, and that the existing dynamics between staff members won’t get in the way of the process. Another huge assumption is that the teacher, after a brief training course, will have enough confidence and expertise to train fellow staff. In our experience, if we take the conflict resolution example, you can only train others after you’ve had enough time implementing and gaining practical experience of the model yourself.”

“I agree. The model we are using comes out of immense pressure – to see immediate results as widely spread as possible. So we’ve rushed into the training process without thinking through the issues. I’ve always felt our approach, without follow-through in the schools afterwards, is doomed to failure. But the pressure on us to produce is enormous. Every educator who attends our training, needs to be mentored in their school in order to ensure implementation.”

“Yes, mentorship would certainly help the situation, but it wouldn’t necessarily resolve some of the assumptions we’ve mentioned. The first mistake is to remove one or two staff members from a school for training. If you want to introduce something new to a school, you have to do it on site, with as many people as possible. You have to

check out the relationships, dynamics and issues in the school before you design your intervention. You have to get buy-in and involve people in the design process. By removing individuals for outside training, you are attempting to short-cut the change process.”

“I can see we’ve got this plant and we’re trying to force it to grow. I know we have to let a plant take its own time so it can grow its roots into the soil. I realise that with this work we should be doing the same.”

## Re-inventing the wheel – the questions

It was after conversations like these that we knew our basic idea, and the offer we were making to schools, was the right thing to do. Safe Schools were very supportive and assisted us in opening doors and selecting schools within which to facilitate the MAD programme. But that was the easy part!

Understandably so. We still had to face resistance from teaching staff within the schools.

For us, facing resistance was all part of the programme. It was a case of working with the resistance to begin communication, to get to know the people and the institution, as well as to allow them to get to know us.

“Why on earth should we accept this programme? In fact a few years ago we had another intervention. Yes, things went well for a while, but slowly over time the energy just fizzled out. The minute the facilitators were gone we stopped implementing what they had done with us. So what’s different with this one? Aren’t we just re-inventing the wheel?”

This was a tough challenge from a tough teacher. After our initial presentation, we returned the following week to face questions and concerns from the staff.

“It sounds to us like the last intervention wasn’t grounded in your school. In other words, it wasn’t integrated into your regular routine, your timetable. It was really just an add-on, and we all know that doesn’t work. Only consider this programme if you truly want to make a difference to your school. First identify where you would like to make a difference and then we can begin to talk. This programme is about you standing up and saying ‘I/we want to make a difference, all we want is support to make that difference happen’. Your desire to make a difference is the root we need to ground this programme. And then, of course, your willingness to do what it takes to make that difference – that is what will make this programme work in your school. Without that desire and that willingness, you shouldn’t be considering this programme, and we shouldn’t be choosing to work here.”

“Can you give us some clear examples of how this programme is different from other approaches that we’ve experienced?”

We highlighted the fact that in order to ground the programme, to make an impact, we work with *all staff* not just with teachers; we work with *adults and youth together*, not just with one group; and we work outside of the school *in the community*, not just in the school.

And, finally, we highlighted the fact that they would be *part of the design process*, and that they would *design and implement their own projects*. In this sense the programme would be *created and driven by them*, because that is what really makes the



difference.

We ended by adding a health warning:

“Taking on this programme will mean extra effort and work. No meaningful difference ever comes without that, and we can also enjoy ourselves at the same time.”

## TOOLS

### Challenges

We faced three core challenges when we focused on people connecting with one another:

- clearly identifying the gaps that existed between people individually, in teams and in groups;
- getting them to connect with each other and close the gap;
- keeping them connected, and preventing the gap from opening up.

Without this connectedness in place, it is extremely difficult, or indeed impossible, to root a programme within a community, be it a school or a neighbourhood.

This kind of work challenged us in many ways:

- keeping a commitment to seeing through a process over an extended period;
- keeping focus and clarity through many different phases of delivery;
- keeping our spirit alive and our energy up through many highs and lows;
- keeping up-to-date with all aspects of the programmes on a regular basis;
- providing ongoing, longer-term support to all programme participants.

Meeting these challenges was critical in getting the programme to a point where it became well established and secure.

### ASSEGAI



In this section the assegai is used as a sharp focusing tool in order to:

- spot the gaps that exist;
- select programme participants;
- discover what causes people to spread themselves too wide and lose focus;
- discover what it takes to have a clear focus and to strike a specific target;
- keep the focus on creating connections;

- hold conversations that go deep into the heart and soul, to enable people to experience a powerful connection with one another.

## Assegai in action

In reviewing our work, the gap between men and boys was very clear and we designed a programme specifically to close that gap. The clarity and sharpness that the insight gave us – identifying the gap, and realising the huge damage to society that was being caused – brought a passion and special dynamic to the design process. This wasn't just another programme, just another piece of work, just another project to facilitate. The costs to society, of boys without fathers and young men without positive adult role models were high, and the programme staff were deeply committed to turning the situation around. When the costs are recognised to be high, it has a wonderful tendency to sharpen the tip of the assegai – it generates energy and passion – and that is exactly what we needed to do the job.

Picking up an assegai and lifting it up high in the air creates a dynamic. Anyone trying to approach this kind of work as just any other job is doomed to failure.

We observed in the Safe Schools scenario that their staff team had no time to even stand still and take aim at any one target. They were trying to hit several targets at the same time - ask a spear thrower, an impossible task! We could also say that they were continually attempting to strike a moving target – ask a hunter, a tough task indeed!

In designing the MAD intervention we used the assegai as a sharp analytical tool, to understand what was happening and to take steps, slowly and methodically, to face it.

If we didn't take the time to stand still, take aim, make the throw and see it land, we could have wasted a huge amount of energy and resources.

In the stories we have examples of:

- *chasing a moving target, always on the move = focusing outwards*  
versus
- *standing still, careful observation and taking aim = focusing inwards;*
- *the cascade effect, attempting to reach as many as possible as soon as possible*  
versus
- *being highly selective, effectively reaching a few at a time.*

## The facilitators' assegai

It was important for both programme facilitators and participants that they identified and shared a personal connection they had with the work.

As facilitators we shared with participants. We also asked them to share with us:

Who are we as people? What is important to us?

What kind of background do we come from?

How have experiences we've had influenced where we are right now?

Why are we doing the work?

Why are we working in that specific community?

What do we care about?

What is the connection between us and this work?

What values do we have that connect us to this work?

What do we wish to get out of it personally?

What kind of results do we wish to see for participants and participating communities?

How are we going to approach the work?

What can people expect from us?

When making initial connections with new people and new communities, there are so many questions people would like to ask, but for many reasons, they don't get to ask. Engaging with these questions allowed all of us to connect with each other and to root our relationships quicker.

We would often answer these unasked questions by taking the initiative:

"I am sure many of you are asking yourselves: What are these whiteys doing here? What do they want? What do they know anyway? They don't even belong here."

We could often feel 'the ice break' when the 'assegai' cut through with direct communication. Through us grasping the assegai, it gave others the encouragement to say what they needed to say, and ask what they needed to ask. In this way we were able to place the programmes we had firmly on the ground for an open and honest discussion. If the above examples of questions were not addressed, they would always get in the way of participants truly connecting with the programme.

### **The reader's assegai**

Are you spreading yourself too thinly?

Are you trying to strike too many targets at once?

Do you identify with any of the situations described in the stories?

What would be your strategy in dealing with any of them?

What are your responses to the questions asked in *Working with men*?

Where are the men in your community? What are they up to?

Are they involved in building community?

What ideas do you have for mobilising these men?

What are relationships like between men and women where you live or work?

What actions could you take to strengthen the relationships between them?

Where you live, have young men got older men to guide them?

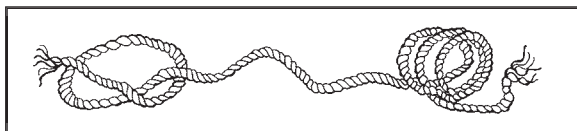
If not, what could you do to bring them together?

Do you observe a gap between school and the community in your area?

What could you do to bridge that gap?

Do you feel you need to create a stronger container, or structure, to be able to hold the changes or differences you would like to make in the work you do?

## ROPE



With the rope we can define space between people and around people. The rope can be tight or loose. It can surround us totally, keeping us bound together and holding us in, or it can have an opening, leaving a gap to enter or exit easily.

In these stories we had numerous examples of circles – some of the circles we created were temporarily set up for a very specific purpose, while others might last for a long time if need be.

The meeting we created to discuss the recruitment of men to become mentors, was an important space to engage the community in this specific conversation. It was temporary in nature but served to spark the project into action, to allow women to voice their opinions and frustrations, while still getting their co-operation.

## Circles

The circles we created for the older men and the younger men stayed in place over nine months, and provided a powerful place of holding, connecting, supporting and communicating among the men.

For example, some of the circles we created in the Hearts of Men programme were:

- Circle of courage – a place in which difficult or painful stories from the past were told.
- Circle of fire – a place in which tough and straight talking could occur between people.
- Circle of forgiveness – where people could let go of, or release, resentment and anger.
- Circle of commitment – where an individual could publicly declare a commitment.

The circles need to be carefully set up and respectfully maintained.

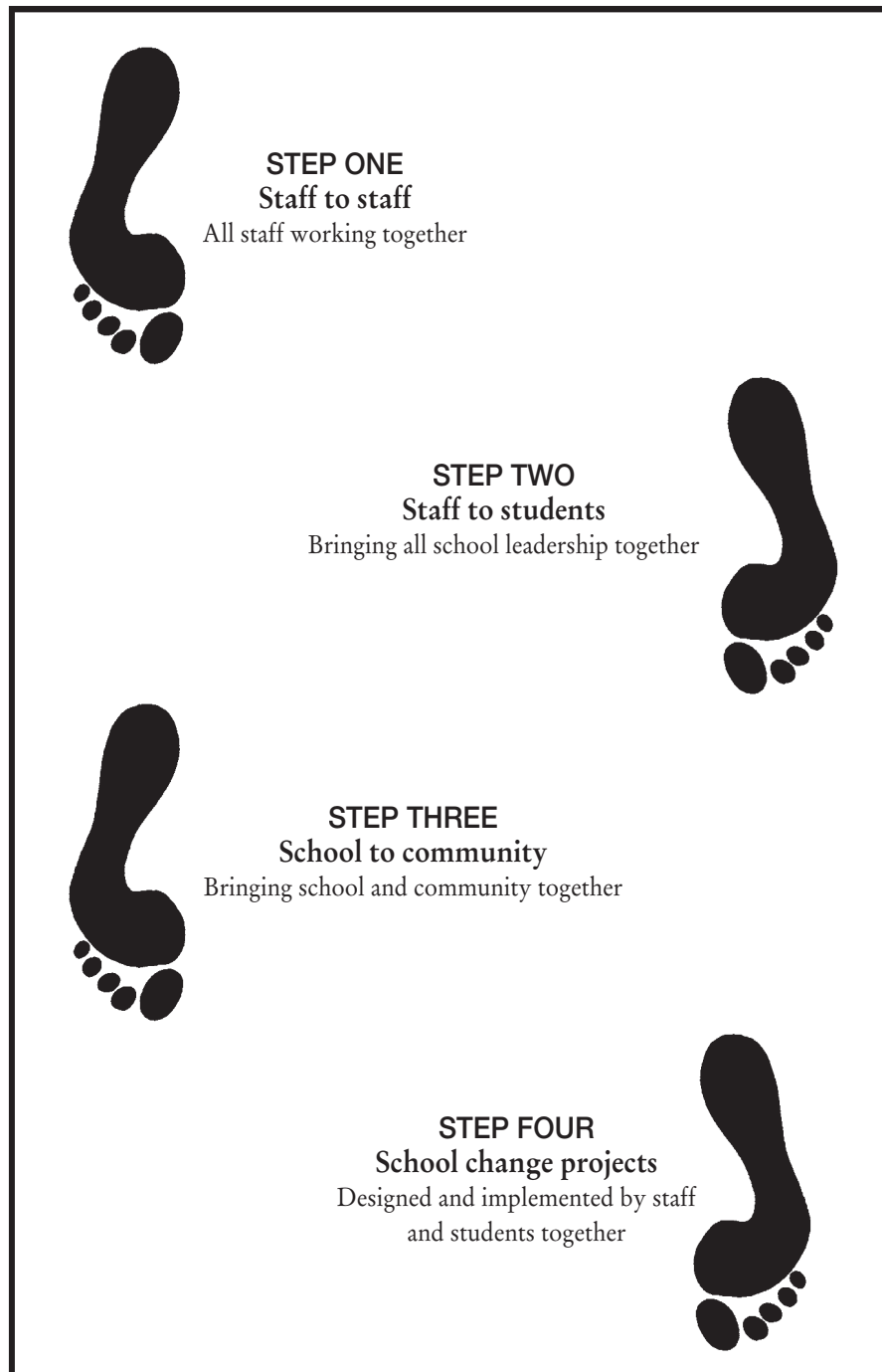
The mentor's poem (*see page 23*) and the man's description of his wilderness experience (*see page 24 – 26*) effectively communicated the power of connectedness for these men: connecting first with themselves as men, and then with each other, and then later with young men/boys. The circles we created assisted and encouraged the participants to build their relationships with one another.

The specific programmes referred to in this chapter and described later in more detail, are clear examples of how a programme can through a strong structure, pro-

vide a powerful holding ground for an individual, a group, a community, an organisation or institution.

The degree to which people share themselves, trust others, dream great dreams, design great projects and sustain the process, often depends on how securely they experienced being held during the process.

### An example - MAD schools leadership programme design structure:



### Creating structures for holding Contracts

Establishing a set of clear agreements that are drafted into a contract, is an important component in all our programmes.

These contracts contain, for example:

- overall aims and objectives
- who does what
- when
- where
- at what stage of the project
- who is involved
- preparations
- special requirements
- reporting process
- communication channels and guidelines
- conflict resolution strategies
- all financial arrangements and accountabilities

We use the process of creating the contract to help connect the individuals, school or community to the programme. The agreements are reached through a series of meetings, discussions and negotiations. Through this process we create a sense of ownership on all sides. It is a document we can refer to at any stage of the process. We often use the contract to help introduce a new phase of the programme, for example, project design and delivery. Participants sometimes forget what they agreed to six months earlier when the programme began. The contract always assists us as a reminder of what we had all agreed on. It holds us accountable to each other.

The Hearts of Men programme also creates a set of specific agreements that are recorded and signed by all parties. Some of these contracts include:

- agreement with participating schools,
- agreement with parents and guardians,
- participation contract for older men acting as mentors,
- participation contract for each young man.

The agreements of the mentors and the boys also contain a commitment to attaining certain personal goals during the programme. Some of these are:

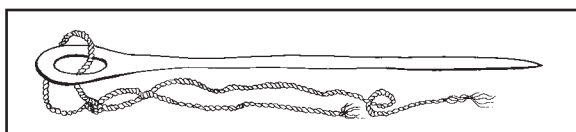
- a goal for me with myself,
- a goal for me with my family,
- a goal for me with my community.

## Design team

In the schools' work we always set up a design team that meet regularly, and are actively involved in structuring and monitoring the programme through all its phases. We create a co-design working relationship. Often the first task is to draft a contract together, which then becomes our guiding document.

We create a practice of ongoing agreements that are recorded in writing throughout the process. The design is open to regular reflection and is constantly revised. We create a clear communication channel between the facilitating team and the design team, through the appointment of a co-ordinator from each side.

## NEEDLE and THREAD



The connecting of people, the weaving together of hearts and minds to build stronger relationships, is a critical part of rooting the programme inside people, and so making it sustainable. We have *six steps* for taking people through this connecting process:

- **Acknowledging that a gap actually exists**

Without this recognition there is no point in continuing. Sometimes people fight or resist acknowledging that a gap really does exist. A participant would often declare that “everything is okay”, when clearly it isn't.

Resistance to acknowledging the gap could be driven by fear, by an awareness that once the gap is named, it has to be faced. And that can be tough and difficult, so it may seem an easier option at the time to say that “everything is okay”. Resistance to acknowledging the distance between people could also be driven by a sense of resignation - a belief that nothing will change anyway, so “why even bother talking about it?”

This process involves choosing the programme in the first place.

“If there is no gap, if nothing is missing for you, then why choose this programme?”

So acknowledging is our first important step.

- **Getting people to turn and face each other**

Acknowledging is one thing, but often when there is a profound gap between people, they are actually facing opposite directions. Because of the gap they have turned away from each other or have lost touch with each other. In such a situation getting them to at least turn towards each other, and to face each other, is crucial. This step provides the impetus for the next step.

This second step is also key to choosing the programme and agreeing to all aspects of its implementation. If people are not facing each other they can't enter into any agreements, and without these agreements, it is impossible *getting* our work *into the earth*.

- **Clearing the ground between them**

When a gap emerges between individuals or groups, it normally gets filled with conflict, misunderstandings, gossip, loss of trust, etc. That space has to be cleared before any real re-connecting is possible. This clearing process is described in *Stepping through fire and water*.

- **Moving closer to one another**

As the ground between people begins to get cleared, the obstacles that prevented them from closing the gap are gradually removed. This now allows for a bit more movement to take place. Once we get some momentum going, it is always easier to make further moves. This process is highlighted in *Breathing air*, where we describe how people start to articulate and share their dreams with one another.

- **Connecting with one another**

We use projects as a method to connect people. There is no better way to do this than through collective action. People engage in designing and planning specific change projects that they have conceptualised together. We describe this in *From air to earth*.

- **Maintaining the progress that has been made**

A tough stage this one! Just when we think the job is done! This stage is reflected in *Back into the earth*.

Connecting and building powerful relationships is an ongoing process. We begin with getting down to earth with people, and we go on a journey through fire, water and air, and we come full circle by going back into the earth.

## **Ritual and ceremony**

Ritual and ceremony provide strong threads that hold people and communities together. They provide richness, a living experience, and tend to bond the group and create a common language. They ground people within a group, a community, and a culture.

### **Examples:**

- Using wilderness/nature to produce a different environment and experience. Solo time, during which a man or boy spend between 12 and 48 hours alone, without food, to connect with the past, with ancestors, and to look into the future.
- Face painting and mask making – rituals to vision and to dream.
- Creating and exploring different male archetypes, for example the King, the Magician, the Warrior and the Lover.
- Special openings and closings for each weekly session, such as fire lighting.
- Creating special ceremonies to mark significant moments or transitions:
  - the boys leaving for the wilderness,
  - the boys being greeted back into the community,
  - the solo walk through the centre of the hall surrounded by fellow students,
  - the sealed message from an educator for every young man,
  - the band accompanying the boys through the streets of the community.
- Creating a special relationship between mentors and boys
  - handing over beads, one for each day of their quest.
- Naming ceremonies in which the young men each receive an animal name that describes their character, from an older man.



- Washing the body in a river as a symbol of letting go the past, of purification.
- Receiving a gift of a blanket as a symbol of community and belonging.

### **Creating a weave in our programme design**

We created a powerful weave by bringing three programme initiatives into one community, and by designing an integration between the three components:

- MAD in the schools
- Going for Gold in the local community
- Hearts of Men - men guiding boys to be men

### **DANGER ZONE**

A health warning – remember this: Gaps that were once open and are now closed can very easily open up again. The closed gap needs ongoing maintenance to remain closed, to keep people connected to one another.

So often good work is done in closing a gap, and then we all take a break, and before we know it, we are feeling out of touch. Sustaining the connection is critical. Ongoing work and deepening relationships is a good way to prevent the gaps from re-appearing.

Remember when things are going well, get them to go better. Don't make the mistake of sitting back and thinking all is well and all will be well.

Sometimes things get worse before they get better. Sometimes when we go through the process of making a difficult connection, of speaking the truth, of challenging each other, our relationship can go through a turbulent time – we need to get through the storm till we get to calm waters. When anger comes up for one, it can often trigger off anger in others. A storm can erupt – but storms don't last forever!

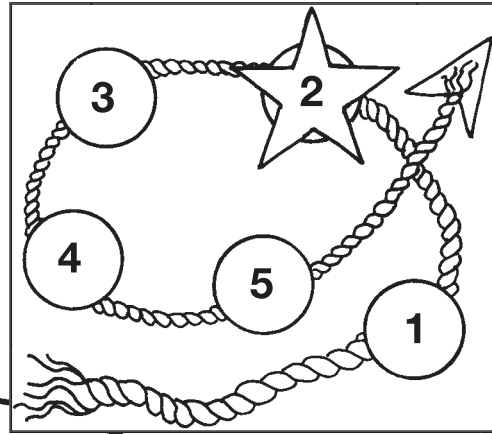
This work needs staying power and resilience – not for the faint hearted!

Be prepared to see things through, to hang in there when the going gets tough.

When connections are made then broken, people tend to get cynical, to blame the process or something else, and want to give up. Always a critical time when the container, the structure, gets tested. You will need lots of rope for holding, and remember, keep weaving and strengthening the process all the time!

People must always be at the centre of the process. They must own the experience, create their own connectedness with each other. We can't do it for somebody else, we can only do it for ourselves, and support others in doing it for themselves.

## THE SECOND COURSE:



### **CLEARING THE GROUND**

A community is based on strong relationships. They are the binding, the glue, between people. The quality of our relationships provides a foundation and platform on which we construct our lives, beliefs, systems, and economic and social institutions. When gaps emerge between people, when relationships break down, we often find conflict, misunderstanding, gossip and lack of trust.

In *Stepping through fire and water* we work towards clearing the ground and resolving issues which stand in the way of building a sense of community.

## Preparing for fire and water – dangerous journey

The students had divided themselves into two teams, Tigers & Gladiators.

The Tigers were stuck in the middle of the hall. The front chair had been pushed almost out of reach. Two people to a chair, they were hanging and clinging onto each other. All eight of them squashed onto five chairs. Sarah, who was blindfolded, was swaying from side to side, trying to find a balance with her smaller and shorter partner. She needed to relax and trust her teammates.

Under pressure from the shortage of space on the chairs, the plan they had worked out before was breaking down. Everyone in each other's faces, stuck together, no distance between people. They needed a plan B and they needed it quickly.

The Gladiators had built up a rhythm and were advancing across the room, chairs being passed from hand to hand as they built their bridge across the floor. Using a song to keep everybody together and working as a team.

We were doing an exercise called *Dangerous journey*, which challenges each individual, together with their team, to cross through 'the poison lake'. Safety was the opposite side of the hall and a 'poison lake' covered the floor. A set of chairs was all they had to keep above this dangerous surface.

The Gladiators' rhythm broke. Elma, who was blindfolded, had stepped out, feeling for the chair and not finding it. For a moment she tottered on the chair shouting crossly at anybody who would listen. David took charge and pulled her back, causing him to fall on the person behind. A dispute broke out over whose responsibility it was to keep Elma safe. Was it the person in front or the person behind? Victor and Phillip, at the back to anchor the team, became impatient and started shouting to get moving. Emotions were building quickly in the team as they struggled with taking responsibility and keeping each other safe, rather than blaming someone for the breakdown.

Meanwhile the Tigers had found a way back into the exercise. Beatrice, prepared to trust and take a risk, was stretching across the gap trying to hook the chair with her feet. Jeanine was holding onto her right hand as if her life depended on it! She was good at encouraging others to take the lead. The rest of the team was screaming encouragement and advice. Sarah was held by her partner and having the situation calmly explained to her. Beatrice hooked the chair with her feet and they were on the move again, trying to rush to catch up to the Gladiators.

David was trying to calm everybody down and stop them arguing. Phillip was shouting that they would never make it, but his scepticism was lost in the noise. David tried to restart the rhythm by singing. A few people picked it up. Victor was encouraging everybody to put blame aside and get moving again. They had only a third of the hall still to cover and they would be through to the other side. If they could work as a team, they could make it.

There was a loud crash followed by screams of laughter. Sarah had fallen off her chair into the poison lake. In the end she hadn't trusted Chessy enough to hold someone of her size safely. The Tigers were down to seven members and four chairs. Crushed together on their chairs, the team had a quick conference about what to do. Awkwardly, stepping on feet and almost falling off, Greg shifted to the front. He was the steady one in the team, a man of few words and lots of action. He got them going again, cautiously passing the back chair, hand to hand till it reached the front. Clutch-

ing and clinging to each other, the team made progress. They were almost level with the Gladiators.

The two teams started shouting at each other, trying to encourage disruption and have fun at the same time. Greg called his team to order, trying to egg everyone on. The two teams were moving almost side by side. They had sorted out how to do it and they were almost through the poison lake. With the end in sight everyone began to get excited and the noise got louder. Victor, losing concentration for a moment, fell off his chair, taking Phillip with him.

The Tigers edged ahead. Ten metres more and they were through! A cheer went up as the Tigers and then the Gladiators reached the other side. Each team was given five minutes to debrief and try and make sense of the exercise and its link to the task that faced them. We then gathered to hear the report-backs.

David, speaking for the Gladiators, reported: “We said that crossing the poison lake was good preparation for team work. The exercise needed us to listen carefully, trust and support each other. If we could do this then we could overcome our obstacles. But if we blamed each other and got cross quickly, then we would fail. We said that it wouldn’t help to blame somebody and get stuck in a fight. We needed to say our say and move on.”

Beatrice spoke for the Tigers: “In the beginning we were uncertain as to how we would cross over. Some of us felt that the exercise was a waste of time as we’re here to start changing and sorting out our problems. By the end we had changed! We realised that if we were going to solve our problems, we would have to change. That exercise felt like we were walking through fire!”

## **Stepping into the blaze**

### **Tough talk – getting straight to the heart of the matter**

It happened on my 45<sup>th</sup> birthday, the day I threw the assegai. I picked it up, balanced my feet, aimed with my heart and threw. It sliced through the air and hit the target. It felt like a bomb had exploded in the room. There was complete silence afterwards.

It was the second day of the staff workshop, and things were not looking good. The venue was small and stuffy. 40 people were squashed into the library. It was very unusual for all the staff to be together for a whole day in one room, thinking about how they work as a team.

We were joined by an outsider, John, a programme evaluator reporting directly to the funder of the project. I was feeling resentful. It was my birthday and I would be spending it airing other people’s dirty washing.

Since we had started the afternoon before, we had been struggling to keep participants on time and committed to the workshop. We had already been through a lot of confrontation and straight talking about attitudes and responsibilities for the problems and difficulties the school was in. We had not broken through and time to do so was running out. The stakes were high.

We were in the session after the break, with everybody full of tea and sandwiches. Participants were riding high on energy after big doses of sugar and nicotine. Everyone sat in groups together, waiting for either Nic or myself to continue. It was Nic’s

turn to get us going.

We were discussing the problems in the school, the way they repeated themselves, and how they had become patterns of acceptable behaviour. We saw this as a vicious cycle that many were comfortable with, and mostly no one wanted to break.

The closer we came to the heart of the problem, the more the group began acting up, trying to divert the discussion, becoming noisy, sending notes around the room, eating or reading. I'd been watching this build up for about 45 minutes, feeling increasingly alarmed and searching for strategies to assist Nic. How to do it? How to force the group out of its comfort zone and straight into looking in the mirror? It hit me with ice-cold clarity. I had to throw the assegai. I began to feel the nerves, the first rush of adrenalin. The moment to gamble was now! Cut straight to the heart of the matter. Risk success or failure of the programme on one throw.

The adrenalin started pumping. I felt it start in my toes and rush up pounding into my heart. The warrior in me started to come out. Okay, time to dance. Time to lift the assegai. I tried to stay calm and gain balance and focus. I wasn't sure what I would say, but I had to say it!

I jumped up and shouted: "Stop, Nic! Stop just a moment!"

I saw Nic's startled expression as he looked at me. He stepped back and I jumped into the middle of the room. I threw the assegai: "So far and no further! This is the hardest workshop I have ever done in my 20 years as a facilitator! I have been to crazy places with people. Walked in fires with them! But not like this! Look at yourselves eating, joking, and sending notes around the room, avoiding discussing the real problems. Playing games and hoping to get through till lunchtime. Coming late or not coming at all, not preparing lessons, teachers smoking in class and punishing youth for smoking, some of you come to school smelling of alcohol or having had a drink! That's the picture your students painted of you!

"Acting this way and not taking responsibility for it is causing a gap in this school. Separating you from each other into cliques and informal networks. Making it impossible to work together, to learn from each other and get on top of your difficulties. Together you can break the cycle, but you have to choose. You have to say stop! No further! If you continue to act like this you are destroying the education chances of 1 300 young people."

There was an embarrassed silence of people caught out and forced to confront what they see in the mirror. I let the silence grow. You must feel the tip of the assegai for it to be effective. You must feel uncomfortable. Change is pain. That's how it is!

I had just about enough energy and guts for the last part of the throw: "Today. Here and now, on my 45<sup>th</sup> birthday, I want to challenge you all. Are you staring hope or no hope in the face?

What's the answer for each of you? Do you want a challenging dynamic workplace or do you want to continue in this mess? Do you want the students to look at you and say 'I don't want to be like that'? Or do you want to inspire your students? Do you want to produce rocket scientists or gangsters? You are all responsible for your own motivation, as an individual and as a member of this staff team. Stop being a victim! Stand up, fight back, change yourselves and change the circumstances here within the school. Clean up your act and stop your contribution to this mess. Do it now and do



it together, before it's too late."

I knew I had to stop before I started to rave. I looked around the room, took a deep breath and sat down. Now what? The atmosphere in the room was edgy and confrontational. Was I too reckless or did my assegai hit the target? I glanced up at our evaluator, John. He was staring at me transfixed. I had just broken all the rules for facilitators. If I had blown it, would the money for the project go out the door? How to win John over? We all sat waiting for a minute or two. Having looked into their soul, the group was busy deciding how to react.

Nic stepped forward. From where I was sitting I couldn't see his expression.

We needed his calmness then if we were to get through this outburst in one piece.

"Mmh. Strong words. Does anyone want to respond to Mike?" he said in a calm, steady voice. The uneasy, undecided silence continued.

"Suleiman, you want to say something?" asked Nic, prompting him, and seeing his fear of stepping into the fire and getting burned wrestling with his need to speak. Suleiman the brave, one of the key change agents in the group. I wondered if he would find the warrior inside himself. Somehow he did.

On his feet, his normally jovial face took on a fearsome power as he threw his own assegai: "It's true what Mike says. All of us know that. But no one wants to be responsible for reporting colleagues. All of us are in the union, including management, but they don't want to discipline union members. We are working in a conspiracy of silence that's making the situation much worse. We are all protecting each other. So it's not surprising how the children behave. We are not really protecting each other! We are committing suicide together. Who can really say in the last year, month or week, I haven't broken my teachers' code of conduct? Let us agree from now on to support each other when we are making mistakes. Point it out to your colleagues; help them to put it right. And if it's still wrong, then so be it - staff must be disciplined. Let the learners be inspired by who we are as educators."

Suleiman slowly looked round the room, taking in each staff member one at a time.

"This is a school with a proud tradition of encouraging change. If we take responsibility for who we are and how we behave as staff, great changes will happen inside the fences of this school."

Suleiman sat down firmly. Six or seven hands went up. Direct, sharp comments followed one another. Assegais were coming from all directions now. The mood was shifting and I started to feel that the gamble may have worked. The discussion was certainly getting hot.

Nic kept the assegai in the target and everybody focused on it. Slowly acknowledgment of the problems and the need to break the cycle spread throughout the room. Ideas of taking responsibility and change began to dominate the conversation. The group was quiet and focused. Soon we would be able to move on and search for the root of why this kind of behaviour had happened in the first place.

John, sitting next to me, muttered in my ear, "Astounding risking everything like that. Are you sure you should confront them with the heart of the matter? Aren't you overstepping the mark? Do you have agreement from the staff to speak your mind? Isn't it a better process when the group discover the answer themselves?" I looked him in the eye and smiled. I had thrown and reached the target. The process could move

forward. That's all that mattered then.

I answered him: "Being a facilitator is an art, like being an actor. You need to dig deep and draw on the many parts of your character; you can't be only one thing. Sometimes it's the warrior, sometimes the nurturer, sometimes the questioner, sometimes immovable, sometimes friendly, helpful and smiling. And I believe as a facilitator I should always be honest, direct and sincere."

### **Into the hot seat – calling a spade a spade**

In another school it was the same. Once again we were facing resistance, which was normal for this part of the process, given that we were 'walking through fire'. We had introduced the *Hot seat* exercise, in which we provide a specially designated chair, from which a participant is given the opportunity to speak their truth.

Nobody wanted to come up to begin the process of straight talking and clearing up the past. Nobody wanted to acknowledge their contribution to the difficult situation the school was in, or to cut through the mask of indifference they had created to cope with it.

Like a tortoise timidly venturing out of its shell, the first teacher stood up and came and sat in the chair. It was Denise Drummond, a young teacher in a temporary post, someone possibly with less at stake than the other staff. Most of the other staff members had worked in this school for over 10 years. For them there was a lot at stake.

Mike asked her why she had come to the 'hot seat'.

"I would like to share with my fellow teachers some of the difficulties I am having with the Grade 10s. Maybe they can advise me?" Great moments often have tentative beginnings.

The mask was about to slip.

Denise continued: "The boys in the class do not respect me and don't listen to what I say and they sometimes make sexual remarks. I don't know what to do. When I came from college I had so many ideas but they don't seem to work." The other staff members nodded in comfortable agreement. Everyone knew exactly which Grade 10s Denise was talking about, and how college never prepared anyone for the real world.

"Denise why do the learners not respect you?" Mike asked.

"They don't have respect for themselves and they have nobody to learn it from."

"What about at school? Shouldn't they be learning respect for themselves and others at school? From the staff at school, especially the men who should be role models for younger boys?" pursued Mike.

Denise hesitated as she realised the point she had led us to. She was faced with a choice to cut the crap and tell it like it was, or retreat into half-truths, a hard place to be for a temporary member of staff. She tried a compromise between both extremes. "I try my best to teach them respect and to be respectful back to the learners, but it is very difficult in the classroom."

She was becoming pale and tense as she answered the questions.

Mike tried again. "Denise, have you asked for help from the teachers in the classrooms on either side of you?"

Denise quickly glanced across the room at Mr Hunter. "I have tried, but he is not always there in his classroom."

“Where is he?”

“He is out of the school doing things.”

“Out of school doing things? Isn’t he supposed to be in the classroom? All teachers are supposed to be in the school”, persisted Mike.

Denise got red in the face and struggled a bit to find her voice. “He is bunking school, and myself and Mr. Rheede cover up for him. We don’t tell the principal.”

There was a mixture of tension and expectation in the room. Mike was intent on digging deeper into the pit and asked, “Denise, do you think any of the Grade 10s have seen Mr Hunter go? Or know that you and Mr Rheede cover up for him?”

“Yes, they do,” she said, almost in a whisper. “The other day during my class they were laughing about it.”

“So, if the learners see teachers doing it, what’s the effect on them?” asked Mike.

“Well, they will also act like that” responded Denise.

Nic stepped in and turned to the other staff.

“Yesterday when we did the exercise *Taking a stand*, you all spoke of honesty and openness. Now is your chance to put it into practice. Who else on the staff bunks school? Who covers up for you?”

Mr Le Grange, the principal, suddenly jumped up and started shouting. “Stop, no further! I have had enough of this! Teachers accusing each other is not going to help us improve the school. We are here for training in how to build up the school, not break it down. I, as principal of the school, say you must stop this, Mike!”

Nic asked Mr Le Grange to explain why he was responding in such an extreme way. Nic reminded him that he had said that the MAD programme was their last option for turning the school around. It was a confessional moment for Mr Le Grange, a moment to dig deep inside himself. He was still standing, almost frozen in the moment of choice.

Watching this, Mike threw Mr Le Grange a life jacket. “Mr Le Grange, you are not to blame for what is happening at the school. If you take that approach, blame will lead to guilt and then you will be unable to change the situation. Everyone needs to take responsibility for what is happening - staff, students and parents. If everyone acknowledges what they are doing to make the situation the way it is and takes responsibility to change it, then you can. That is the difference between hope and no hope. If we stop now, each one of us will continue to reproduce the problem and things will remain the same. If we understand the problem and fight against it, we will succeed.”

Eventually Mr Le Grange sat down. Looking a bit shaken, he started to talk. “Ever since I was a young boy I have been scared of failure, of not succeeding. I was always under pressure to do as well as my brother, and never did. When I didn’t, I covered it up by pretending I was succeeding. I suppose I am doing this here at school. Not acknowledging my failure. Pretending I am doing OK.”

A teacher put her hand up. “I think that it is not Mr Le Grange who is not succeeding, it is us. All of us adults at the school, we have lost touch with the learners, with ourselves and our profession. When a learner comes to school hungry, we pretend we don’t see it, when he or she has a problem at home, we pretend we don’t see it. When a staff member does something wrong, we turn the other way. We have lost touch. On the dot of 3 pm we go home. It is time to reconnect with ourselves.”



It was time for a break.

## Out of the fire and into the water

### A leader speaks

Mrs Claasen, the school principal, wrote about her experience of being in the ‘hot seat’:

Only later people discovered how mad the programme really was when they were faced with the ‘hot seat’ issues. A decline in excitement became evident as people started to feel uncomfortable and unsafe in criticising and disagreeing with each other openly. Volunteers for the ‘hot seat’ became scarce as people thought twice of exposing themselves and others. Emotions also ran high and for some it felt like entering a battlefield with those they love and respect. Suggestions were made to leave this part of the programme and the facilitators were frowned upon at this moment.

The sun never ceases to shine after a storm, let it out and deal with it. Many realised that problems must be seen as a challenge, and, in order to level the playing fields, we must know where all the potholes are. Even the breaks were tense.

This part of the programme carried on till the next day and the more we dealt with it, the better it felt. The teaching and support staff, for the first time, were locked in discussions and were very eager to highlight their concerns.

All were allowed to speak from their hearts and make a difference to issues that really bothered them. This was the turning point of the workshop and it made everyone realise that if we intend to succeed we have to respect, support and acknowledge each other.

We have definitely sailed away from our safe harbour and we are anxiously waiting to catch the trade winds in our sails.

Mrs Claasen demonstrated lots of courage and leadership during our staff workshop in her school. There were 27 adults in the room: teachers, administrative staff, the cleaners, the caretaker and parents from the governing body.

Mrs Claasen settled down in the chair. “Ag, man, let me go first and clear my heart. I am an isolated leader and I want to break that isolation. I sit alone in my office, thinking am I doing the right thing? Am I doing OK as a leader of the school? Nobody says anything to me.”

“Why is it like that?” Nic asked.

“Everybody always smiles and says, ‘Yes, Mrs Claasen, of course, Mrs Claasen, three bags full, Mrs Claasen.’ But I never hear a word of criticism. I only hear it whispered in the corridors! So-and-so says such-and-such about you. Information traded to get on my good side! I have had enough of this. I love this school. I have been here for nearly 26 years and I am proud to be the principal. It is an honour. But I want to

be the captain of one team not three or four different teams!”

“That’s what’s happening and how you feel about it. Let’s try and focus on why it is happening,” Nic responded.

“Because we are scared of what will happen to us if we speak out. Scared of what people will say about us. We also want to protect our friends when they don’t do their work or slip out somewhere. So we keep quiet and don’t say anything. We want to look good in front of those with power over us.”

“What do you do to create this situation?” Nic asked.

Mrs Brandt, one of the teachers, jumped up and started talking in a voice full of disbelief.

“This is enough! You can’t ask a principal that! She is our leader!”

“Thanks, Mrs Brandt. But I disagree with you - it is precisely the question we should ask of a leader. The principal is asking for feedback on her performance. That won’t help her unless she understands why she doesn’t get feedback now and how she contributes to this situation.

We are facilitating the process and you will have to trust us for now. In a few moments we will give everyone a chance to give Mrs Claasen some feedback on her performance, both her strengths and her weaknesses.”

While Mike was speaking Mrs Claasen started crying and everyone went still. Mike paused to give people a chance to respond to their principal crying. No one moved. A gap between staff and principal, unmasked, confronted us all. We were at the bottom of a pit.

“You know people, I am not crying because I feel sad. I do, but I am also relieved. Ek het myself leeg gemaak! The problem is now out in the open,” responded Mrs Claasen in tears, pushing her glasses back to wipe them. “What do I do to make it like this? Well, Nic, I am probably not firm enough and I don’t always treat everyone equally. I should do more to enforce school policy.”

Mike asked everyone to give feedback to Mrs Claasen by saying one thing they admired about her as a leader, something she needed to improve on and what support they could offer her to do this. One by one we went around the room. Everyone was asked to talk directly to Mrs Claasen. We heard acknowledgment of her as a leader, as well as the difficulties encountered with her style of leadership. The expectations she had of staff were not clear, neither were the boundaries. As each person responded, they revealed as much about themselves as they did about their contribution to the gap between principal and staff. As we moved around the room more tears were shed. It was as if they were all washing the past clean.

Mrs Claasen sat and listened with enormous dignity and respect, thanking each person in turn. By reaching out emotionally she was filling the gap, and the group drew closer together.

You could feel it was a moment for recreating a new environment. This process took a couple of hours as each staff member was given a chance to have their say. Eventually everyone was feeling tired and drained. When the process was complete, relief surged through the room. It was over, but something fundamental had changed. The principal had spoken out. The staff had followed suit. The gap was starting to close, but what would happen now? What would be their new way of relating to their

principal, and to each other?

The principal had the last word. “You know, at first I was scared to come into the ‘hot seat’, but having done it I now feel a sense of freedom. I said what I needed to say, things I haven’t been able to say before. I want to give the ‘hot seat’ a new name. From today on we should call it the ‘freedom chair’!”

And so we did.

## **Respek vir ek, respek die plek**

The end of break bell had just rung. We were standing around in little groups, waiting to restart the prefects’ workshop.

“Jou platneus!” Shinaaz dissed (*showed disrespect to*) Ruth. Sparks flew across the room.

Mike intervened. “What is going on?”

Bodies and tongues swiftly went still, eyes looked everywhere except at Mike.

There was silence. Tension built in the room. Ruth was on the edge of tears. Mike called everyone to stand together. Dragging feet, they ended up in a circle with Shinaaz and Ruth opposite each other. The silence and tension was about to break into fire.

“Can somebody explain what just happened?” Mike asked.

Zureida, the head girl, raised her hand. “Shinaaz and Ruth have been fighting. Shinaaz called Ruth an ugly name.”

Mike, not realising the seriousness of what had happened, asked Shinaaz to apologise.

There was no response.

“Zureida, can you tell us what Shinaaz said?” asked Nic.

“She called her a *platneus*.”

“What does that expression mean, *platneus*?”

“Flat nose, like a bushman! She is a bushman girl!” answered Faidel almost whispering, fearing what would happen if he said it out loud.

Ruth started crying. Zureida, Ruth’s friend, moved closer to protect her.

Mike encouraged, “Go on, Zureida, hold her, put your arms around her. It is good to show support.” Ruth relaxed against her, crying but held.

Nic grasped the bull firmly by the horns and continued. “Anybody want to explain to us a bit more why *platneus* is such an insult? Crystal?”

“It means that you are not the same as us, you are stupid and live in the bush!”

“How do you think it made Ruth feel?” asked Mike.

“Terrible.”

“How do you think Shinaaz was feeling when she said it?”

There was surprise at the question. The group was just getting ready to hear the juicy bits!

“She must have been feeling bad to hurt someone like that. Maybe something happened to her at break?” commented Zureida.

“Did it Shinaaz?” asked Mike.

Shinaaz remained quiet, arms folded, body stiff with pride.

Mike asked, “Who is Shinaaz’s friend?”

Two girls put up their hands.

“Candice and Fayruz, can you go and stand with her and hold her? Anybody know why I am asking the two of them to do this? I am not asking them to take sides, so why am I doing it? David?”

“When things are going round and round inside you, it helps to cool you off if your friends support you.”

“Yes, I agree - now everyone knows we are here for both Ruth and Shinaaz and we are going to sort out the problem. Candice, Fayruz, any body know how Shinaaz was feeling today? Or if something bad happened to her at break?”

“Ruth is always holding herself special. Shinaaz had to show her who she is, to put her in her place!”

“So who else here also shows everyone how tough they can be? Come on, let’s be honest!”

A few hands went up. Nic laughed and said, “So everyone is playing *Bombs and shields*, just like the game we played this morning. Come on, let’s hear some of the other bombs you throw at each other! Some of the hard, hurtful things you say to one another!”

“You pig.” “You kaffir!” “Your father is a drunkard!” “Your mother is a prostitute!” were shouted from different parts of the room. Nic continued “If you are one of the prefects who throws these kind of bombs at each other, put your hand up.” Most of the hands went up.

“So it’s not only Shinaaz, most of you do it. What is the same about all these insults?”

Tyrone answered. “You say something about their family that will make them cross or you say something bad about how they look.”

“So the bombs are made of insults about people. Like in the game, the bombs push us further away from each other. How do we feel when bombs are exploding around us all the time?”

Shahid spoke for the first time. “You enjoy it! It’s fun! You throw a bomb and then see what happens.”

Jenny jumped in quickly, “No, Shahid, that’s stupid – look, if we all throw bombs at each other then we don’t respect ourselves. Remember the MAD motto: *Respek vir Ek! Respek die Plek!*”

Mike added, “So the cause of the problem is that we don’t respect ourselves and so we don’t respect others. All of you throwing bombs of disrespect to each other and it goes round and round, like a wheel, like a vicious cycle. You are all caught up in it. In the community, with your parents, the staff and the students, over and over, the same thing. Showing who you are. Are there any other ways to show people who you are besides dissing (*disrespecting*) them? That shows us you have respect for yourself and others? That will show us you are a fighter for respect? This may help us find a way to break this vicious cycle.”

Shinaaz was still standing, her eyes staring down, her friends close by. Ruth continued to cry softly but began to take notice of what was happening around her.

Crystal responded, “By doing good things and remembering what Mike said before about being a peacemaker and helping your friends?”

“How can we do that here in the room? Showing people who you are by fighting

for peace? Zureida?” asked Nic.

“I think Shinaaz should apologize!”

Shinaaz didn’t move. Shouts came from different parts of the room. “Come on, Shinaaz, apologise! Just do it and then it’s finished! Apologise girl! It is nothing!” Under the pressure Shinaaz began to crumble. Her body shaking, she squeezed out an apology.

“Louder, Shinaaz, everybody must hear! Come on!” pressurised Mike.

“I am sorry!” Shinaaz’s mask cracked and she started crying. Candice and Fayruz moved even closer.

Nic asked, “Do you accept the apology, Ruth? Ok, Shinaaz has said sorry and Ruth accepts, but is the problem solved?”

“No, they must forgive each other and start again. They must hug each other and we can carry on with the workshop,” insisted Zureida.

The distance between the two girls suddenly became the focus of everybody’s attention.

Mike added, “As leaders, when we are trying to solve conflict, we should make sure that the peace bridge is built from both sides. You must build the bridge between people from both sides!”

Again calls from other prefects. “Come on, girl, do it!” “Hug her!” “It will cost you nothing!”

The pressure was building. Ruth moved slightly forward. Shinaaz remained fixed to her spot. Under the careful guidance of Zureida, Ruth took another step then stopped. Fayruz pushed Shinaaz gently forward. There was a moment of complete stillness with everyone waiting, expectant, and then it was over. The two girls hugged; everyone clapped. The tension began to evaporate.

Mike asked everyone to sit down, and then continued, “The problem is not yet solved. We should support Shinaaz and Ruth with suggestions of what they can do to repair the situation and make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

Zureida, always the peacemaker, went first. “I think they should learn to be friends and get along with each other. If they know each other better, then they will really show who they are! We as prefects must stand together and show the children who we are! We must be role models for everyone, including the teachers.”

“How can we make sure that the two get to know each other? Can we ask Zureida, Candice and Fayruz to make sure this happens? To be the builders, the people who help build the bridge from both sides? Perhaps you can report to us the next time we meet?”

Mrs Reynolds, the staff member responsible for the prefects, started to speak.

“Up until now I have been quiet, watching how Nic and Mike dealt with the situation.

I am amazed! What a way to solve conflict. Normally we would have made Shinaaz go to the office. There the teacher or the principal would make her feel ashamed of what she had done and then punish her. She would feel small, afraid and alone. By bringing it out into the open Shinaaz did feel ashamed, but in front of everyone. We could all learn from what happened and see that we often do the same thing. It is not only Shinaaz who does this. It is very good to solve conflict out in the open, where

everybody has to take responsibility for what they have done and we can all learn from each other. We should do this more often at the school.

I want to make a suggestion that I will discuss with other staff. Like we have prefects, we should elect another group of leaders in the school who will have the special task of making peace at school, and helping each other solve fights when they break out. We could call them the peacemakers, and they could all learn how to solve conflict.”

## Stepping out of the water

### The emergence of ‘the A-Team’

The classifications ‘non-white’ and ‘non-European’ are concepts, words from the past. We proudly say, “The old language of apartheid is dead. In South Africa today we no longer define people by what they are not, as non-somethings. Now, you are what you are.” But this peculiar way of describing people is still very much alive. We have to look no further than the new Education Act. In our schools, administrators, secretaries, caretakers, cleaners and maintenance teams are collectively referred to as non-teaching staff. This terminology is currently widely used by educators. Does it really matter? Aren’t we being just a little pedantic, when we question our use of language?

Well, we found out that it did matter to some. We found out because those people who were referred to as the non-teaching staff pointed it out, and stated very clearly that to them it was unacceptable.

We were in a staff workshop in one of the primary schools. It was now the second day, and we noticed that of the staff team, only teachers had spoken about issues that affected them and their school. The rest of the team was silent. Understandably so, as they were nervous. This was their first time in a staff training, meeting or workshop. They were the excluded group - the school secretary, the cleaner and the caretaker.

When we gave initial programme presentations to the participating schools, we discovered that only teachers were invited to attend. This was a common experience. When asked by the school who should attend, we would say that all staff should come and hear what the programme is about. That was unconsciously interpreted as teaching staff only, though we never said the words.

In that workshop we insisted that at least one member of the support team spoke about the issues that affect that team. And that was the day that Boeta Jamie, the caretaker, spoke up. He told us that he was a man with very little education. But that didn’t mean he was stupid. That didn’t mean that he had nothing useful to say. He asked us, “Why do teachers think they are better than us, superior to us? Why are we made to feel like second-class citizens in this school? Why am I ordered about? Why is our work never appreciated? Why do the students speak to us with so little respect, we the elders?”

The group sat in silence while Boeta Jamie continued, “I’ll tell you why. Because the young people see how you as teachers speak to us. They see that you have no respect for us and our work. So why should they show any respect? When we ask the learners to clean up, they just laugh at us. But all this has got to change. We can’t carry on like this,” he said, shaking his head. Boeta Jamie spoke with no anger. He was a gentle man. He communicated with great dignity. He spoke in a way that was easy to listen to. It



was impossible for those in the room that day not to hear what he had to say. People were shocked. Everyone knew that the truth was being spoken. Everyone felt ashamed at what they were hearing. Nobody had intended to denigrate Boeta Jamie and the other support staff. They were all just used to how things were. There were teachers and there were non-teachers, and teachers always ran the show, making all the key decisions. That was just how it was. The work of teachers was all that mattered.

But something happened that day - something shifted. We all realised that the school was operating its own form of apartheid - with first and second class citizens, a place where human dignity wasn't valued. We asked Boeta Jamie what he would like his team to be called. We decided we needed to create an alternative to "non-teaching staff".

"From now on," he declared, "you will call us the *A-Team*." The announcement of the new name was met with great applause and enthusiasm. We asked him what this name represented for him. He chose *A-Team* because he was proud of his work. He felt that he, together with his colleagues, performed a valuable and essential role within the school. They helped to create a clean, pleasant and safe environment for all staff and learners.

And then discussions took place. Agreements were made as to how the staff were to communicate and specific jobs were allocated. It was decided that students would be expected to follow the *A-Team's* instructions in the same way that students were expected to follow the leadership of teaching staff.

Fundamentally that day, a marginalised sector of the staff team found its voice. From now on they knew they would be recognised in the school, and that they would be heard. As facilitators, we took the experience from that workshop into the sessions we had with subsequent staff teams in other schools. We discovered that big gaps existed between teachers and support staff in most of the staff teams we worked with. Boeta Jamie had taught us that it was an area we needed to focus on.

## **Washing barriers away**

In another school we witnessed an amazing transformation with regards to a 'non-teaching' staff member. During the staff workshop we discovered that the school gardener and maintenance man, Mr Lombard, was missing. When we asked Aunt Pam, the school caretaker and cleaner, to describe her team, she replied that she had no team, she was the only one. We referred her to the name of Mr Lombard that appeared on the staff list.

"He's never here, maybe one or two days a week if we're lucky," replied Aunt Pam.

"And if we challenge him, he brings in the union and we have to back off. There is nothing we can do. He knows his rights and he works the system perfectly," added the principal. Given our experience at the other school, we wondered if it was not possible to turn this situation around. Maybe this was an unvalued 'non-teaching' staff member reacting to his circumstances. His attitude was "They don't care, so I don't care."

We resolved to invite Mr Lombard to the planned staff support sessions that were to follow the initial intensive workshop. He accepted. We facilitated a tough talking session between the staff and him. The staff spoke of their experience in the workshop. They spoke about the distance he kept from them, that they didn't really know what was going on in his life, and how it was difficult to support him. He spoke of the prob-

lems he was having outside of school. They spoke of how they could support him.

Aunt Pam told him how much she wanted him back at the school, so that she could feel that she was part of a team. We all told him what an important team member he was, and what a contribution he could make to the school.

The principal spoke of his talent for gardening, for planting and nurturing. The more she spoke, the wider the grin on Mr Lombard's face. It was as if he had been waiting for this kind of acknowledgement and praise for a long time. For a problem that had been going on for some time, it only took one meeting to break through and to close the gap.

The developments around Mr Lombard in the following months were astonishing. From being a loner, isolated from the rest of the staff and hardly ever at work, he became an active contributor to school activities, and a dedicated gardener. He took up a leadership position in the newly created Environment Team, working closely with students, guiding and teaching them horticulture. Together with the staff team he introduced a new school cleaning system that was successfully introduced in every classroom.

This co-operation between staff and students thrilled Mr Lombard, as it freed him from the huge burden of cleaning the school so that he could spend more time at the task he most loved, gardening. From a silent hidden figure, he grew into a confident speaker during staff sessions. At the end of the term he led the Environment Team presentation in the hall, speaking in front of the whole school.

When we witnessed that, we all knew that Mr Lombard had arrived, and that he was now a core member of the staff team. If one studied Mr Lombard's contribution to the learners, the distinction between who was a teacher or so-called 'non-teacher' became blurred. And that was tremendously exciting.

We joked that the school had built a new classroom at no extra cost! The obstacles that had once stood between Mr Lombard and the staff had clearly been washed away.

## **TOOLS**

### **Challenges**

When we facilitate an individual or a group through a conflict, when we encourage people to speak about difficult issues, or when we are supporting participants in reconciling their differences with each other, we are faced with particular challenges:

- having to work with and overcome resistance and fear;
- being comfortable with strong emotions and feelings - anger, grief, sadness, betrayal;
- creating confidence within participants that we can hold this tough process.

In this phase of the programme we keep our attention on particular aspects:

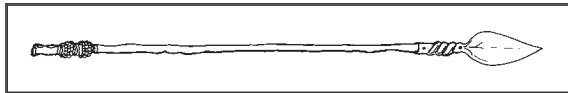
- assisting people to talk straight to one another and break through the barriers of silence,
- finding ways to make sure that the fire is hot enough but does not burn



and create damage,

- keeping channels of communication open even when the going gets tough,
- avoiding getting stuck in the middle of a situation and looking to find a resolution,
- discovering a turning or breakthrough point that creates movement and a way forward.

## ASSEGAI



In this section the assegai was used as a sharp tool in order to:

- keep our focus in difficult, heated and emotional situations;
- keep asking sharp, incisive questions to open up important issues;
- cut through fear, resistance and lack of trust;
- encourage people in going beyond the superficial and speak the truth;
- strike a specific target, to recognise what lies at the heart of a particular situation;
- be bold and courageous, and to keep the process moving forward.

### Assegai in action

In this process we ask what we call ‘assegai questions’. They are sharp and incisive. An example of such questions could be:

Are you staring hope or no hope in the face?

What is it you see when you look into the mirror? What do you see when you look at your school? What do you see when you look at your staff team and your students? What do you see when you look at yourself? Do you see hope or no hope?

Each step of the way needs its own set of questions and processes to challenge and keep going to get to the core concern or resolution. It was often at the point of recognition, when participants acknowledged that this might be their last chance, their last opportunity to turn their situation around, that they were staring ‘no hope’ in the face, that the work of transformation began. There was a sense of clarity and honesty when they identified that the stakes were high, and that most of them were feeling hopeless regarding their situation.

‘Assegai talking’ equals tough talking. At this stage in the process we need to start calling a spade a spade, because when we do that we can start to dig. As part of the digging, we encourage people to share their stories of what has happened. It is important first to acknowledge, then to understand, and finally to let go of what has happened, in order for us to be able to move on. We always face resistance when we start to dig. We often hear someone cry, “Please don’t dig up the dirt. It feels like you are dragging us down into a pit.”

From experience we've discovered that to build a solid foundation, we have to dig underneath the surface where we find powerful memories and emotions - anger, blame, fear, recriminations, guilt. If we don't travel down into the pit, we merely lay our future plans on an unstable surface, for example a feeling of hopelessness, and our plans are doomed to failure. It is crucial that the container of the past, the so-called pit, is cleared out and refilled with hope, dreams and clear intentions. You have to walk through the fire of criticism and understanding of the problem or conflict to reach the water of dialogue and reconciliation.

As facilitators we give encouragement to the participants by talking them through the experience, telling them that there is always a fear that as you go down into the pit, you feel you will be engulfed, that the walls are going to collapse in on you. At that moment there is a temptation among most participants to stop talking, to retreat back into silence, to bring a halt to communication because it feels so uncomfortable. When the group is experiencing discomfort and their levels of fear are rising, there is often a temptation for us as facilitators to back off. This is the very moment when we need lots of courage and vision. It is critical that as facilitators we have the ability, and the confidence, to lead participants both into and out of the pit - that we have the inner strength to hold and believe in the process.

To change situations, circumstances and structures, we believe we must start with people first, working inside out, not outside in. We move from the person, to the situation in which they find themselves, then to the structures they are working within. From this we discover what skills need to be developed and what needs to change.

## Reader's assegai

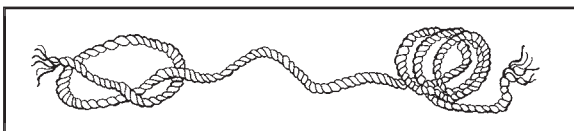
What kind of relationships do you have with people in your sports club, place of worship, workplace, organisation, community or at home?

Are the foundations of your relationships solid, or are there things that need clearing up and sorting out?

Are you prepared to take the risk of changing the way you are communicating with those close to you, with those important to you?

Have you the necessary courage to say what you have always wanted to say? Who can support you in doing this? What are the risks for you in speaking up? What is it costing you in not speaking up?

## ROPE



As a planning tool, rope is very important for us in this phase of a programme.

The challenge that faced the leaders and facilitators of change, was to find processes and structures that could create the necessary limits, boundaries and focus for change to take place successfully.

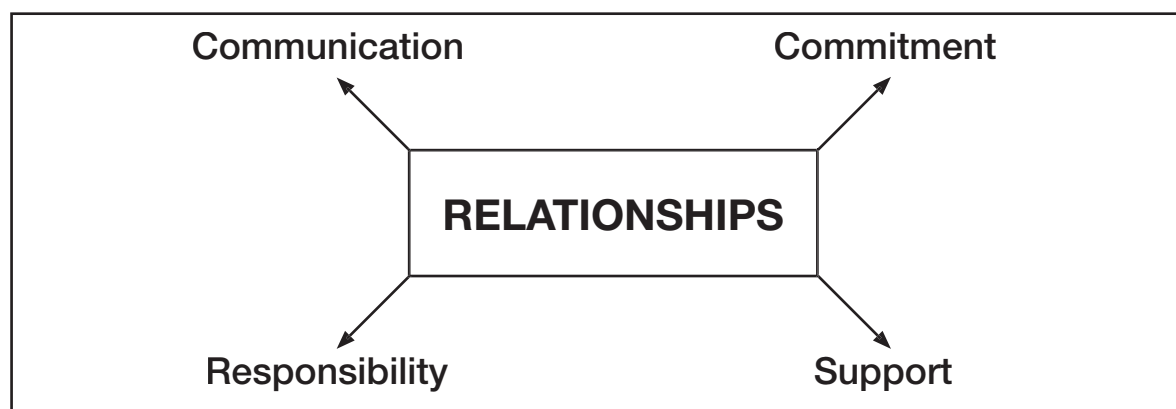
The form through which the change happened needed to encourage:

- facing up to the problem individually and collectively;
- keeping a focus on the solution, and not the problem;
- trusting and supporting of others;
- dealing with the people and their emotions;
- taking risks.

When people, groups and communities dig deep into themselves, they need to be held firmly.

They should not be allowed to sink into the problems they are trying to overcome. In order to hold the process, we needed to create safe structures. Examples of some of these were relationship building workshops, the ‘hot seat’, and building a circle of support.

### Intensive workshops



If relationships are the foundation on which we build organisation and community, then creating time and space for relationship-building workshops as part of the overall design of the programme is the key. We need to create a space within which participants open up to the tensions and obstacles within their team. We need time for listening, building trust and understanding. We knew from experience that if we divided this process into shorter weekly sessions, we would not be able to create the focus and atmosphere required. This was only possible when suitable time was set aside to create a space within which participants could communicate with one another, a space different from a normal meeting, a space that was unusual in order for unusual communication to occur.

In the case of the schools programme, many thought this was not possible.

“Teachers are so busy, they will never give up the time. You will never get teachers to give up a Saturday. Teachers are not committed enough. They won’t agree to stay after hours. Anyway, the Department would never allow any teaching hours to be lost.”

This is what we were constantly being told. But in the participating schools, when staff realised what was at stake for themselves as well as their school, they gave the time. Often colleagues had to persuade and encourage their peers to participate, that it was worth giving time to the future of the school. We built our workshops around four specific cornerstones:

- speaking the truth and being open to listening to the truth,
- taking responsibility for changing the situation,
- giving and keeping a commitment,
- asking for and providing support.

### Circle of acknowledgement

Working with circles was crucial to holding and supporting the group, to give them the courage and faith to be able to speak about the past to one another in a direct and constructive manner. Circles were used in different ways to provide focus for dealing with issues, or as a way to build appreciation and acknowledgement.

Drawing everyone into a tight circle provided the facilitator with a way of dealing with the conflict as well as maintaining group focus and attention. This prevented the conflict from spreading. Eye-to-eye and face-to-face communication helped us to surface and read each other's emotions, while containing and focusing them.

A circle of acknowledgement allowed us to jointly share in the understanding and resolution of the problem. It was important that the circle acknowledged that the behaviour of the antagonist was not isolated and was a result of social circumstances or common patterns of behaviour.

In the situation described in the story *Respek vir ek, respek die plek*, care had to be taken that the resolution achieved within that particular circle was sustained. Sometimes participants might feel pressure from the energy and focus generated by the group, to resolve a conflict or issue before they are ready. It is valuable following up on all resolutions and agreements to check that they are holding.

### Building bridges

Our approach was to deal with problems as they surfaced, deal with them straight away and push for resolution - from conflict to tears and healing in a short space of time. We used the dynamics of the group that we were working with to provide the starting point and content for doing this. A good example of this is in the story *Respek vir ek, respek die plek*. This meant that we were also constantly changing our workshop designs to allow us to work with problems as they occurred, rather than pushing them forward to some future date. Flexibility was a constant component of our programmes, and one that ensured that relationships constantly and consistently grew stronger.

### The freedom chair - a space for one

The *freedom chair* (hot-seat) was one very important tool we had for creating space for people to talk what was in their hearts. The use of a special chair in the circle created a hot, but safe space for a person to step into and speak. To assist in creating the space and making it safe for the freedom talker, we developed specific rituals and focus points:

When a participant stepped up to the *freedom chair*, they were welcomed by the facilitator and taken through two introductory questions:

- What is your motivation for coming up and talking?

- What do you hope to achieve?

The talker was then asked to relate her/his story. The facilitator then asked the participant to:

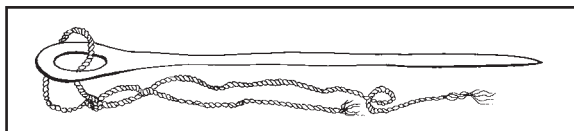
- analyse the story,
- explain their role and motivation,
- say what they could have done differently,
- take responsibility for the situation.

This process was completed before any responses were taken from other participants. This helped to keep the focus on the talker and kept them safe from interjections from the room.

After responses and feedback from other participants were taken, and as a way of closing the process for the talker, the facilitator asked:

- what the participant would now do differently,
- what they were going to take responsibility for,
- what the participant felt that they had achieved by coming into the *freedom seat*.

## NEEDLE and THREAD



To build the weave, we must assist people to see that people are simply people. To support a person or group to do this, we work with the mind and body together, with the physical, emotional and intellectual parts of the person. This is how we create the weave with people.

Active Action Learning, a mixture of games, movement, drama, story-telling and ritual, is a learning methodology that we use that works with both the mind and body, opening up the spirit and the psyche to change. Working with the mind and body simultaneously allows for people to access deeper levels of feeling and meaning.

*Dangerous journey* was one such game. It was a rehearsal for the reality of change, forcing participants to confront individual and group strengths and weaknesses. It brought into sharp focus for the group the key ingredients necessary for successful change, and helped to identify the uncertainty that lay ahead.

Through the exercise the group was able to see very clearly that the outcome of a change process would depend on the quality and character of the people who initiated, led and participated in it. It provided a chance to reflect on the necessity for a completely new style of leadership that was prepared to be creative, take risks and find new forms of knowledge.

In the process of the game, participants were forced to come up close, be in each

other's faces and spaces. This broke down physical barriers, and emotional reservations, and created bonds between people - bonds that would help hold people when the straight talking started.

## Listening to many sides

A problem, an event, a circumstance, an issue, a story between people is always seen from many different perspectives. From those closely involved to those on the sides, all have views on what they are observing. If problems and their causes are to be surfaced and resolved as quickly as possible, then it is important that the whole group agrees to the solution, and would actively implement it. For this to happen we need to hear all sides of the story.

With every new speaker, a different perspective is given. We learn something new and discover exactly what kind of gaps need to be closed between people. It also helps to build an acceptance of diversity of viewpoints on an issue. This is important in nurturing tolerance and accepting difference.

## DANGER ZONE

### Containing the fire and water

The opportunity for people to speak out and call a spade a spade cannot happen in an uncontrolled way. The freedom chair and acknowledgement circles must be part of a larger and longer process. In our case the container that held this whole process was the fact that we were engaging in integrated year-long programmes, in which everyone was participating in order to make a difference.

This is important because the change that takes place in straight-talking sessions will not of itself become sustainable. For this to happen, new patterns of behaviour need to be adopted or the environment may need to change. This requires support and coaching beyond the straight-talking sessions. If this is not possible, be very careful about engaging in straight-talking - you may set off fires that you can't control. We know that the assegai is a very sharp tool, and we make sure we use it in a well contained and structured environment, within a programme which is ongoing.

### Facilitators confronting the group

If the facilitator or group leader is going to confront the group with their own behaviour, as happened in the story *Tough talk*, they need to keep the following three ingredients in mind:

**Timing:** when you decide to do it is critical; the group must be ready to be pushed and confronted over the emotional edge. When they are ready for this is a matter of judgement and experience in working with groups of people. It is always a gamble in which the cost of choosing the wrong moment could be that the group or participants merely reinforce their own beliefs.

**How you do it:** if the group feels that the facilitator or group leader is not sincere in their need for confrontation, it will backfire. For confrontations

of this nature to work, the group must believe that the facilitator or leader is only concerned in promoting dialogue and the advancement of both the individuals and the group. With each group the way to do it would change according to their trust in themselves and the process, and also culture, class, gender and other social identities.

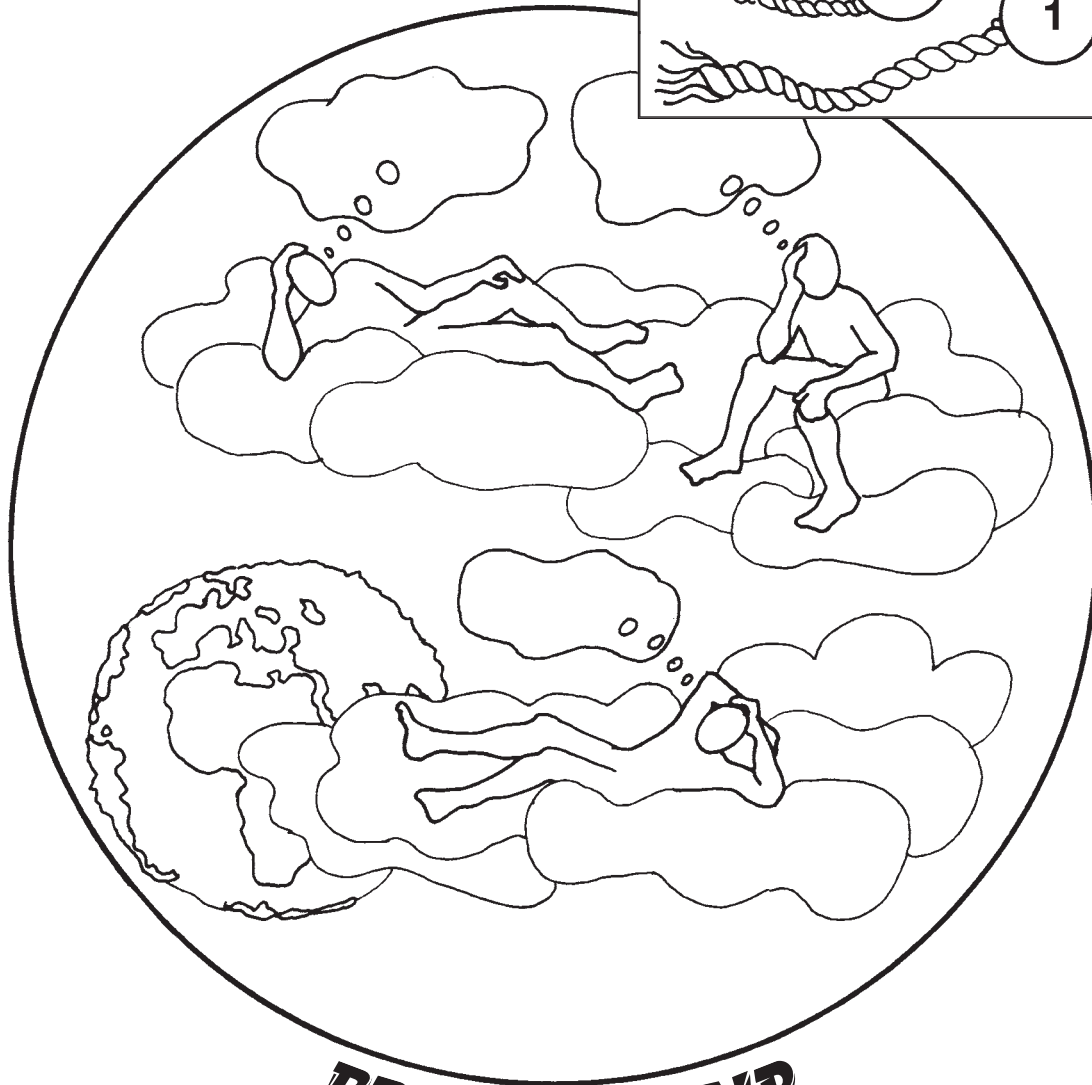
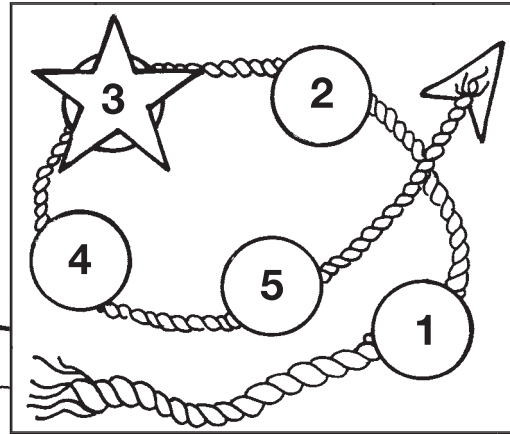
**Back up facilitator to hold the process:** what happens after the facilitator confronts the group is crucial to achieving a breakthrough. We recommend that this type of confrontation should only be tried if the facilitator or group leader is working with someone else, as a pair. The day Mike threw the assegai, Nic was in the room to observe responses to Mike's challenge, and find a way to ensure a positive resolution.

### **Making it relevant**

A group may have many issues, events or relationships that are unresolved or bind them together. For straight talking to enable change, the events, issues, and relationships that are chosen as a focus must be ones that are relevant to the group as a whole. Even if the issue or relationship is not mine as a participant, I must be able to see something of myself, or the group, reflected in the example chosen. If this is not so, then participants will lose interest and not support the outcomes of the process. Linking the content of the workshop to group dynamics is a way of making it relevant to daily life. The workshop then also serves as a place to practise tools and learning for real life.



## THE THIRD COURSE:



## BREATHING AIR

### DREAMING UP A FUTURE

What makes a person stand up in their community and say “I want to make a difference”? And what allows them to keep on making the difference over a long period of time? To have the energy and motivation to do and sustain this takes careful nurturing and constant caring.

In *Breathing air* we work with dreams as a tool for community action. Organising people and communities depends on what can be imagined, invented or fantasised - something that lives inside of your mind and heart such as a personal thought, a feeling of how things could be different, a vision or the dream of a place one would like to reach. Dreams are a powerful source of motivation and hope.



## A facilitator's dream

"Hands to hands," I called out. Everyone quickly found a partner, and they all stood with hands touching. This was only a warm-up exercise, just a bit of fun.

"Hands to shoulders," I shouted above the noise. I watched as staff and students moved around the resource centre finding new partners. I saw a young girl reach out and place her hand on a teacher's shoulder. He needed to bend down to make this possible.

"Elbows to knees." The school principal went down on her knees, and placed her elbow on a young boy's knee. He grinned. He couldn't quite believe it.

"Head to head." There was Mr Philander, the school gardener, with his head against that of Mr Omar, the deputy head. There were boys to boys, girls to girls, girls to boys, women to men, everybody all mixed up with their heads touching. And I asked myself: "If what is happening in this game today could become a reality, what kind of school would this be?" Everybody connected in some way. Everybody prepared to bend a little to accommodate another. A place of learning, full of laughter, in which adults and youth are in close contact and communication. A unified school with a smile on its face.

"Bum to bum!" someone shouted and the whole room collapsed.

"Yes, it's bum to bum," I called, "go for it - this time in groups of six."

"Dis 'n mal plek," someone shouted amidst the chaos in the room. What would the Circuit Inspector say now if she walked into the room, I wondered.

"Ear to ear in groups of ten," I called out.

"Ja dis lekker, a listening school," I thought to myself, a place in which adults listen to youth, and youth listen to adults. A place where young people listen to each other. What a place that would be. We began this session by saying that history was being made today, that something very important was happening. We went around the room and asked everybody to say what it was they thought was being created at this very moment. One young girl spoke clearly: "Today is the first time that students and staff are coming together, to work together, to plan together, to make decisions together. We are here to make a difference to our future and to the future of this school, together. That is why history is being made here today." We call it *People to people* and it's only a game I suppose, but today amidst all the fun in that room, I saw some powerful images taking shape. Images that spoke of hope.

"Lips to lips," a boy shouted. There was a roar.

"That's it!"

We decided it was time to move on!

## Dreaming up something different

Ashleigh and Sophie had dreams but were not able to reach them. They were stuck on paths that made their dreams seem distant and impossible to achieve. Ashleigh, 16, a tough youth, dreamed he'd play for Manchester United. Sophie, 35, a street committee member, mother of two children, had a dream to be more literate and continue her studies.

The power of imagining that things could be different was not enough to motivate either of them. More was required. When they looked into the future, the path to their dreams seemed full of obstacles. This made it impossible for them to believe that their

dreams could be achieved. They needed to believe in themselves, as well as find ways for other people to believe in them, too.

Ashleigh was a participant in one of our youth leadership workshops. A perceptive, tough young man, caught in a vicious cycle of family and community circumstances. His dream may have been to play for Manchester United, but he was heading straight for prison. He didn't take his dream seriously and nobody else did either. When asked to share it with us, everybody laughed. He was a good soccer player, but his peers couldn't take it seriously as he smoked a pack of cigarettes every day.

He was challenged to stop smoking as a first step to make his dream real. His peers were challenged to support him in doing this, and one of them was chosen to take care of him through the process. Each cigarette less he smoked was seen as a step closer to realising his dream and he was affirmed for this. He was also drawn into being a motivator of other younger boys and encouraged them to get involved in sport at school. This didn't get him to Manchester United - but the belief that he could opened a door for him to begin believing that he could be different. This allowed him to slowly change his attitude - and be recognised as a fighter for his dreams, not a fighter for destruction.

Yet Ashleigh's story is also about finding a place for one person's dream within their wider social network. It is essential to link different personal dreams into a group dream. This can provide a source of ongoing encouragement and support for breaking the cycle of apathy. However, it needs to be done in such way that the person's dream is not lost as it is incorporated into the group's dream.

Sophie's dream emerged one night very quietly and hesitantly. We had created a dream circle with stones picked up on the beach. Next to the circle was a basket of clothes and other props. Everybody was asked to imagine how they would look if they reached their dream. With this image in mind, they had to dress up using the clothes and props and step into the circle and explain their dream.

Sophie collected all the books and pens she could find and stepped into the circle and explained her dream. She had dropped out of school because of a pregnancy and had always dreamed of improving her education. It was never possible to do this because she was always busy looking after her children. By stepping into the dream circle she had made her ambition public, and had it witnessed and affirmed by her peers. Many offered her support.

At first it was very difficult to move Sophie into action. Nothing worked for her. She tried night school and the library, but never followed anything through.

Until the day we did an exercise on collecting community dreams. Instead of doing a needs assessment, participants in the community-building process were asked to go door-to-door in their street and collect dreams from residents in their community. After this was done we came together and spent a day constructing one dream for the community. A picture was drawn of what the community would look like if this dream was reached. Three teams were selected, each with a particular project focus that would lead to the realisation of the dream. I noticed that Sophie was in the crèche team.

Over the ensuing months, Sophie attended training for preschool support staff and, with other members of her project team, opened a small crèche. Since then Sophie's confidence has grown and she is slowly being recognised as a community leader.

## A musician's dream

Kenny stood, his arm poised, holding a conductor's baton in his hand.

"A one, a two, a three ...," he whispered.

A quick flick from his wrist, and the school band sparked into life. I remember his jacket being a bit too small for him, its buttons straining to contain his large chest. It was as if something inside Kenny was bursting to break out.

Hundreds of us were gathered for a celebration to mark the progress that the high school had made, and to share its vision of the future.

An educator, Mr Samsodien, asked the school choir to step forward. He conducted the singing while Kenny's band accompanied them.

I call it Kenny's band because it was Kenny's band. That day I saw Kenny standing tall, full of hope. But a few months back there was no band at this school, and there was no choir.

And I remembered that Kenny had once said, "A school without music is a dead school."

When he spoke these words there was no hope in his eyes, only resignation. We were sitting in the school library. We were in the middle of a discussion with student leaders. I remember the shelves were empty - a library with no books, a school with no hope. In the corner of the same room stood an upright piano, and it was locked.

"What happened?" we asked.

"There used to be music at this school, there was a brass band and there was a choir. We had a music teacher then and you could take music as a subject. I used to come in here and play the piano at breaks."

"And so what happened?"

"Well, he left. The music teacher left. There were retrenchments, and the first teacher to go was the music teacher. I could no longer take music as a subject. There were no more music sessions. And then the band collapsed. And then soon after that Mr Samsodien just stopped doing the choir. Before we knew it music had disappeared from the school. It was just gone." We all sat in silence. Kenny's head was bowed, staring at the floor.

"*Ja*, a school without music is a dead school," he mumbled to himself.

"You love music, Kenny. It's important to you," Nic said.

"Kenny lives for his music," a young man said. "*Ja*, music is important to me. I come from a family of music. We all play, in the evenings, every weekend. Our house is full, anyone can come and play music in our house." He paused, nobody spoke. "And now, *ag*, I don't enjoy coming to school any more. It used to be different here."

"Yes, music is missing for you. You lost your music teacher. So it is different now. Who else is missing music at the school?" we asked. Many hands went up. One young woman said, "Myself, well I don't play music like Kenny and some of the others, but I still miss it. I miss the band. They used to play at assemblies and on special occasions. We were proud of them. They were good. And the choir too, it's strange not having a choir here any more. They used to lift our spirits."

"So tell us, what actually did happen with regards to music at this school?" Kenny looked up at us like we were mad, like we hadn't heard a thing.

"I've already told you what happened, what are you asking?"

“You’re right, you did tell us what happened. But now we’re asking a slightly different question.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Kenny, you told us your version of what happened at the school. And now we’re asking you the question - what actually happened to music at this school?”

“But our version will be exactly the same as Kenny’s version,” a young woman said.

“And that’s a problem,” I suggested. “If you all see it like Kenny sees it, then you will all be stuck just like Kenny is stuck right now. He has given up, he has no hope, he isn’t enjoying school any more, because something he loves has been taken away from him, and he doesn’t see a way to get it back, at least not here in this school. And this school is where Kenny spends five days a week, four weeks a month, ten months of the year. Is that how it is Kenny?”

“Yes.”

“You see, a teacher left and music was not offered as a subject in this school any more. That’s true, you can’t alter that. But take a look at what happened next. Kenny said: ‘then there were no more music sessions, and then the band collapsed. And then the choir collapsed too.’ And who caused all that to happen?” I asked.

“The teacher going of course!” someone shouted at us. The students were starting to get impatient with us. Why couldn’t we understand? It was simple, straightforward.

“The teacher wasn’t even here, he was gone. How could he have caused all that?” asked Mike. The students stared at us in disbelief.

“What are you suggesting?” one of them asked. “If the music teacher leaving didn’t cause everything to stop, then who caused it?”

“That is a very good question?” we said. “Who caused it, if not the teacher?”

“Okay, I get it - then Mr Daniels caused it, ‘cause he’s the principal, and he should have done something about it. Yes, okay, so he caused it,” spat out Kenny.

“Okay, so Mr Daniels issued an order for all music to stop. He disbanded the band and the choir. I think we should go and ask him why he did that,” I suggested.

“Don’t be stupid, he didn’t actually do all that,” said Kenny.

“But you said he caused it.”

“Are you telling us that we caused it?” challenged a young man.

“Well, if not you, then who?” Mike asked.

“That’s ridiculous, I’ve had enough of this, can we go now?”

“Why did Mr Samsodien stop organising the choir?” Nic asked.

“Because he gave up hope, ‘cause he saw everything else collapsing. He said he didn’t have the time or energy any more. He said it was up to us if we wanted to carry on.”

“Ah, and then what?”

“We just stopped, we didn’t carry on,” another student said. The room was getting still. We sat in silence. Nobody moved.

“So, what are you beginning to see in this conversation? What actually stopped you from playing? Who actually stopped you from playing? Like the truth.”

“The truth?”

“Yes, the truth!”

Kenny spoke quietly, “I suppose we stopped ourselves. Ja, we gave up. We lost hope. We did it.”

“That’s right, Kenny, when the teacher left, you all made that mean you couldn’t carry on on your own, by yourselves. The music teacher didn’t tell you that, you told yourselves that. So now you can’t change the teacher leaving, that’s happened. But you can change what you all did when he left. Is it true that you can’t play on your own?”

“Of course not.”

“Is it true that you can’t teach others to play?”

“Of course not.”

“Is it true that you can’t organise the band yourselves?”

“Of course not.”

“Kenny,” one of the students shouted out, “you said that you play at home all the time, and that anyone can come play with you. So why don’t we start here at school in the breaks? Why don’t we get the key for the piano? Kenny, you play as well as the teacher did, if not better, why can’t you lead the band?”

“Yeh, Kenny, why not?” asked another.

“Why not?” asked Mike.

“Why not?” said Kenny, “Why not?” He smiled and his eyes lit up. He shouted, “Okay then, why not!” The students clapped and laughed. They gathered around Kenny. They were excited. They began making plans.

“One at a time, just one at a time,” Kenny called out. So Kenny stood up that day and took a lead in the school. And the lead he took inspired Mr Samsodien to call the choir together once again.

And there they were, on the day of the school celebration, standing shoulder to shoulder, older man and younger man standing together, doing what they both loved best, making music. And everyone watched in awe. The whole school together, spirits all raised that day by the work of Kenny and Mr Samsodien.

## **Dreaming up hope**

It was the end of a long afternoon. We had been going door-to-door, asking people what their dreams were for their community. We had come back with 40 dreams, some similar and some different. We drew them on a big sheet of paper, and made a colourful and complex rainbow of dreams. We stepped back and looked at the picture. Everyone felt excited. A possible future was alive, right here in the room with us, in the present.

Street lights, proper drainage, clean streets, a new park, more houses on the open field, a vegetable garden in the school, no more gangs, a fence around the railway line and a bridge over it, a crèche and a centre for the youth and children.

All the dreams were about the things that create community, pride and a sense of belonging.

As we evaluated the session, we realised that the excitement we all felt about the dreams would need to be shared with the community. We needed something that would make the dream feel real. Something when spoken of that would immediately tap into and create a reservoir of hope, and make the future alive in the present.

Mrs Davids, the primary school principal, came to our rescue. “I will ask the Grade 7s to write a song about the community’s dreams. I will bring them along next week and they can teach us the song.”

The following week, true to her word, Mrs Davids arrived with a group of learners,



all squeaky clean in their school uniforms.

Standing in front of their mothers and fathers, community leaders, teachers and their principal, they were too shy to sing the song they had written. Every time they started they got stuck after the first line, overwhelmed by the opportunity to teach adults something.

“Go for it, girl!” “Stop playing around and sing!”

The adults supported the children and, at the same time, made it more difficult. They were struggling to find new ways of being together and to change traditional roles. Everyone’s body language, voice tone and attitude needed to transform. Both children and adults needed to make one big leap into a new future. Across the ages, building community would mean new rhythms.

Slowly the song emerged, led by Shakira the head girl.

As the strength and rhythm increased, I asked her to explain the song.

“Everybody knows the song *Give me hope, Johanna?* That’s the tune and we’ve made up our own words.”

But it wasn’t so easy to find new rhythms. We had to learn the tune first. Then we learned the words, speaking and repeating them, over and over. The adults really made hard work of it, pushing against years of tradition of instructing children in how to do things. Eventually we sang it through, words and tune, adults and youth together. The adults were still singing, while standing completely still and frozen. I challenged them to explain why they were not moving in tune. This was met by silence and then laughter as they realised how silly they were being!

“Come on people, we are old but not yet cold! Let’s show the youth what the golden oldies can do! If we can sing and dance together, we can build our dreams!” one the adults called out.

I picked up the rhythm again. “A one, and a two, and a three – Give me hope...”

Two years later I am sitting and writing this book and cannot remember the exact words of the song. Have I lost the dream? Nervously, I pick up the telephone and dial the number of the school to speak to Mrs Davids. What if no one remembers the words? What will I write then? What will it mean if they have forgotten the words?

Mrs Davids comes on the line and I put my request to her. She starts to laugh and sings softly, “Give me hope...”

In her heart the dream lived on.

## **TOOLS**

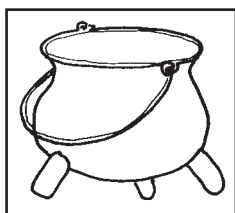
### **Challenges**

When working with dreams we faced four main challenges:

- Surfacing the dream by expressing personal thoughts and feelings in words, in such a way that it excited the passions and emotions of the dreamer.
- Creating personal reservoirs of hope, motivation and belief that the dream was achievable.

- Weaving personal dreams together into group, team, organisational, or community dreams.
- Ensuring that these dreams were realised.

## POTJIE



As facilitators we needed a container to hold the work we were doing with dreams.

At the point where energy is created and people are starting to move, where dreams are becoming reality, we need a structure in which to support them, so that the positive energy and movement is held and sustained. Each individual, group or community dream needs to develop its own container. Dreams need to be:

- witnessed** by others,
- woven** together,
- affirmed**,
- acted** on collectively,
- supported**,
- and **sustained**.

These six elements are important for holding and focusing the dreaming process. Putting this into practice can differ in each situation and will depend on how we are weaving the group together. The process needs to be creative, fantastical, exciting and dynamic enough to energise the person to take action. Each step of the process needs to create its own room for the dream, the spirit to breathe, move and act.

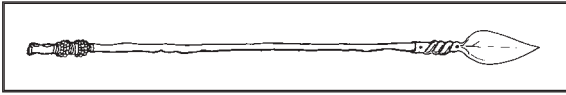
In Kenny's case:

- the band and choir were formed,
- they rehearsed,
- they created a repertoire of compositions and songs,
- they created a structure within which people could make music together,
- that holding structure was critical in being able to sustain and provide form to the music, as well as to individual and school dreams.

In Sophie's case it was the crèche.

In the case of the community leadership, the dreams were all held in a collage drawing, expressed through a song, and given a specific shape through projects. The drawing was used for planning, monitoring and evaluating progress.

## ASSEGAI



The assegai was used to identify and challenge core perceptions and beliefs in situations in which people's dreams were being strangled.

Sharp, focused 'assegai questions' were used to:

- cut open space to breathe life into the dream;

- identify a specific turning point for an individual;

- shift their energy from apathy or destructive behaviour, into positive action.

We needed to find the questions that open the pathway to the source of our personal/group power, which encourage us to step out of our fixed identity, to let go and recreate ourselves.

### Assegai in action

In the case of the workshop in which Kenny was a participant, we decided to pick up the assegai to assist the students in stepping out of the pit of hopelessness. We placed personal dreams on the tip of the assegai. If you remember, in the corner of the school library stood a piano, but it was locked. The resource was standing there waiting. All that was needed was the key to open the lock. Our target was hope. We needed to generate a sense of hope, that it was worth attempting to locate the key, that it was possible to open that piano. We asked, "What are your dreams? What dreams do you have for yourself? What would give you a life you would love, a life full of joy?"

The students shared their hopes and dreams. Some of them were speaking out for the first time in public, communicating with a larger group, conversations they were used to having only with a close friend in private. This process of speaking out provided energy, and energy produced movement. Kenny shared his hopes and dreams within this context. The opportunity to speak his frustrations, and describe to all of us how he had come to lose hope, provided an opening for Kenny to move forward.

In the case of Ashleigh, we had to use the assegai to correctly identify what action he could take to breathe some life into his dream while still being cool. Space in which he could be affirmed for wanting to play for Manchester United, rather than for bunking school and being disruptive in class. Also a space for Ashleigh to see that he could be affirmed for being tough and determined enough to go for his dreams, rather than for being known as just a tough guy.

### The reader's assegai

What gives your life hope and meaning?

What influences you to do something?



What moves you from inaction to action?

What makes you change your attitudes, your way of thinking and feeling?

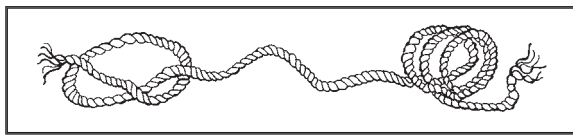
What leads your mind, heart and feet to move in a particular direction?

What do you do to build your energy of motivation, your reservoirs of hope?

When did you last speak your dream, have it witnessed by others and act on it?

If you belong to a group or organisation, ask the same questions, starting with:  
What gives your organisation hope and meaning?

## ROPE



People will not necessarily, or easily, surface their dreams and imaginings in public.

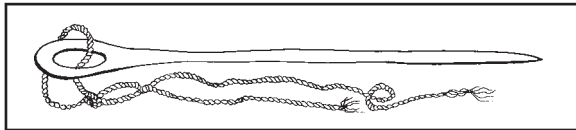
Less still will an organisation that is often too structured for dreams to breathe and live.

For dreams to emerge, to surface beyond individual thoughts and imaginings, a clearly set aside time and space needs to be created. Dreams need to be protected and given space to be shaped and molded. When dreams first emerge they are vulnerable. We use our rope to remind us to create space for dreams in the overall programme design. We circle each dream with the rope to protect it, until implementation plans are in place, and the dream is strong enough to stand on its own. With the rope we also create a dream circle, which clearly defines the place of dreaming, with specific rituals for stepping in and out of the circle.

Kenny chose a project that stepped beyond the personal domain, his own dream, to include others in his vision. He wanted to resurrect the school band, and he was prepared to lead the process. But creating the band and practising together was not enough. The music needed to be performed and to become part of the ethos of the school again. A space needed to be created for the school, the band and the choir to interact regularly to allow music to enter the school again. The school needed to create an opportunity where the accomplishments of the band and choir could be witnessed and celebrated. The ceremony described at the beginning of Kenny's story provided one such platform for the young musicians to communicate their love of music to the school community. In doing so, they lifted the spirits of that community, and they provided a great sense of hope to all staff, students, parents and guests present.

In Sophie's situation, the clearly marked out dream circle and the activity around it gave her the chance to surface her dream, and the crèche project team she joined provided the opportunity to give shape and form to her dream.

## NEEDLE and THREAD



Key to success is the facilitator's desire and ability to be a good weaver.

Linking the realisation of personal dreams to community action is a powerful, motivating tool. The key to getting it right, to work, is by weaving personal dreams with community and organisational dreams. If we are unable to find a way to do this - so that each personal dream finds a resonance, a space within the bigger community or organisational dream - then it loses its power, and remains just with the individual. To weave personal, organisational and community dreams requires the facilitators to be creative in the way in which dreams are surfaced, so that links between the two can be noted from the outset, for example, linking Sophie's need to study with the community's need for a crèche.

Achieving this requires active listening on the part of all concerned, and the facilitator needs to take input from other members in the group on the possible links between personal and community dreams. In addition, it requires imaginative methods that create a sense of magic and excitement about the dream. This allows dreamers to tap into their emotional reservoirs and dig deep for the necessary energy to create change. The dream circle in Sophie's story, the use of a coach in Ashleigh's story, the use of visualisation and song in the community process, are all ways of doing this.

## DANGER ZONE

Working with dreams is exciting and challenging and fills the group experience with the colour and texture of people's inner thoughts and feelings and aspirations. It provides a constant source of hope and motivation. But beware, it is also a complex process and the stakes are high. The cost of not realising all or part of a dream, is dashed hopes and expectations. This can destroy the energy and initiative of individuals or community and, if this happens, it can become very difficult to sustain the drive for change.

### Discovering and owning the dream

Ownership of the dream is important to provide motivation for all the action that is necessary to realising it. Sometimes, like Sophie, it takes a while to find the right container. The process of discovery takes its own time. This may call for a lot of patience from group members and facilitators. Each person, and the group as a whole, needs to take responsibility for taking the necessary action to realise the dreams.

### Walking the talk

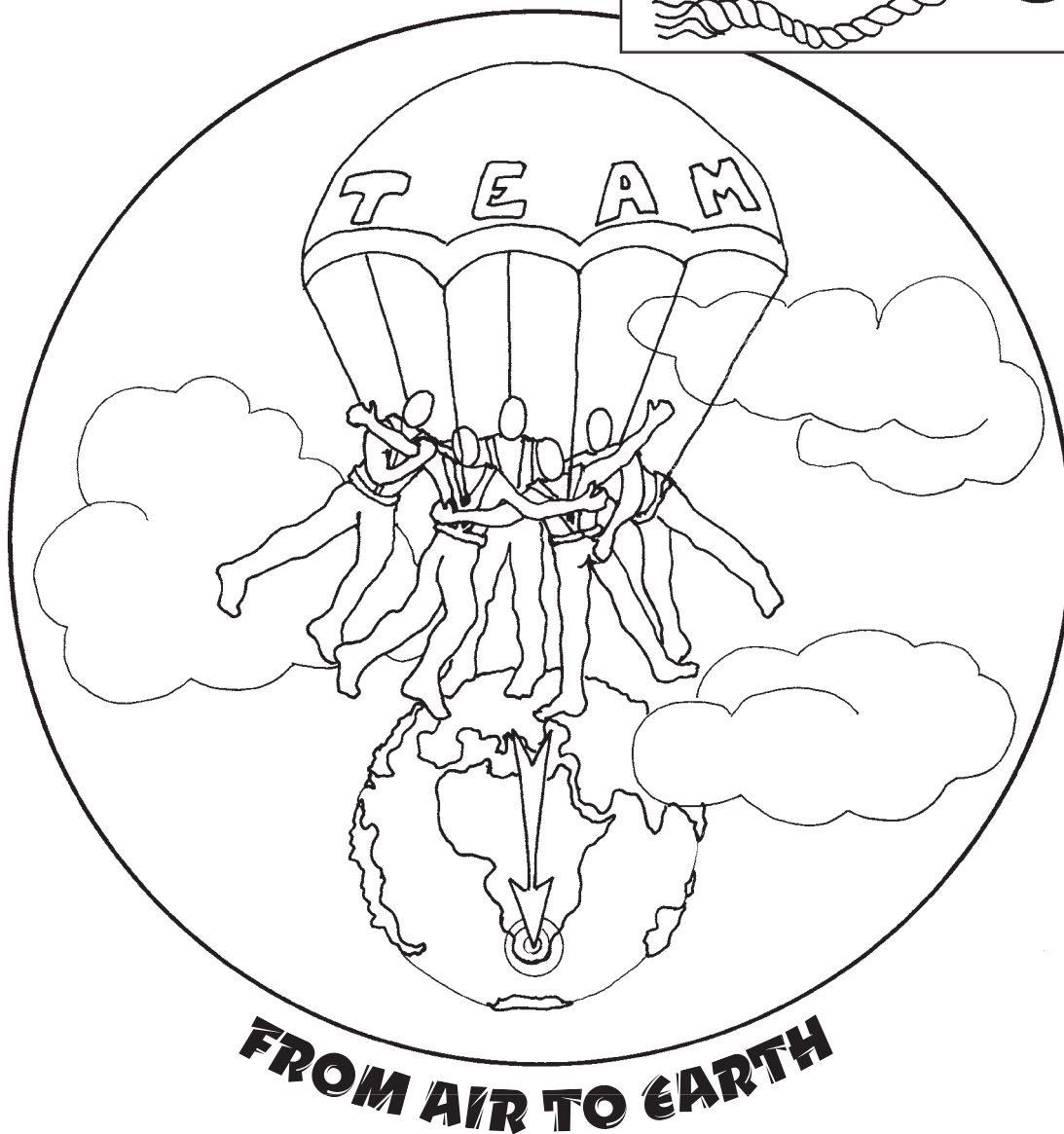
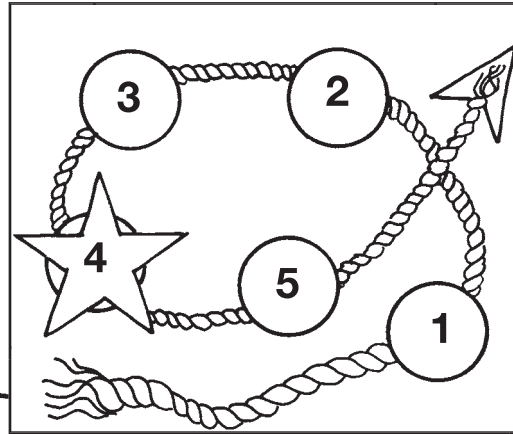
Succeeding in the realisation of part or all of a dream is very difficult. Obstacles of unemployment, poor quality of education, low self-esteem, fear and apathy, make it a challenge to overcome and realise a dream. Constant activity that clearly takes you closer to the dream is very important. The dream must slowly become real. For this

to happen it requires constant support in the form of acknowledgement, encouragement, and coaching, in order to help the person or group reflect on progress made and the next steps to be taken. If the process is not guided and held, it may not succeed. Beware of action that is not linked to the dream. Keep the dream sharply in focus by taking specific action on it.

### **Sustaining the difference**

Development projects and programmes are often based on the assumption that “I sacrifice so that the community will be a better place”. To sacrifice continuously means you need regularly to refuel your motivation. It cannot be assumed that people are able to keep motivated simply through personal sacrifice. For many people who become involved in community building, the initial spark of wanting to make the community a better place is not enough to keep them going over a longer period. It is important from time to time to be able to return to and to re-ignite the spark. We pick up on this specific challenge in some of the stories we share with you in the following section.

## THE FOURTH COURSE:



### GIVING SHAPE TO THE DREAM

We now face the actual test – to make the dream real – to move from words and images to action, planting the seeds of something imagined, in the middle of many questions and doubts. In moving *From air to earth* we now give specific shape and form to the dream.

The building of team structures during this implementation phase is important. Each team is organised around a specific project. We adopt the motto: 'TEAM - Together Everyone Achieves More'. The teams serve to harness and focus people's energies.

## The community leadership team – reporting on progress

“I don’t believe it! Your report sounds too glowing! Can all of this really have happened after only four months? You people from NGOs always make things sound better than they really are! And you, Mike, are a good talker! You can convince me to buy a stale doughnut!”

I was in the hot seat as our latest progress report was being panel beaten!

### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP GROUP REPORT ON PRECINCT PROJECT - 10/9/01

*“We who live here can see the changes, even if outsiders cannot.”*

*“Parents now help at the school, for e.g. at school functions they help with the food, they do the tables, wash the glasses.”*

*“The best part of the precinct programme has been the improvements in the neighbourhood through the training courses we have had.”*

(Participants’ comments at last evaluation)

#### PROGRESS MADE

We compared the drawing we did of the situation at present with the community’s dreams drawing and discussed the first steps to change in the community. Where could we start to close the gap and how? The group realised that the first step was probably a name change for their precinct and a name for their group. It was something new and exciting. After discussion we agreed on a new name for the precinct. The group realised they would have to work hard to get everybody to use the new name. The group decided that they would undertake two projects as a start and they divided into two task teams.

#### THE CLEAN-UP CAMPAIGN

The campaign would target one street at a time and work with residents to clean up the street. The team would go door-to-door first and talk to people and then start cleaning the streets. The team would not move onto a second street until the residents of the first street were keeping up with the cleaning themselves. The junior school involved in the MAD programme would help. Council would supply bags, bins and brooms to be stored at the school.

The song *Give me hope* would be taught to residents while they were busy cleaning the street.

#### NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

The neighbourhood watch only had four people in it and needed to be strengthened with more recruits, uniforms, proper IDs and radios. They also needed to be properly trained. They felt the police needed to be called to account for not providing a satisfactory service to residents.

It was agreed first to have a meeting with Council law enforcement and local police to seek support, and then call a meeting with all residents to recruit new members and build a better relationship with law enforcement agencies.

We discussed the Hearts of Men programme and agreed that Nic should give a presentation on it. If the leadership forum decided to work on the project, then it would go with the neighbourhood watch task team. We think the group will accept this idea.

#### OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

The two task teams are unevenly divided between men and women. The women are in the clean-up, and the men are in the neighbourhood watch. Only a few men and women have changed sides. When this was raised as a problem, heated debate ensued.

We need to return to this, as women must take charge of security to ensure a focus on family violence. Men must also learn to share in cleaning up. Attendance in the group has dropped a bit, but the core group is stable. We expect some more will drop out as we struggle to get things going in the community.

The link between the school and community is new and still a bit shaky, and it will take a few clean-ups before it comes right.

#### SOLUTIONS

Mike and two participants agreed to run a workshop on men's and women's roles. With David from Community Development we must follow up those that didn't attend the meeting. I am not too worried about this though, because as soon as we move into action other people will join. We need to work on building the link with the junior school. We need to see that it becomes the focus in the MAD schools programme, and when Hearts of Men starts, this will also help.

#### MOOD IN THE GROUP

We started off the session singing the song about five times! The mood is upbeat and there is a feeling of "can do". The name change made everybody very excited. The group is ready for the men's project, as it is very focused on reducing crime through building community. The gender debate is alive and hot and a good background for launching something completely different!

Mr Junot sat scrutinising the report with disbelief written all over his face.

I felt frustrated. I felt like screaming out loud, "I am not a spin doctor!" Why couldn't we accept small successes for what they were? Had we become used to failure? Did success threaten us too much? Pull us out of our comfort zones?

Noting my silence and having a good sense of me by now, Mr Junot continued.

"I know this community. They really struggle to work together! There are a lot of

divisions even between people from the same political party. For them to work together like this would be a big change.”

I sat in silence thinking how I could respond. The truth was it had been tough to get to this point. Every session with the community leadership had been a battle. Sometimes I felt like we were in the midst of a storm!

But things had changed. We had broken through. Participants had begun to move from being victims of their circumstance to being victors, to taking action. I knew I couldn't say this to Mr Junot as he would surely dismiss it.

“Mr Junot, let me tell you how Mrs Davids, the school principal, described the process. She put it so well. I can't remember exactly what she said but it went something like this: ‘They (Change Moves) made us talk. We were a bit frightened in the beginning because it brought up many problems and it made us wonder if we were going to cope and if our peace would be interrupted. But the positives make up for the negatives. The first time you don't want to talk, but by the second or third time you want to talk. It makes you feel like laughing and doing things. It is good to talk through our problems, to heal and not to get stuck in the past. We must move on into something new’.”

“Yes, but ...”

“Mr Junot, for once can't you feel good about taking a small step forward?”

Mr Junot ignored my last comment and continued.

“But is the situation sustainable? Won't everything disappear after you leave?”

Here we go again, I thought, everything is always judged by this one question - is it sustainable? How can we ever know the answer before we have tried?

“Some people wanted big things. But we have to start small and first see small effects. The community now has direct ties with the local authority and has the telephone numbers of people that they can contact if there are any problems. The neighbourhood watch has had training and they now have batons, two way radios, torches and jackets and the relationship with the police is much better. The streets are cleaner. So we have taken a step forward, but Mr Junot, I really don't know if we can keep it growing so that the change is permanent.”



## The mentor team – organizing community events

### HEARTS OF MEN COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

#### What we have achieved so far:

- All 21 boys are still on the programme,
- We have nine mentors,
- The boys were active in the community during the holidays, through projects like keeping the streets clean, working at the community centre and the clinic,
- Five boys have received life saving training at the council swimming pool.

#### The “Social Club”

We know there are a lot of people who want to put our community right. We’ve decided it’s time we take the bull by the horns and start doing things for ourselves. The Community Social Club is a result of the men’s programme, and was started to keep the youth off the streets through organising regular Friday night coffee clubs for youth and families.

#### Since December we have organised:

- A games evening
- Talent Show
- Fun Day (soccer and netball tournaments)
- Ambulance services’ demonstration
- Street clean-up campaign
- Back to school dance
- Costume Ball

We are hoping to have many more programmes for our youth and we need your co-operation to make this a success. Anybody is welcome to come and help in the activities of the Social Club.

April 2002 *(translated from Afrikaans)*

The story behind the Social Club was simple. This community project was created by the mentors working on the Hearts of Men programme. They were searching for a way to make the gains they were making with the young men sustainable. They wanted to create something that would provide a structure for the young men once they had completed their initial eight-month programme. They also wanted to create something that was open to all the youth within their neighbourhood – young men and women. They wanted to create a forum through which their own wives and partners could contribute.

In this way they generated a positive atmosphere around the boys' and men's programme. By creating the Social Club they were acknowledging that as men they existed within family as well as community structures. They were acknowledging the importance of men co-operating together to improve the community for all.

## **The student leadership team - building castles in the air**

### **One step at a time**

There is an exercise we do called *One step at a time*. The group stands in a circle, a very tight circle with no gaps, everyone's shoulders touching. They are told to remember this shape, because this is where they must end up after completing the exercise. Everyone now steps backwards until they form a very large circle, spread out with gaps between each person. The aim is for the whole group to move from where they are standing in the large circle, to once again create the tight circle in the middle of the room. The difficulty is that only *one* person may move forward at any one time, and they may only move *one* step at a time. If two people move together at the same time, then those two people must take one step backwards again.

This exercise is all about teamwork, clear communication, concentration and observation. It challenges us to watch out for the whole team, keep focus, to have patience, and to take things really slowly, literally one step at a time. The exercise is like a metaphor for completing a team project. You can use the image of the open circle with gaps moving into the tight circle. You can use it as an example of having to get to a specific point with the whole team. It serves as a useful physical image, and is an example to keep referring back to.

### **Ready for action!**

We were in the high school library. We were beginning a support process for the newly elected Representative Council of Learners - the RCL. Four morning sessions were planned, spread over two months, during which time the RCL would be implementing leadership projects that aimed to make a difference to their school.

We talked. There was much enthusiasm. There were many ideas. They realised that they needed to show the student body that they had a useful role to play. They were nervous and apprehensive. Serving on the RCL was something new. The RCL was a new concept within the school. It had only been in existence for a year. The educator assigned to support the RCL was doing it for the first time. They didn't know whether they had the capacity to make things work.

Someone called out, "Come we're ready for action. Enough talk, let's get down to business. Let's decide what kind of projects we're going to do."

Someone else, "Let's decide what we want to achieve, before we come to a project."

We brainstormed. The newsprint was full. We narrowed down all of the suggestions into themes. Everyone agreed that only two big projects were achievable.

They eventually selected two main themes that emerged from the list:

- a communication gap in the school - between RCL and learners, between RCL and staff, between learners and staff; and

- a lack of interest in education - especially in maths and science, where learners didn't see a future for themselves.

They then divided into two working groups. They decided that during the two weeks before our next support session, the groups would meet separately and would draw up project plans.

They left the library full of hope and energy.

### **One step forward - one step back**

Two weeks had passed and they came into the library without much enthusiasm. They sat, many of them staring down at the floor in silence. We didn't have to ask them how things were going, we already knew. There was no progress to report. The teams hadn't met, and the two leaders hadn't done anything. They were angry with their teams.

"So what caused you not to meet?"

"Only some of us in the communications team turned up in the library as arranged, but the rest didn't pitch. We thought if they couldn't be bothered, then why should we? So we left".

"And the other team?"

No one spoke. Silence.

"What happened to the education team?"

"We didn't really agree on a meeting time – ag, no one seemed that interested. We were keen when we here last time, but then, ag, well, you know how it goes."

"Last session you said you were ready for action, but now two weeks have gone by, and there has been no action. Last session you all left feeling positive. There was a buzz, but this session you are all down. You can feel the tension in this room. So what do you see from all this - what can we learn?"

"We thought we were ready, but we weren't."

"Those of us who were keen allowed the others to pull us down. We got angry so we did nothing. That was stupid."

"How can we pretend to be leaders when we can't even do what we said we would do? How can we expect other learners to follow us?"

"But how can you say that? You were supposed to be our team leader. You didn't organise the meeting properly."

"This is not the time to blame - that won't get you anywhere. We asked you what you could learn from what happened, or from what didn't happen - we didn't ask you to look for someone to blame. You are all responsible for those meetings not taking place - each and every one of you. And when we say you are all responsible, we don't mean you are all to blame. We are not interested in blame, we are only interested in each member of the RCL taking responsibility for the success of the RCL. That is what matters most."

We left a pause. We sat quietly. The room settled. The mood was beginning to shift.

"Do you remember the exercise we did *One step at a time*? You remember what happened when two of you took a step at the same time? Both of you took a step back, and then one of you, or someone else in the group, took a step forward again. And so we went on. In the exercise you sometimes had to take a step back, but you

always took a step forward again. We make mistakes, we clear them up and we move on. And that is what you need to do right now. Learn from what has happened, see we don't do it again - move on!"

## **Back into action**

It was as if that conversation cleared the air. The teams split and began their planning by brainstorming various possibilities for their projects. Enthusiasm and energy had returned.

The communication team reported back an abundance of ideas: a suggestion box, more assemblies, debating competitions between classes, reviving the school newspaper, information letters for parents, encouraging reading and use of the library, developing pride in the school uniform.

They stated their main aims as being to:

- get everyone at school involved in communication,
- build relationships,
- create a successful school.

We encouraged them to choose one or two points from their list and to develop them into an action plan for the month ahead, with a specific step for each week. In the planning phase our motto would be: 'To take one focus area - one month at a time - and one week at a time.'

We decided that the whole RCL team needed to be involved in the communications project - as leaders and supporters. So we scheduled the education project for the next term. 'One term, one project' was added to the motto. We also narrowed it down into a Science Fair, which would be held in the school. Planning could begin this term but implementation definitely the following term, once the communications project had got off the ground.

Tasks were set for the two weeks before we would next meet. The RCL would meet and plan their action steps more thoroughly. They nominated representatives to meet with the staff MAD design team in order to share their plans and ideas.

One young man said, "There is no turning back now. We must do what we said we'd do."

We had noticed that the educator in charge of the RCL was absent - she was overwhelmed with other duties. We felt her absence. The link between RCL, management and staff was fragile. The RCL needed her input, and she needed to see what level of support and encouragement these students required. We were looking forward to seeing how they progressed in two weeks.

## **Two steps back!**

When we gathered again, the mood was worse than it had been at the beginning of the previous session. What had happened before had happened again, so the effect was even greater this time. More despondency. Increased frustration. Lethargy.

So, what now, we asked ourselves. We didn't dare ask them that question - we knew what the answer would be. Already the young man that had spoken at the end of the

previous session had resigned. We heard that he was too disappointed when so few members turned up at their meeting. He was too angry that the RCL leader didn't pitch. He'd had enough, so he'd walked away. We wondered how many would follow him.

Drastic situations called for drastic action.

"So what do you suggest?" We did ask the question!

"Let's scrap the projects, it's a waste of time," they answered.

"We agree, scrap 'em," we said. They looked up in dismay. They had expected us to wrestle with them, convince them that they should continue, motivate them to have another go. But we didn't. We sat alongside them in silence, also staring at the floor. We repeated after a long while, "Yes, scrap the projects."

One young woman said, "It's stupid. Here we are planning to change our school for the better, and we can't even paint and clean up our RCL meeting room. We've had it for months and we've done nothing. Surely we need to get our own room right first, before we go out into the school and attempt something bigger. We said one step at a time, but we are trying to jump further than we are able."

They listened to her. She was making sense. Painting their own meeting room would bring them together, give them a sense of achievement, and build some confidence to venture further. They proceeded to plan the clean up and painting of the room to the last detail. They had learned the effects of a lack of planning and involvement. This time everybody was pulled into the conversation. Every member had to commit themselves to a painting or cleaning session, giving a specific day and time. They also drew up a list of all materials required and who would get them. Paint, the most expensive item, had already been donated, so they could jump into action quickly - and they did.

It was interesting to see how their lack of success on the bigger projects and the knowledge they had gained from that, had given them the necessary push to continue with another task, unbeknown to us, that they had been unable to implement.

In two weeks we were going to have our final session with the RCL team. They suggested we have the session in their newly decorated room. We asked whether it would be completed by then. "Isn't two weeks a bit quick?" we asked.

"No," they replied, "we will get the job done!"

We discussed with them some ideas for gifts we might bring for their meeting room as part of the celebration they were planning. We left them. We each had a smile on our face.

## **Life is tough**

Two weeks passed and we didn't get to meet in the newly painted room. We sat once again in the library with our gifts on the floor. The group was smaller this time - some of them couldn't face us, some of them couldn't face themselves. They were sad.

We got them to tell us their story. This time they had made good progress. On the whole, the team had stuck to their tasks, cleaned up the room and prepared the surfaces for the painting. So far, so good. But then over the weekend there had been a break-in at the school and the door to their meeting room had been smashed in, and all the paint had been stolen.

We suggested that we visit the room anyway and check on the progress they had

made before the break-in. We gathered together in their meeting room and discussed the incident as well as ideas to get another supply of paint. We then gave them our gifts to place in their room when it was complete - two pot plants and a poster celebrating our new South African Constitution. They certainly needed and deserved some encouragement.

The struggle the RCL had in implementing their projects emphasised to us the importance of having a mentor, a coach, someone to stand by in support of the learners as they struggled with difficult dynamics, relationships and circumstances. It was important to have someone there when they wanted to give up, when they were staring no hope in the face. This experience repeated itself on many other occasions, within the schools and in the community, with both youth and adult leadership. We appreciated how important it was to have a long-term, ongoing support and coaching process in place.

## **The men's team - building castles on the ground**

### **Planting a dream**

Three years ago, when we started, we had a vision...

- to provide a strong support system for young men within a community setting;

- to bring older men back to mentoring - providing the boys with male role models;

- to steer young men away from gang structures by exploring alternative options.

We created a design...

- we researched, we spoke, we gathered together men with experience of this work;

- we developed the overall shape and content for the different parts of the programme;

- we experimented with and explored many ideas and approaches.

We raised the funds...

- we listed all staffing and programme requirements;

- we costed out all possible expenditure;

- we obtained quotes where necessary;

- we researched funding options and completed applications.

We went into action...

- we created partnerships with specific schools, communities and local authorities;



we formed a staff team;

we committed ourselves to at least three years of work in our host community;

we developed a programme time frame and commenced delivery.

## Two years later

So far, so good. We completed our first year successfully in our host community. Everyone was eager to begin a second programme in the same community. We had also been invited by local government to begin another Hearts of Men project in another neighbourhood.

As we entered our third year of delivery, we reflected and asked ourselves some questions. We had built the programme on the ground. Our vision was alive. What we designed was up and running. Funds were still in place. The staff team was as committed as ever. But how deep were our foundations? When we, the facilitating team, withdrew from the community, would the programme remain standing, and for how long? Our challenge was to start deepening and strengthening the foundations, so that the work with young and older men would remain intact.

## Three steps to independence

We needed to find ways in which residents could keep this vision alive themselves, to provide their young people with ongoing support and guidance within the community. We had achieved a first level of 'buy-in' and involvement in the programme; we now needed to take it to another level.

We followed a particular development and training strategy:

**First step** - participate in the programme - experience it for yourself.

**Second step** - learn the programme - develop an understanding and get trained in all aspects.

**Third step** - facilitate the programme - strengthen and change it where you see fit.

## Taking steps to ownership

In the process of bringing this project *From air to earth* - from vision to reality - it was crucial that participants felt a greater sense of involvement and ownership. In the staff team we adopted the motto: 'Every year, everyone takes one step up.'

An example of how this translated into practice: the youth and mentor co-ordinators in year one became the programme managers in year two. Two of the mentors from the first year became interns in the second. They would then go on to be co-ordinators in their third year. In this way we were continually growing and developing as a team, and also trying our best to ensure that there were enough skilled men in the community once our three-year cycle was complete. We were looking at the same kind of development cycle with the youth participants in terms of their taking on more leadership responsibilities each time they were involved in a new programme.

But we needed to look further than just developing a facilitating team, to find ways of ensuring the sustainability of all aspects of the programme. For example, we re-



cruited an outside agency to deliver all the wilderness training for youth and mentors. It was convenient to do so. The specialist agency provided facilitators, a wilderness site, all food, accommodation, outdoor equipment and transport. We had used this system of delivery for the first two years. A good service was provided, which we paid for with a large part of our budget. It saved us an enormous amount of staff time, not having to deal with all the logistics involved in organising a wilderness adventure.

We now began to realise that while this arrangement suited us during the period when we were establishing ourselves and building the programme, it was unsustainable. In terms of developing the capacity of the community to deliver the wilderness component, we had made a mistake. A plus factor was that all staff and interns had learned a tremendous amount by attending the numerous wilderness-based experiences the agency had delivered for us.

We now decided to shift from a situation where everything was provided, to a situation where everything would be created within the community. Eventually we knew the community would have to take over the whole process to be able to sustain it. They would have to be involved in every aspect of planning and set-up.

Contracting this agency for the wilderness component was too expensive for the community to sustain, so the model we were using had to be radically reviewed. Participants needed to plan all menus and work out their own way of obtaining food. They needed to solve their own transport arrangements - supported by us, but managed by them. Local men needed to get more involved in the planning and delivery of the wilderness programme itself. For us, this was a radical shift, but also a natural shift once we looked at the sustainability issue more carefully.

Once we started to have these kinds of conversations it immediately began to influence all aspects of programme delivery. We developed a new and exciting edge. It also enhanced what we were doing, now that the stakes were being raised. Our motto was now being extended to every aspect of our work: 'In every part of the programme, everyone is expected to take one step up.'

For the first few years we had been engaged in setting up a new programme in new communities. We had to show that these intensive, longer-term interventions with young men could work. We needed to prove that there were enough older men who cared and would step forward and get involved in such an initiative. Those were hurdles we had to negotiate first. Now that we had cleared them, we were being presented with a new challenge.

### **Nothing for nothing**

At the very next wilderness camp, instead of all the food automatically being distributed among the various teams, the food now had to be purchased. Each team was issued with coupons valued at different amounts. They were given a price list of food, and possible menus for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The teams had to work out their menus over 10 days and budget accordingly. It was made clear to them that if they made a mistake and ran out of coupons and/or supplies, they would spend the last few days without food. They had to agree in their teams what they would spend and when, and what luxury items, for example syrup, they could afford.

This approach raised the stakes - raised the conflict - raised the stealing! It also

immediately raised the learning process and experience. The wilderness camps were always a sharp learning experience for participants. The difference now was that they were having to take far more responsibility for themselves, which in our view was making the learning sustainable.

If you have nothing, you will get nothing. If you are wasteful, there are consequences. If you don't plan, there are consequences. If you are driven by instant gratification, by eating too much or purchasing too many luxury items, you could end up with no food in the end.

We raised the stakes even higher on the next wilderness adventure. This time the coupons and menus were introduced weeks before departure. The coupons were now extended beyond food to all aspects of the wilderness excursion - equipment, transport, team performance and individual behaviour.

The teams now had to budget for the trip to the bush. They were given a breakdown of what it cost for each seat in a vehicle. They were allowed to bring one bag each, and were made aware of the cost to them of any extra baggage they might bring. They were going to have to hire all equipment: i.e. sleeping bags and mats, rucksacks, eating and cooking utensils. Any damage to equipment would have to be paid for by their team, and this could have an impact on their food budget.

There would be a court system to adjudicate any stealing or fighting that might occur. Guilty parties would have to pay a fine, which would come from their team budget. So now every move had an immediate consequence and a knock-on effect. The team would now have to care for each other and for their supplies in a different way. Any individual transgression would have an immediate effect on the whole team. There was now an increased ownership and buy-in from every participant.

The teams were told that this system of holding each group accountable for each team member's behaviour and performance would come into immediate effect, a few weeks before departure. Any transgressions would affect each team's eventual budget.

## **And another step up**

The question now was where did we go from here? The coupon system is good to the extent that it allows you to purchase real food in real time. The weakness is that the food is still purchased in advance of the programme through a pre-agreed budget.

We felt the need to extend the challenge and involve the mentors and young men in the actual budgeting of the whole programme, i.e. working with real money, in this case getting the prices of food available, and purchasing enough stock for the programme within an agreed expenditure framework. We needed to make the shift from coupons to real money.

We listed some other tasks: Selection of youth. Medical checks. Parental permission. Programme design. Content development. Facilitation. Transport to and from site. Wilderness site selection. Purchasing medical and wilderness evacuation cover. Fundraising.

What struck me was how many of these jobs are normally handled by the few - the professionals - while the participating community observes from the sidelines. We knew that this approach was faulty and had to shift in order for us to be 'building castles', not in the air, but on the ground!

## TOOLS

### Challenges

Over the past 20 years human social organisation in industrialised countries and cities has changed as a result of the impact of globalisation. New technologies, like the computer, internet and cell phone, form part of a global culture that has affected who we are as humans and how we organise ourselves. These developments, among others, have meant that community building has to take account of:

- the greater emphasis on the individual and their personal development;
- new forms of organisation which are flexible, less structured, self-managed.

One of the impacts of these trends has been the emergence of work teams as a form of community organisation. These are teams that come together around a particular issue and operate on the basis of agreed principles and programmes of action. If we accept the assumption that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, then the collective intelligence and capability of the team will be greater than the sum of the individual members' knowledge and abilities.

The challenge has been to:

- realise the enormous value to be gained from creating and nurturing teams,
- include more people through team structures in decision-making and management,
- create an environment in which teams are constantly learning and expanding their collective capacity.

### ASSEGAI



To assist teams to be successful and to break the cycle of “talk-talk”, we used the assegai to keep ourselves and the various teams focused on activities, on getting on and doing it, on solutions and not problems, on seeing results as quickly as possible.

In monthly reviews and support sessions we identified a number of assegai questions that assisted with evaluation of activity and future planning. For example, if a team or group got bogged down by a problem, we would ask them to reflect on what it would take to get moving again, and then to turn this into a project and put it into action.

## Reader's assegai

What teams are you involved in? How are they working?

Can you think of situations where you could benefit from forming a task team?

Does the structure of the teams you are in assist you in realising your dreams?

Do the teams build motivation, or get bogged down in endless talk and little action?

Is "talk-talk" a vicious cycle in your organisation?

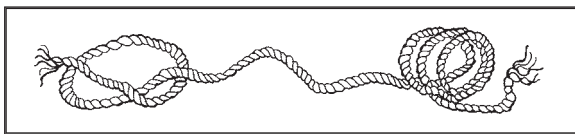
What causes this vicious cycle and how can you break it?

In what ways are you a learning team? If not, why not? How could you strengthen the team?

What binds people together in your organisation?

What closes the gap between you and others?

## ROPE



With the advance of all three legs of our potjie – community, schools, and men - we noticed the emergence of these work teams. These teams were all action orientated with a clear focus on addressing one specific community need, for example, cleaning the streets or providing social activities for the community.

This clear break with past forms of organising also represented an attempt by the community to address the problems of previous development initiatives, which had become bogged down in too much talk and struggles over power.

This led to a huge shift away from talking about constitutions, elections, group and organisational dynamics, to planning and action. The cycle of endless, unproductive meetings was broken as the teams focused on action and results. The act of doing rather than talking, built hope and the morale of team members, which encouraged further participation.

There was also a strong desire to co-operate among teams that were developing in all three programmes. The primary school became a key meeting point of these different teams as they planned their different actions. A small leadership core crossed over between teams, allowing information to flow informally between groups. A leadership forum was established to allow these leaders to meet once per month to share ideas, evaluate progress and learn new skills. This forum was co-ordinated by the local authority, and from time to time called public meetings to report back to the wider community.

As these teams developed, we were forced to introduce tools that would assist

them to operate more effectively. To ensure a common approach, we shared the same set of tools with participants in the three programmes.

## Structure

To ensure sharing of responsibility, involvement and ownership by all members, the teams kept formal leadership positions to a minimum and relied more on having team co-ordinators to drive activities. In teams where adults were sharing responsibility with youth, the structure was formal, with co-ordinators and other portfolios as needed, with the emphasis on sharing power between youth and adults.

This allowed us to turn any activity into a project and plan it in detail, ensuring that everything that needed to get done in order to achieve objectives was clearly written down and that responsibility was taken for it. This was important because when people are involved in changing their lives and circumstances, they tend to create huge complex objectives that require consistent working at over a period of time.

A step-by-step approach of turning each activity into a project allowed teams and individuals to regularly reach targets/milestones on the way to achieving the big objectives, keeping morale and motivation high.

We developed a project management framework that was simple and easy to use:

**Project title:** something catchy and easily understood by all

**Sub-title:** a sentence explaining the project

**Vision:** what the team wants to see at the end of a project

**Project objective:** the specific objective of the project

**Monthly objective:** what will be achieved in the next month

**Weekly objective:** monthly objective broken down into weekly objectives

**Monthly plan of action:** What will be done? By whom? And when?

**Monthly review:** Which objectives have been achieved? Why? Which objectives have not been met? Why not? What specific action needs to be taken to meet outstanding objectives?

## Capacity building

The emergence and development of the work team as a form of organisation was organic and experiential, and we used two ideas to help participants structure their learning.

### 1. Learning teams

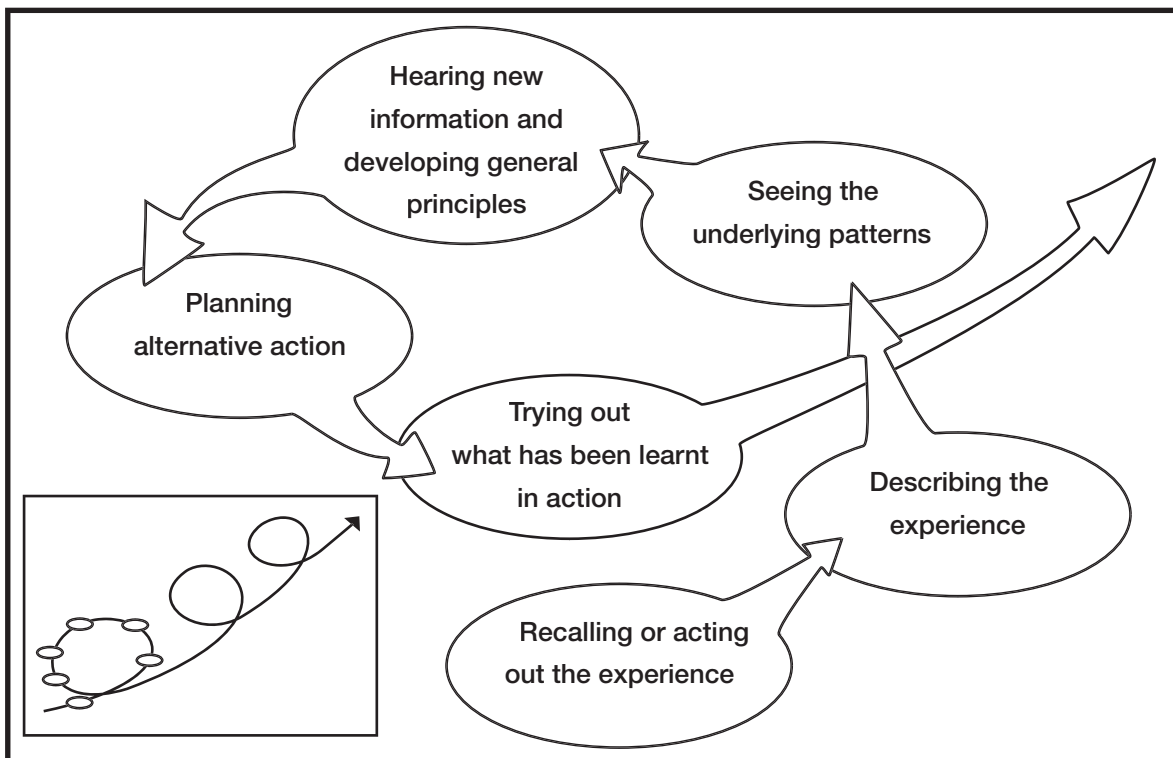
We introduced the idea of becoming a learning team. Many factors can affect the performance of teams, but success is based on being able to learn from experience and grow capacity incrementally. What is a team that is able to learn? If we understand

learning as a form of change in which an individual or group is able to participate in a non-stop process of absorbing new ideas and practices, a learning team would be recognisable by:

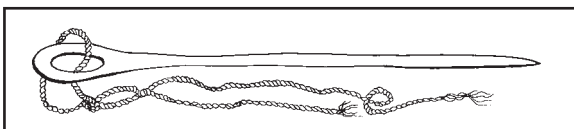
- its willingness to challenge its own ideas and ways of doing things;
- its willingness to try new ideas and practices;
- its capacity to recognise and respond to changes in the situation around them;
- its capacity to share ideas, knowledge and skills within the team;
- its capacity to engage in continuous reflection.

## 2. Action reflection cycle

We introduced six-steps for structuring a reflection session/monthly review:



## NEEDLE and THREAD



The work team approach also forced us to examine what would hold us together beyond common objectives and forms of organisation. Through a process of trial and error we realised that the learning team would need to be based on three pillars or building blocks of organisation:

common dreams, principles and intent;

regular rituals to celebrate success, acknowledge commitment and build a feeling of belonging;

constant and consistent personal/team growth in skills and abilities and incrementally building the capacity to reach success.

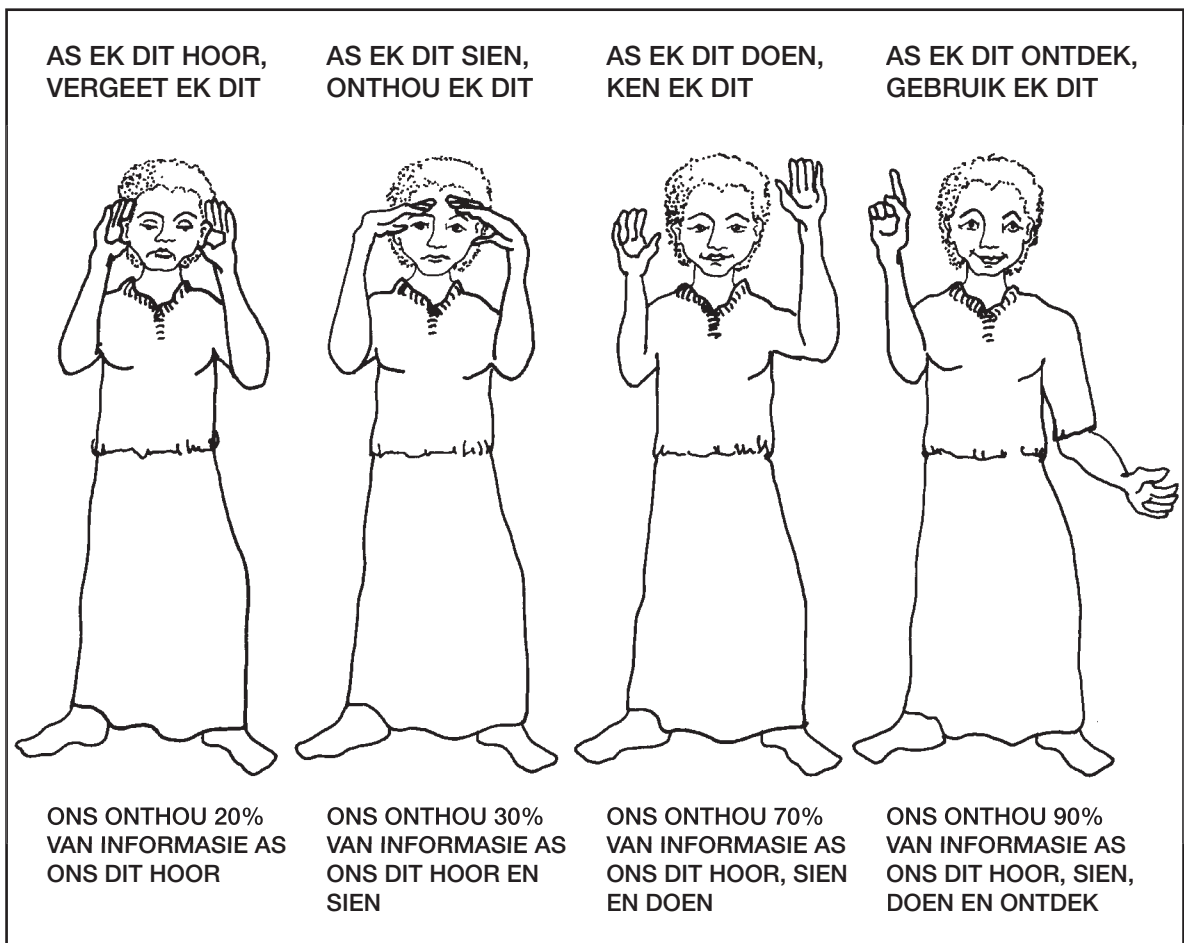
The more attention we paid to these three pillars, the stronger the teams became.

### Creating a bridge between our vision and reality

The word *vision* related very much to what we could see in our mind's eye. Something we could see that hadn't yet appeared in the real world. We had already spent some time with the student leadership, looking at what they were seeing in their school and community at present, and what they would love to see as a future alternative.

The word *project* had visual connotations. We could say that a project was like a *projector*. Instead of projecting film onto a screen, it allowed for the *projection* of an individual or a group's vision out into the world.

Some students thought that what others wanted to see was impossible, given the circumstances. But a clear vision was already beginning to form in the imagination of some of the leadership. Their challenge was to project that vision outside of themselves, so that others could begin to see what they saw. They also needed to show that their vision, their imaginary picture, could transform itself into something real which people could touch and experience themselves.





## **DANGER ZONE**

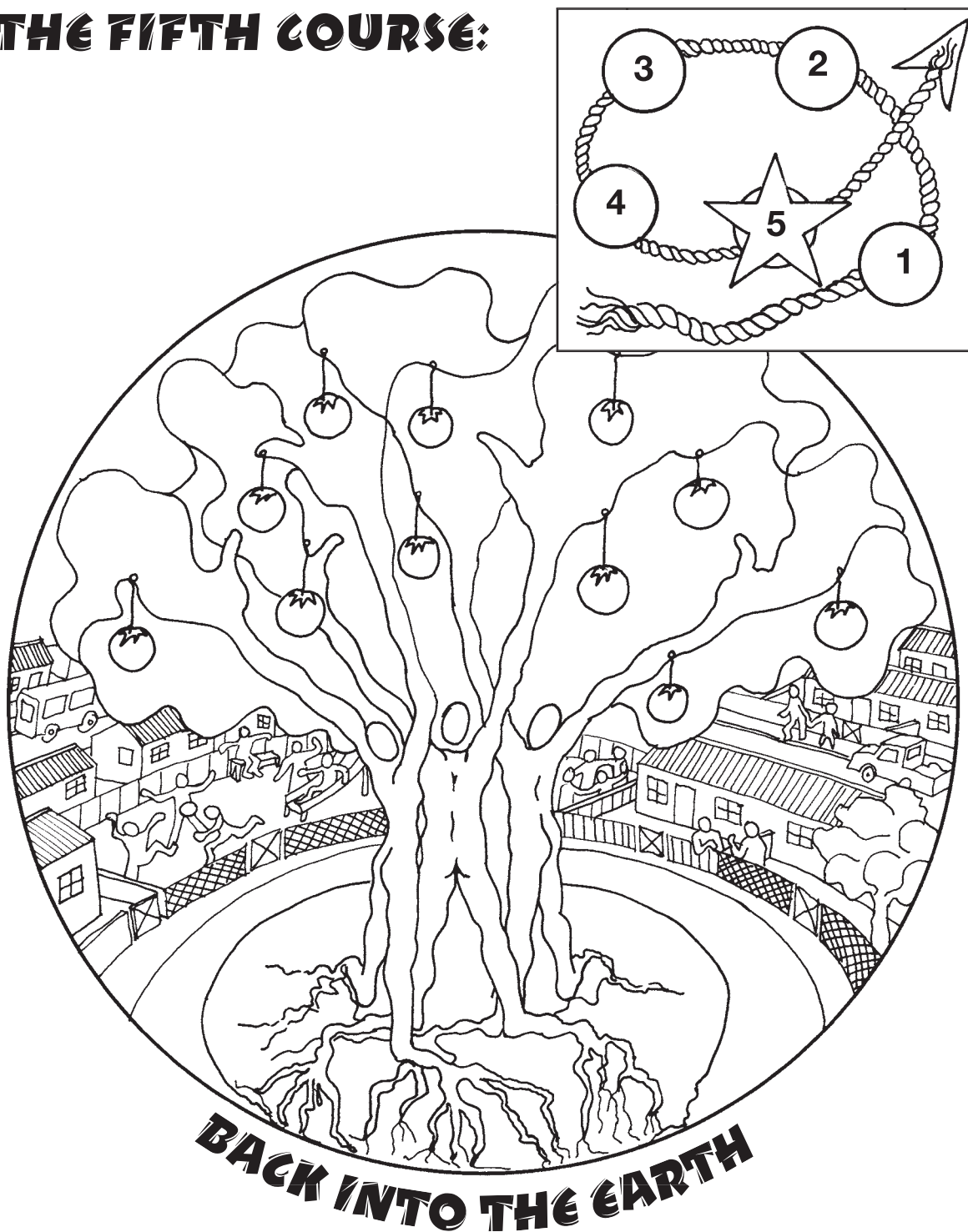
### **No quick fixes!**

The constant focus on action should not be misinterpreted as seeking quick fixes to problems. We are not advocating action for the sake of action. Action must lead to movement and development. This was done rather as an attempt to break the cycle of “talk-talk” and to achieve tangible results quickly in order to build momentum and motivation. The stress on “action-action” comes at this part of the process. We could not introduce it right at the beginning of a process, or in a way that was uncontained. Our strategy of action sat within a series of interconnected, longer-term interventions.

### **This is not anarchy!**

The more flexible team approach should not be seen as groups of people operating without structure. On the contrary, the idea is to build your organisation with enough structure as is necessary to complete the job. It questions the assumption that every time people organise themselves, they need a constitution, executives and portfolios to be effective. It challenges us as leaders to create flexible organisational forms that are straightforward and simple. The work team form of organisation is based more on relationships than it is on structure. It will only work well if the relationships in the group are working well.

## THE FIFTH COURSE:



### COMING FULL CIRCLE

As part of the development process we have moved full circle:

we started by giving birth to our programmes in *getting into the earth*;

we then *stepped through fire and water* to clear the ground;

we *breathed air* in order to dream;

we started our descent *from air to earth*, beginning to make our dreams real;

we are now coming full circle *back into the earth* to secure our learning and practices.

## Rooting the new

“How do we create a future that is from the future, but not for the future?”

I was a participant in a workshop and we were asked this question. At the time the question seemed obscure, but the answer we finally came to was very simple:

Creating a future from the future is all part of the visioning process, because to vision something is in a sense to ‘go into the future’, to place ourselves in an imaginary future, and to ‘see something’ there that doesn’t as yet exist. We then bring that vision, the thing we see, back into the present.

So the first part of the question made some sense.

“But not for the future” - what about the second part of the question?

Well, if it is not for the future what is the vision for?

Finally we decided that there is no future; the future doesn’t really exist. All we actually have is today. So it is not for the future, but for the present.

Even if we believe there is a future, that future will never look any different if we don’t put the vision into practice today, in the present, because that is the only real time that we have at our disposal.

So I grasped that there was *a time to dream*, and then there was *a time to act*.

Dreams take place high up in the air, in the wide, open spaces and landscapes.

Action takes place on the earth. And in order to sustain the action, we need to see it rooted deep down into the soil.

## Rooting in the schools

### Coming down with a bump

“I was so shocked when I read that document! Mrs Samuels came to me the other day, and she asked me to read it and see what I noticed. When I said that I didn’t notice anything new, she asked me to look carefully at the language, the terms we were using. I couldn’t believe what I saw. As a teacher I was part of the struggle to bring apartheid to an end. I have always considered myself to be a progressive South African, and yet I didn’t recognise that the language we are still using in our school Code of Conduct reflects the same language used by the apartheid regime. To me that is shocking! And as a principal now trying to build the new South Africa, I like to think we are working with our young people in a different way. It really showed me that sometimes we don’t see things, we get so used to how something has always been, so we don’t see it any more. So I agree with Mrs Samuels. We need to review all our documents. We need to think carefully about how we are relating to our learners, especially in areas of discipline.”

### A blast from the past

Mrs Samuels was the staff co-ordinator of the communication and relationships project team established at the school during the MAD workshops. The educators and learners working in that team had decided to focus on discipline in the school.

They all felt it was an area to be strengthened. The big question facing them was how to do that. What could be done differently? I suggested to Mrs Samuels that a

good place for us to start was to examine the school's Code of Conduct.

She replied, "But that is just a piece of paper. The problem we face is implementing it. The learners ignore it, as do some of the teachers."

"I agree with you, but let's just take a look at what is written down. It is just a first step."

She produced the Code of Conduct as well as a separate document headed 'Forms of Punishment'.

## FORMS OF PUNISHMENT

### 1. HARD LABOUR:

For fighting, swearing, disrespecting school property (graffiti, etc.), truancy, leaving school without permission, disrespect for teachers.

### 2. DETENTION:

No homework, dishonesty, late coming, absenteeism without letter, incomplete homework.

### 3. SEND HOME:

No school uniform or non-conformity. Only to return when properly attired.

### 4. ISOLATION:

Misbehaviour in classroom.

### 5. IDENTIFICATION AT ASSEMBLY:

For littering.

Something immediately grabbed my attention on the list of punishments.

"Hard labour, detention, isolation, identification – what do those words remind you of?"

"What do you mean?"

"Where have you seen them before? Who used to use those words?"

"Yes, I see it, I see what you mean. I'm amazed I didn't see it before!"

"I know we all do that. This document has been with you for years and you've just accepted it, because that's the way it is. Looking at this document, I am not surprised that you are having difficulty implementing it."

Mrs Samuels laughed and said, "So looking at these papers is a good place to start after all."

"I think so."

## Moving from being punished to taking responsibility

During the MAD workshops we worked hard on the concept of dealing with mistakes that had been made. Facing the consequences of our actions is one way in which we can take responsibility for them. Accepting the consequences, i.e. doing what is required, is an empowering way of dealing with a situation. The so-called transgressors take an active role in redeeming themselves, as opposed to being on the receiving end of the punishment and often resenting or resisting it.

Together with the teachers in the communications team, we worked on translating the punishments into community service options, where the emphasis would shift from punitive measures, to actions that would benefit the school community as a whole.

*Forms of punishment* became known as *Consequences – serving your community*.

*Hard labour* was translated to *School maintenance – improving your school*. Students would now select from a range of physical jobs around the school, for example cleaning, painting, repairing or gardening.

*Detention* changed to *Classroom and Library maintenance – building a learning environment*. Students would select from a range of practical tasks, for example covering, sorting and repairing books, or cleaning equipment.

*Identification at assembly* was redesigned to *Speaking at assembly – acknowledging your mistakes*. Rather than being picked out at assembly in front of the whole school and shamed, students would now be encouraged to address the school, publicly acknowledge what they had done, and report back on what they had already done, or planned to do, to rectify matters.

As we worked our way through the document, the staff already began to feel that a substantial shift was beginning to take place. Students would be encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, and the consequences they would have to face were designed to benefit the whole school. They felt that this was going to create a different atmosphere around many of the disciplinary issues. It was also a way of pulling students into positive tasks through which they would receive positive acknowledgement in school.

## **Moving from negatives to positives**

We then proceeded to work through the Code of Conduct document.

Again I asked them what they noticed. “What words appear the most in this Code?”

“Do not, don’t and no,” someone observed.

“And what effect do those words have? What kind of behaviour do they describe?”

“It’s all negative. We are not saying what kind of behaviour we want, we are just telling them all the time what they must not do. Maybe we should rewrite this one as well. We should attempt to describe what we expect from them, the positive behaviour they can strive towards.”

We agreed unanimously to do just that.

## **Code of Conduct**

1. No fighting in classrooms, playground, toilets
2. Do not play in school grounds after school
3. No writing on walls
4. Do not litter
5. Do not call “names”
6. No spitting
7. No playing in the classrooms
8. No swearing
9. No back-chatting
10. Always wear proper school uniform
11. Keep your hair tidy - boys short hair, girls plaits (no dyed hair)
12. No late coming
13. No eating in classrooms
14. No truancy
15. Don't leave school without permission
16. No running on stairs
17. Do not wear any jewellery to school
18. No talking in class
19. Look after trees and plants
20. No stealing
21. Always be honest

We also agreed to draft the new Code of Conduct in the form of a contract between every student and the school, to be signed by the student and witnessed by a parent or guardian. This was something new.

## **Taking ownership**

Participation by all was identified as being crucial to successful implementation. The communication team needed to share these new documents with the rest of the staff in order to gain their support. Already we knew the principal supported this initiative. We also knew that the principal had a strong and positive leadership influence on her staff team, and that if she supported this work, then her staff would most likely follow her example.

Once this support was secure, the communication team sat down as a whole to design an implementation strategy. So, for the first time, staff and students were sitting together to devise a way forward in terms of improving and strengthening discipline and accountability within their school. The staff knew that they could no longer do this on their own. They needed the co-operation of and the partnership with their student leadership.

Together they came up with a dynamic plan and they immediately began implementing it.

Involving students in the running of their school, and encouraging them to take responsibility with their peers, had a powerful effect on school discipline. It also gave both staff and student leadership a new way of engaging with one another.

## **MAD PROGRAMME - COMMUNICATION TEAM**

Project action plan

Project title: RESPEK VIR EK

Project objective: TO BRING ABOUT RESPECT FOR ONESELF AND OTHERS IN OUR SCHOOL

Monthly objective: To introduce the project to the whole school and get all involved

Weekly objectives:

### **WEEK 1**

Draw up code of conduct – guidelines for behaviour plus consequences (to be implemented by staff and student leadership)

### **WEEK 2**

Introduce the code to learners and have a signing ceremony (whole school involvement)

### **WEEK 3**

Leaders go to classes, and put up a copy of code in each class (to be implemented by communication project student members)

### **WEEK 4**

Leaders visit classrooms to identify students with bullying behaviour, and set up a meeting with those students identified (to be implemented by communication project staff and students)

## **Strengthening relationships between staff and students**

### **Tough talking in parliament**

“Excuse me, just a minute,” Mr Amos raised his hand. He spoke as he rose to his feet. He is a large man, and a senior member of the management team - when he spoke people listened.

“I am an educator. I do not have to explain myself to students. I don’t have to justify my decisions or my actions to them either. I’m prepared to sit here and listen. I’m prepared to listen to what learners have to say, to their ideas. That doesn’t mean that we have to take them on – we will just consider them – that’s all.”

A student leader had just spoken eloquently about the state of the school, how she saw it from her perspective. It was honest straight talk. I felt the parliament was beginning to hot up, starting to get real. We had had a tentative, polite, formal start. The young woman was the first person to speak from the heart, to let us know exactly what she saw and how she felt. She wasn’t known as a ‘trouble-maker’. She was a top student, a recognised leader, also involved in the student Christian movement. She had an air of respectability about her – you couldn’t ignore her easily.

She had spoken specifically about some staff members who do not pull their weight, who were, in her opinion, irresponsible with regards to their behaviour. She did not name names, but her reflections sent a ripple through the educators and learners participating in the parliament.

Mr Amos, in my opinion, was not one of the educators she was referring to. He was a committed educator who was passionate about building a culture of participation in sport at the school. But he took exception to this kind of talk from a student, especially in an open forum.



“This parliament is supposed to bring us together. I supported the idea of having this discussion forum. But now I fear it is going to cause problems, create conflict and divide us. I am not so sure it is a good idea any more.” He shook his head and sat down.

This was the first large parliament session being held at this school. There were many struggles going on. Mr Amos’s contribution had made an impression and had increased the tension in the room. Continuing open debate wasn’t possible that day. We needed to work with both sides.

Mr Amos was angry, and was most probably speaking for other staff members as well. Students were feeling that the truth was being stifled. They were wondering if it was worth continuing in such a forum with adults.

Some educators were frustrated with the lack of honesty from their colleagues. Mr Amos and others were struggling with the reality of this kind of forum in which people might speak out, especially in front of students. He would be able to handle the conversation if it were just adults, but certainly not in front of students. That would be betraying his colleagues. He would have none of that.

“Who does this school belong to?” questioned the learners. “Isn’t it supposed to be a partnership between learners and educators, youth and adults? Then we must be able to talk openly to one another. Isn’t that the idea of this parliament?”

### **Creating a strong container for tough talking**

So we learned many lessons that day. Parliaments were a totally new concept, with educators and students coming together as leaders into one forum. But to do what, that was the key question. We knew that relationships can fall apart when people don’t say what is really going on for them, and when people talk behind each other’s backs or just to those ‘on their side’.

Yet Mr Amos was also right. Relationships can be soured and destroyed with tough, direct talking, especially if all parties have not been prepared for it. Both sides need to think through carefully how they are going to introduce a topic, especially a sensitive topic. They also need to be willing to listen to what others are saying, especially when what is being said is difficult. All this takes careful preparation. All participants need to understand exactly what it is the forum is intending to achieve.

We realised that the forum, just like an infant, needed protection and nurturing in its early days. We hadn’t done enough preparation and planning. We needed to get agreements from all parties as to the intention and format of the parliament. We needed to agree on specific guidelines. We needed to build slowly and carefully over several months. We could then create a safe and trusting environment for all, eventually agreeing to tackle tougher issues when we felt the parliament was strong enough to handle them. Otherwise we realised that the idea of the parliament might meet ongoing resistance, and eventually collapse.

In this particular school, tough, straight and honest talking needed to take place between all role-players – parents, staff and students. But first we needed to construct a container strong enough to hold the talkers safely. We needed to be able to build relationships, not destroy them. We needed to bring people closer together, not to alienate them further from one another.

## Creating the right foundation

We realised certain things were missing. Without co-operation between students and teachers, the education process, as well as good school governance, could not occur. A common belief in partnership, and in co-governance of the school was missing. Also missing was a belief in young people as leaders of today, and not tomorrow; the recognition that they needed experience in leadership today, that young people had a contribution to make right now.

Parliaments were agreed to without necessarily having these basic foundations in place. Some believe that the belief system is built through active experience, through the process of participating in a parliament. That is true, but you do have to have the basic agreements in place beforehand, and we didn't. But we learned from our mistakes, and in the end that is what counts, learning from your mistakes quickly enough!

## Preparing for parliament

So what we learned about the need for preparation in the high school could now be applied to our work with the staff and students in the primary school.

Twenty two youth leaders were sitting on benches outside the resource centre. They were anxiously waiting for the first meeting between youth and adult leaders. Mike was trying to calm their nerves and support them to find the confidence to make the next giant leap, co- management of school projects with staff.

Amidst the shuffling and nervous coughs Ashneigh found her voice first: "But what will happen when we get inside? Where will we sit? What will we call our teachers? How can they follow us?"

Ashneigh had asked these questions repeatedly over the last two months, since we began to prepare the youth leaders for working with the adults.

"Ashneigh, last week we had a workshop with the staff and we shared with them all your concerns and we discussed what they would have to do to make it work," replied Mike, "so don't worry, it'll work out. We have tried this in other schools!"

Ashneigh wasn't having any of these platitudes of comfort from another adult. She was a tough young girl and knew that adults always told children what to do - for her an immutable truth.

As it was for some of the adults. But is it? The week before, a few of them had raised concerns about their authority and control being lost if leadership of projects was shared with the learners.

To support them in the process of working with youth leadership, they had recognised certain principles and made agreements among themselves:

That youth are the leaders of today and not tomorrow.

To put this principle into practice, opportunities to lead needed to be created.

By sharing responsibility in this way, youth could lead youth and provide role models for all the students at the school.

To ensure success, the adults would need to change their roles from controllers to guides.

To solve problems and ensure a common approach to being guides, staff would meet in between sessions with the students and evaluate their progress.

Mike tried to explain this to her and the other learners. “You have all practised your reports and we’ve discussed where you will sit. We will play some games when we get inside and once you start laughing together everything will be OK! Trust me.”

It was all about trust. Trust in yourself to achieve beyond what seemed possible. Trust in yourself to take risks when the stakes were high - to take seemingly immovable truths about power, shake them up and produce something new and very different. Trust that Mike and Nic would hold the process in a responsible manner.

Mike asked, “Which games do you want to play? Let’s choose your favourite three games to play then you will know exactly what will happen in the first 20 minutes!”

“People to people.”

“The one where you follow the other person’s hands.”

“The frogs and the newspapers.”

The response was unanimous. Over the last few months these games had been played over and over, breaking the ice between groups in the school. There was a sudden burst of activity and the staff started arriving.

## **Parliament is not only for MPs!**

The hall was packed, full of noisy educators and learners. The last parliament sitting of the year. Chairs were arranged in a U-shape with everybody sitting in groups, staff and students all mixed up. Everyone was trying to sing and chant louder than the others.

After a while we all got tired and Shahira, a Grade 6 learner, stood up and welcomed everybody reading from her notes.

“On behalf of MAD - the Making A Difference programme, I want to welcome you to our parliament. Our agenda today is to take reports from all the teams and present certificates to leaders who have done well. We will also have an item from our choir and our dance group. At the end we will sing the school song. Before each team reports, they should sing their chant and we should all support them by joining in.”

Mr Smidt took over.

“Shahira and I are your speakers of parliament today. Let’s give her a clap for opening the parliament! OK. I would like us to rise and Monita and Crystal will lead us in prayer, first in Arabic then in Afrikaans.”

“Who will be the first team to report? Environment team?”

The leaders made their way to the front.

“I am Charne and as you know, I am the captain of the environment team. With me here are my other leaders, Chad and Mr Pieterse. Please join us in our chant:

*Respek vir Ek! Respek die Plek  
Vir ek! Vir ek! Vir ek!  
En die plek.*

All 90 of us stood and moved together chanting at the tops of our voices. Stamping! Clapping! Rapping! Feet and hands! Head and heart!

“Together again one more time:

*Respek vir Ek! Respek die Plek  
Vir ek! Vir ek! Vir ek!  
En die plek.*

After everyone sat, Chad began to read his report.

“Since the last parliament our team has painted and fixed up the boys’ toilet. We stayed after school with Boeta Jamie and got everything right. We have got bags, bins and brooms from the council to clean the playground. Please help us pick up all the papers.”

Chad stood back, breathed a sigh of relief and went red in the face. He had done it. He had managed to read a report in English! Everyone clapped for him.

Charne continued:

“In the next month we hope to visit all the houses of people who live around the school. We want to ask them to help us look after the school grounds and to stop people littering around our school. We are also going to start painting ‘Save Water!’ pictures on the walls of the toilets. Our next planning meeting for the whole team will be on Monday after school.”

A hand shot up; it was Cindy.

“What about your task of toilet duty? Are you still going to do it? Sometimes there is no one doing duty.”

Mr Pieterse rushed forward to help Charne, forgetting completely the need to give her a chance.

## **Holding each other accountable**

“Yes, Cindy, you are right, some of our members are not coming to meetings or doing their duties. I was intending to ask parliament today if you had any suggestions about what to do.”

Hands shot up.

Anthony stood and gave a quick break-dance performance, and with much bravado he asked: “I want to know who the people are! Mr Pieterse can you please read out their names?”

Mr Pieterse glanced around the room looking for the principal. After a moment he read out the names and asked those present to stand. An uncomfortable moment, as some of the names included members of staff as well as the principal. Can a parliament call the principal to account? Slowly feeling out the newness of it, awkwardly almost, everyone whose name was read out stood up.

The principal, never one to hold back, seized the moment: “Mr Pieterse and learners, I would like to apologise for not attending meetings. I have been very busy in the last month. I should have explained to Charne and excused myself. I’m sorry - this will not happen again.”

She sat down. Applause and whistles broke out across the room. We heard a range of excuses and reasons from the others. Each person was listened to in turn and was asked to apologise, like the principal. They also had to explain what they were going to do to make sure it didn’t happen again.

Everyone clapped. The environment team sat down.

Over the next 10 minutes we heard reports from the bullying and health projects and from the communication and education teams. Each team received its share of questions and suggestions. This led to fierce competition to see who could ask the hardest questions!

Shahira and Mr Smidt continued together.

## **Celebrating leadership**

“We have come to the leadership awards. This is the first time we are giving these awards, so let me explain. The awards are for staff and students who have really been good leaders this year. Each of you has already voted for who should get the awards. We are going to give four awards: for commitment to relationship building, communication with other leaders, support for the team, and for taking responsibility. As you know, these are the four cornerstones of our MAD programme. The staff awards first. To present the awards, I am going to ask Shafiq and Linda from Grade 5 to come forward.”

Shyly and in one voice they read from a piece of paper:

“For responsibility, our principal, Mrs Brandt. For communication, Mr Pieterse. For commitment, Mr Smidt, and for support, Mrs Claasen.”

The staff came forward, unsure of what would happen. At first everyone was quiet, looking to see what the principal would do. The principal getting a certificate from learners! Unbelievable? Mrs Brandt stepped forward and shook Shafiq’s hand. She bent down for a quick kiss and received her certificate. When she kissed Shafiq, the hall burst into laughter and clapping. The staff stepped forward and held their certificates up for a photo to be taken.

Mrs Claasen started to speak:

“Thank you, learners. In my 15 years of teaching this is the first time I have received a certificate - it makes me feel so good. I really feel I have achieved something today!”

The awards for student leaders were given out by two Grade 6s, amid lots of clapping, stamping of feet and singing of songs! Shahira thanked everyone for coming to the parliament and reminded us all that sandwiches and juice would be served for all parliamentarians in the courtyard. We broke up noisily, riding on the powerful emotions of the event. Today would be remembered as the day Mrs Brandt stood up and said sorry and got an award! Parliaments are places where the unexpected can happen.

## **Rooting in the community**

### **Who said there were no good men around?**

Cowboys do cry! I sat through the mentors’ graduation in the corner at the back of the school hall, crying. It felt as if a load had been lifted off me. I was in a hall full of South African men, all colours and classes, and the atmosphere was flooded with emotions and passion. I wasn’t the only one crying. The families, friends and supporters of 15 men were gathered to celebrate the ending of a stage in their journey of change. This was a special ceremony for the mentors. They had completed their initial training and were about to begin work with the young men in their community.

But it was more than that. More than a graduation. We were celebrating the impossible. A tough situation. People hardened by surviving, many who had lost their self-respect.

But here was a group of men standing up and saying, “No more. Enough! We will create new ways to be as men. And we will share it with our sons.” Powerful stuff!

I sat with tears running down my cheeks as each man came up and spoke of his journey, hopes and fears. Of what joining the mentors’ circle and the training had meant to him. Of gaining a better understanding of himself as a man. Of seeking a new path in life.

They also signed contracts - contracts with themselves, their families and their community - to mentor young men.

But I really started to cook when the wives spoke. Women who understood that for men to change they - as wives, mothers and lovers - would also have to find new ways of relating. They would need to change how they acted toward their men. These were women who were celebrating the changes they witnessed in their men.

When one of the programme leaders asked me to speak, I couldn’t. My emotions ruled my logic and I was at a loss for words. Afterwards we all stood around with huge smiles on our faces. Hugs, laughter and handshakes. Yeeeeesssss!

It felt so good to be part of men taking back their lost parts, their history and their identity.

## **Men taking their place**

We were reviewing progress after three years of work in the school and the community.

Mrs Williams, the primary school principal, was sharing her reflections with a researcher.

She was asked what impact she could identify from the three interventions. This is what she said about men:

“Two years ago when we had a parents’ meeting here at the school, the room would be full of women. You would not see a man in the room. Well, maybe just one, and he would be standing alone at the back, near the door. Now when we have a parents’ meeting, the men make up nearly half of those present. That makes me pleased. I feel that the hard work with the community leadership through Going for Gold, and the involvement of Hearts of Men, has made an impact. I can see a clear difference now with the men. They are involved with the youth, especially with the young men in the community. They are also involved with our school. Especially the men who are not working, they come and ask me what they can do to help. It is wonderful to see these men standing up and getting involved – what a difference it makes to the whole community, the youth, the parents, just everybody.”

## **Can the gain sustain?**

We are so hungry for quick successes in South Africa, this question comes up regularly. We are all looking for quick fixes to our problems. The pressure for solutions and results is enormous.

Building community is an organic process about slow incremental change. Each



step creates the next. To be sustainable the change must become permanent. For this to happen, many people, processes, projects and resources will need to work together for many years to support sustained, planned, evaluated and well-managed development. The chances of this happening over the next 10 to 15 years are unknown. The risks and costs of failure are high. But does that mean that we should not begin and keep striving for success, because we are unsure of its sustainability?

Recently the provincial government launched a three-year initiative to speed up social and physical development of the entire suburb as a strategy to fight crime. Part of this plan is the development of a community forum to co-ordinate and oversee planning, monitoring and implementation for this renewal. This forum is structured geographically into precincts and in clusters on the basis of interest, for example, youth, schools, and economic development opportunities. This is a major gain, as it has assisted in surfacing and supporting the development of leadership from all sectors and areas of the community. But resources for social and physical development from the various branches of government are limited.

The precincts have multiplied and become a key structure for grassroots development and local government/community partnerships. Each precinct has a committee and many have embarked on projects. This growth is proceeding very quickly. More training and resources are needed to support this. The growth is uneven and full of potential for conflict.

Residents are more organised than before. The clean-up has become the Environment Forum. Challenged by the need to maintain interest, the five existing clean-up committees launched a suburb-wide environment forum and programme. They recently won a national award for community action to clean up streets, recycle waste, and improve and maintain local parks. The committees are now being started in each precinct.

The schools have become more involved in community activities like clean ups and environmental programmes. Some of the schools have begun to deal with education transformation more successfully especially the primary schools.

Hearts of Men has made a significant impact in the precinct. For the first time men are sitting together as men to evaluate and change the way they are with their families and community. While the number is still small, their capacity, knowledge and understanding are growing. The programme is providing a powerful alternative for the boys to dropping out of education and joining gangs. The Social Club is in the process of registering as an organisation and developing capacity to provide a permanent service to its community.

The real victory is that the community is on the move. The leadership vacuum is slowly disappearing as new leaders grow and develop the confidence to initiate, lead and manage change. Community building is happening. A sense of community is budding. A sense of freedom and development is growing as more people break the cycle of apathy and become activators of their own lives. Youth have more options than before. Accountability of government officials is emerging as the capacity and skills of leadership grow.

But is this new momentum self-sustaining?

Uneven quality of services, unemployment, poverty, gangsterism and crime are still high. In some parts of the wider community gang-related shoot-outs are a regular oc-



currence. Many residents still doubt or are apathetic about change.

That's the picture now. What do you think? Is it sustainable? Is this even the right question to be asking?

Perhaps we should be asking what we learned from the last step, to ensure that we take the next step more firmly.

## TOOLS

### Challenges

In the MAD programme, apart from the three letters standing for 'making a difference', we used the letters to identify three key dynamics of the process:

**M**ovement - creating some momentum especially where people are stuck.

**A**ction - taking action in order to sustain movement.

**D**irection - giving shape to the action in order to achieve specific results.

Giving shape and structure to people's action is the critical challenge here.

We know that for change to occur we need to create movement. For movement to occur we need motivation. Motivation leads us into action. And action needs direction.

## ASSEGAI



In the Code of Conduct story, we used the assegai to focus on the language used to describe 'punishments' being given, and also the language used in the Code of Conduct. This focus gave us the clue as to how we should go about rewriting and transforming the school's approach to discipline.

In developing the parliament structure, we used the assegai to focus on the purpose of the sessions, and also to be detailed and organised in our preparation for the events.

We also focused on specific achievements and created awards for each of these, for example leadership, commitment, etc.

In the staff evaluation, we focused in on specific measurable changes, and on individually recognised qualities. In our evaluations we used questions like:

What is different now? How do you know it is different?

What was it like before? How have you achieved that difference?

What support have you had? What obstacles did you overcome?

What could you do differently next time?

## Reader's assegai

Do you acknowledge members and leaders in your organisation? How often? How often do you appreciate and recognise the people you work with? Enough? Do you need to do this more often?

Is it always the powerful leaders in your organisation that get acknowledged? Do you recognise the hidden everyday leaders who lead quietly without being noticed? Do you know who the leaders are in your organisation?

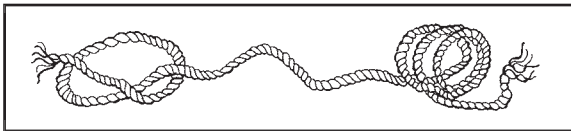
Do you encourage teamwork in your organisation? Do you celebrate the successes of these teams? What criteria are used to elect people to teams in your organisation/community? Do these criteria reinforce existing relationships or are they a way to build new relationships within the organisation/community?

What do you do to build hope and pride in the leadership of your organisation/community?

If you are a member of a team, do you ever come together to celebrate achievements you have had?

Do you have rituals to do this? What does it say about you if you don't?

## ROPE



Examples of structures we developed:

### Schools based

Code of Conduct plus opportunities put in place to rectify breaches to the Code by serving the school.

Document of Agreement between school and learners and Signing Ceremony.

Preparation meetings between student and staff leadership.

Parliament sessions to acknowledge achievements, celebrate victories, and identify problem areas.

Reflection sessions for staff to collectively share experiences and to evaluate performance.

## Community based

Mentor Commitment and Signing Ceremony for male volunteers in the presence of community leadership and families.

Weekly sessions for young men together with their mentors.

Project teams of young men doing community service.

Project teams of adults doing community service.

Community leadership circle for adults.

Community Social Club organising youth events for local children.

## Using parliaments

We use the idea of parliament, as a regular meeting place for leadership teams within an organisation or a community, to:

- share information and suggestions,
- give each other support,
- check on action plans.

It also provides a platform to:

- acknowledge and celebrate leadership and teamwork in the school community;
- allow leadership and teamwork to emerge;
- hold each other mutually accountable for who we are as people and the way we operate in groups;
- hold management accountable outside of the normal line function;
- acknowledge and encourage teamwork across positions, functions and power relations;
- have a fun way to keep momentum going on long-term projects, and to build energy and hope.

## Primary school new Code of Conduct

### New Code of Conduct

I, \_\_\_\_\_, a student of \_\_\_\_\_ Primary School hereby undertake to abide by the following CODE OF CONDUCT of the school:

1. To respect the democratic right of students, including myself, to be taught, and in no way hamper or disturb this process.
2. To respect the democratic right of teachers and employees, and in no way hamper or disturb them in their duty.
3. To respect the authority of all teachers and obey instructions.
4. To respect and protect school property and the property of others.
5. Not to leave the school premises without permission during school hours.
6. To be punctual at all times and no truancy.
7. To attend school regularly and to bring a letter or note from a parent/ guardian or a doctor's certificate, to explain the reason for my absence.
8. To adhere (conform) to the school's seasonal dress code and to keep my hair tidy – plaited hair for girls, short hair for boys and dyeing of hair is not permitted.
9. To be courteous and polite to everybody.
10. To continue with my work when teachers leave the classroom and always do my homework.
11. To be honest and take responsibility for my actions at all times.
12. To hold the name of the school high in whatever I do.

My parents/guardian and I understand that failure to abide by the above-mentioned Code of Conduct may lead to punitive measures as decided upon by teachers, the school principal and the school governing body.

Student's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section from Hearts of Men mentors' contract

### MENTORSHIP AGREEMENT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, choose to participate in the Hearts of Men programme, and volunteer my services as a Mentor.

I agree to enter into a partnership with Hearts of Men that will facilitate the delivery of the programme in \_\_\_\_\_

and I pledge the following commitment.

I will:

- act as a mentor for the youth for eight months;
- attend all mentor training and support sessions for the duration of the programme;
- attend a facilitated mentor and youth session every week and one Saturday per month;
- meet once per week informally with other mentors and youth in small groups;
- be in regular communication with and accountable to the programme managers;
- adhere to all guidelines, instructions and coaching from the programme managers and from the community intern.

I will keep to the following guidelines:

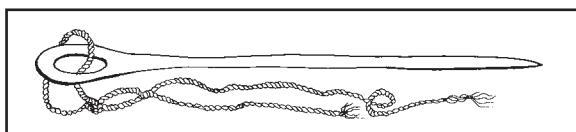
- \* encourage the youth to attend all sessions and participate in the programme;
- \* support the youth in completing their personal and community projects;
- \* encourage the youth to work independently of me;
- \* keep in regular communication with the youth and with other mentors;
- \* offer my support to youth and mentors;
- \* remain open to receiving the support of others;
- \* ask questions and request assistance when undertaking a task;
- \* be consistent, attend all sessions, and be on time;
- \* treat the youth and all others with respect, honesty and tough love;
- \* only make promises to the youth and all others that I can keep;
- \* meet only in designated areas, for example the Junior School;
- \* invite a youth to my home only with the prior consent of a parent and co-ordinator;
- \* give money or any other item only with prior consent of a parent and co-ordinator;
- \* avoid being manipulated by a youth into doing things I do not wish to do.

## The facilitators' challenge in holding this process

Implementing new structures involved new ways of doing things. The most challenging new structures were those that demanded that participants communicate and relate to each other in a different way. This could take time. As facilitators we had to be prepared to ride the waves as they rose and fell, to keep the participants on track, especially when the going got tough.

We had to keep faith in the new structure even when *they* lost faith, to keep motivating participation when people wanted to withdraw. Sometimes when we noticed these symptoms, instead of giving up, we took them as a good sign that the natural process was working, and used them to motivate us to keep moving on!

## Needle and thread



In our programmes we often use candle lighting as a symbol of unity and hope for a better life. When lit, the flame taps into something deep in the human spirit, evoking feelings of warmth, light and hope. In a very simple and elemental way it connects the head, the heart and the spirit of the group, building unity of purpose. A candle has a religious or spiritual significance for most people, evoking love and peace and, in so doing, building spiritual bridges between people that are often able to transcend emotions of conflict within the group.

As the candle is lit, we acknowledge that the group is once again together as a force. Having the flame burning throughout a session provides a connecting point and a visual reminder for all. As we extinguish the flame, we observe the smoke it leaves behind and watch as it spreads throughout the room into each one of us.

Rituals, ceremonies, acknowledgements, certificates, public signing and graduation ceremonies create energy and life in a group, drawing the social fabric tighter and making it stronger. The warmth and bond between people that results from these activities provides the group with the emotional energy to sustain action and ensure the health of the group.

## DANGER ZONE

### Worry about the group's health

Many facilitators and group leaders pay little attention to the social health of the group; rituals, ceremonies and cultural practice are often ignored in the rush to complete the workshop/meeting, to reach a particular goal. Our society often places a lot of emphasis on tasks, outputs and indicators and ignores the emotional and psychological health of a group/team/organisation.

### Putting people into monitoring and evaluation

Continuous assessment and problem solving is necessary to implementing a successful

programme. Ensuring that this is done in a people-friendly way, in which participants can own both the evaluation and its outcomes, is more difficult. Ritual and ceremonies are keys to creating conditions of support and trust that can hold and channel criticism, allowing participants to build confidence and self-esteem while reflecting on and understanding mistakes.

### **What is enough preparation?**

As the story *Tough talking in parliament* showed us, when attempting to build new patterns of behaviour based on new divisions of power, people need to be prepared carefully. Fears and uncertainties need to be acknowledged and dealt with. New relationships need care and nurturing if they are to work. As facilitators or leaders, when we push ahead with new ideas, we need to ask ourselves whether or not others are ready for this change. Are we pushing ahead because of *our* need to see the change? Or is the group/individual ready for it?



**• THREE**

**R**

**DIGESTING  
THE MEAL**

**A**

**R**

## **THE LESSONS WE LEARNED**

### **Reflecting on years of hard work in and around Bonteheuwel**

**1999 – 2000:**

Bonteheuwel Pilot Project – with local government

**2000 – 2001:**

Community leadership programme - in 1st precinct

MAD leadership programme - in 1st primary school

MAD leadership programme - in 1st high school

**2001 – 2002:**

Hearts of Men programme - in 1st precinct

MAD leadership programme - in 2nd primary school

MAD leadership programme - in 2nd high school

**2002 – 2003:**

Community leadership programme - in 2nd precinct

Hearts of Men second programme - in 1st precinct

Hearts of Men programme - in 2nd precinct

### **So what?**

It is now four years later and we have completed 10 programmes. We have worked in one area, focusing on specific neighbourhoods. But so what? What do we have to show for it? What have we discovered? What have we learned?

### **Key questions**

When we began we asked ourselves two questions:

If we focus all our energy and resources in one area, will we produce better results?

If we combine our youth, community and school leadership interventions into one overall strategy, will they prove to be more effective?

## **Our motto**

And from these questions we developed a motto:

‘Local is lekker!  
Into every home  
Into every heart  
Focus on people  
Focus on the precinct’

## **Understanding versus having the answer**

In this section we share our learnings with you. After reflecting on what has happened over the last four years, we have now come to some new understandings. They do not provide us with a fixed answer, a solution to all the possible situations we might face in the future. We will use what we have learned merely as a guide on the road ahead.

## **Creating the container**

As part of this reflection, we return to the image we used earlier in the book - of the potjie, the three-legged pot as a container for cooking up community. Our reflections are written under the following headings:

<b>P</b> eople focus	<b>P</b> artnerships
<b>O</b> pening up	<b>O</b> pportunities
<b>T</b> esting over	<b>T</b> ime
<b>J</b> uvenile	<b>J</b> ustice
<b>I</b> nspiring	<b>I</b> ndividuals
<b>E</b> nergising and	<b>E</b> mpowering

## **PEOPLE FOCUS**

### **People to people - involving all ages**

We found that our decision to include people of all ages was critical to our success. Over the three interventions, participants ranged from approximately nine to 70 years of age. Bringing leaders together from as wide an age range as possible enriched the process enormously.

We discovered the value of both young and old being brought together, and being acknowledged for all that they have to offer.

### **Lesson we learned...**

When building community, include all the community:

children, teenagers, adults and elders, and all the role players;

schools, parents, local government, community leadership, community-based organisations and other NGOs.

## **Building a facilitation team**

We found that the specific choice of people we brought together to facilitate all three processes was very important.

We needed people who shared a common vision, a dogged commitment to community building, immense passion, a shared understanding of the process, and a belief in bringing out the very best in people.

Without such a strong and cohesive team, the results would never have been achieved. The trust, the integrity and respect of people were critical to our performance.

### **Lesson we learned...**

When attempting a huge challenge, a tough task, gather a special team of people together, because only a strong, skilled and cohesive team will do. To do this work a team needs to trust, respect and believe in one another.

## **Getting relationships right**

We found that getting the relationships right between us as a team, between us and all our programme partners, and between all the participants themselves, was critical.

We discovered relationship-building to be a crucial building block, a foundation stone, to community building.

Spending time on, and paying close attention to all these relationships, was worth every minute, every hour it took. The more relationships we looked at, the better and stronger our programmes became.

### **Lesson we learned...**

When creating a sense of community, take a good look at all the relationships that need to be taken care of, and keep looking for more!

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

### **The potjie stands on three legs**

We discovered that creating partnerships between people and groups was the key to building a community spirit. It was important for us to model in our everyday practice the principle of partnering, working together and co-operation.

Just like the potjie has three legs that provide it with a strong and stable platform, so we brought three initiatives together, to provide for a more powerful and enriching intervention.

The fact that our whole approach to conceptualising and designing the intervention was based on partnership from the outset, created the right environment for other partnerships to thrive during implementation.

### **Lesson we learned...**

When designing a community-building initiative, focus on forging specific partner-

ships that will enhance the final result – remember two or three heads grouped effectively together in partnership are always more powerful than one!

Take care to select partners who will strengthen and energise your work – you don't want to be working with people who ultimately drain your precious resources.

## **Integrated development**

We discovered that our work in one community, in which we had the schools, community leadership and youth programmes working alongside each other, produced far better results than in a community in which we only had one initiative implemented on its own.

The programmes actually enhanced each other and made a far greater impact on community life. The programme in isolation had a limited localised effect, but failed to have any wider impact.

### **Lesson we learned...**

When we design an intervention we must think in an integrated way – if possible right from the start.

If, for example, we are designing around young men, we shouldn't focus just on the young men themselves - we need to ask ourselves what is missing for these young men.

If the answer is “older men as role models”, then we need to design another intervention to identify and mobilise these older men.

If, for example, we are designing a school-based intervention, we shouldn't focus just on the school itself - we need to ask ourselves' what is missing in the school?

If the answer is “parent involvement”, then we need to design another intervention to motivate and involve these parents.

## **OPENING UP**

### **Creating spaces for movement**

We discovered that in situations in which individuals, groups or communities are stuck and in conflict with one another, or are stuck because they are unable to overcome obstacles in their path, it is essential to open a space to create some movement, some way forward. This could be a healing space, a thinking space, or a problem-solving space. A space within which participants could relate to one another in a different way, a space that would encourage a different level of communicating and thinking, a space within which participants could begin to see their own as well as their team's potential.

### **Lesson we learned...**

When encouraging and building new leadership, it is essential to open a space for real dialogue between people – for tough straight talking to occur. We need to open up subjects that have never or could never be discussed. We need to open up the possibility that things could be done differently, that the situation we find ourselves in today does not have to be the situation we find ourselves in tomorrow!

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

### **For new leaders to emerge**

We witnessed the power and possibilities that occur when a space is opened, especially for a new adult and youth leadership to emerge. We observed people stepping forward to accept responsibility when given the opportunity, accepting their place as leaders, and then creating opportunities for others.

These were often people who had never thought of themselves as leaders, or had never been identified as leadership material before.

We noticed old leaders starting to lead in different ways, once they saw the opportunity for shared responsibility and the benefits of spreading the leadership role.

### **Lesson we learned...**

Our key role as facilitators is to open the space and create opportunities for others. We don't determine what those opportunities are - that is for the others to create. We create the space and we provide the support for them to build and use an opportunity. We have absolutely no power over those who don't wish to grasp an opportunity for themselves!

## **TESTING OVER TIME**

### **Ongoing assessment**

We built ongoing, regular evaluation into our programme design – participants took part in weekly and monthly evaluation that occurred during normal session time. They defined the measurables and they participated in evaluating whether they were achieving their targets. Through this process they were involved in regular and ongoing problem-solving and project planning.

### **Lesson we learned...**

This approach was successful. Rather than relying on outside professional evaluators, we learned that including participants empowered and encouraged them to use the evaluation and planning methods for themselves in the future.

### **Development as an ongoing process**

We found that designing mostly year-long processes and committing some of the programmes to working in a specific community for a minimum three-year period, was the right way to go. In this way we were acknowledging that development is an ongoing process – the solutions or answers we find today merely offer up challenges and new situations to resolve tomorrow. For a new programme – a new culture - to take root takes time. How much time would depend on the specific circumstances – it is always situation and context bound.

### **Lesson we learned...**

We learned that development occurs over time and is situation specific. This cannot be

pre-determined; it has to be discovered. We need to be more flexible in our planning, budgeting and funding.

For example, facilitating our MAD programme over a year in a primary school worked perfectly. During implementation we discovered that, given the circumstances, much longer than a year was required for the high school programme to have impact and be sustainable - but all the funding was pre-determined and finite, so we had to end after a year.

Our Hearts of Men intervention worked well in a community in which gang violence was well under control – we successfully mobilised older men to volunteer as mentors. In a neighbouring community which is experiencing intense gang conflict, we are struggling to get local men to step forward – that process will take much longer.

We also learned that we should possibly have waited for the gang activity to stabilise before commencing the programme. We recognised that the starting date of this process was very much funder driven, as opposed to situation driven.

## **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

### **Active youth involvement – leaders of today**

Involving young people in decision making, designing and implementing systems of discipline, and community-building initiatives is crucial. If we don't give our young people responsibility today, we are in fact training them for irresponsibility tomorrow.

We saw what a difference it made within a primary school when the student leadership were intimately involved in setting up a new disciplinary system. A sense of justice, an involvement in and understanding of the justice system, is a cornerstone of democracy.

#### **Lesson we learned...**

We must find every opportunity possible to involve our young people in school governance and community building. Whether we are managing a school, improving our community or attempting to reduce crime and violence, we can only do it in partnership with young people. We can't do it for them, and we can't do it to them – that never works.

Working together with young people really works!

### **Focusing on justice**

Young people make mistakes all the time (and so do adults!).

We know how important it is that they be held accountable for their actions. In this way they get to discover that there are boundaries, and there are people who notice what they do and care. What is crucial is that they be dealt with in a respectful manner, and that they learn from the mistake.

#### **Lesson we learned...**

Moving from punitive measures to a restorative approach has huge educational and developmental benefits. Always use mistakes made and examples of lack of discipline



as learning moments, to enable the individual to develop and the group or community to become stronger. Acknowledging the wrongdoing, putting matters right, forgiving each other and moving on, is a good recipe for community building and success!

## **INSPIRING INDIVIDUALS**

### **Lighting the fire**

Lighting the fire of inspiration has been a key element of our work. Without this fire being lit – if individuals don't find their sense of purpose and passion – then everything we do would come to nothing. All the plans, structures, good systems we put in place rely on passionate and inspired people to run them and to keep them going, especially through tough times. Like development processes, keeping the fire burning is an ongoing task. We were vigilant not to make the mistake of firing people up with tremendous enthusiasm and then abandoning them. Keeping inspired requires ongoing maintenance.

### **Lesson we learned...**

People are individuals and we need to discover in each situation what inspires them. Giving people the time to speak, and listening to them articulate their dreams and visions, creates a climate conducive to inspiration, to upliftment. People get inspired when their potential is seen and recognised. People get inspired when they experience their value, and see how others give them recognition. People get inspired when they begin to see a possibility for themselves and their community, a possibility they didn't see before. With this possibility comes hope, and we know that without hope, there comes nothing!

## **ENERGISING AND EMPOWERING**

### **Fire producing energy**

Inspiration creates hope, hope generates energy, and energy produces power.

So the more inspired we are, the more hopeful we are, the more energetic we are and the more power we produce. Powerful people are unstoppable – they do what they say they are going to do, they achieve what they set out to achieve. The same applies to a powerful community. We are talking about personal power here, the power of the spirit, the power and strength from within, the power that flows from equal partnerships. We are not talking about positional power, power over people, to manipulate, intimidate or to bully others.

### **Lessons we learned...**

We learned that inspiration, hope, energy and power are inseparable – they flow from one to the other. One of our most important tasks as facilitators and community builders is to help create and maintain this flow. This process embodies the mind, body and spirit.

We learned that the assegai, the rope, and the needle and thread are powerful tools. They need to be used with good judgement and respect.

We learned that as facilitators, we need to keep our eye on our own levels of hope, energy and personal power – if those are not burning inside us, we can't expect to be part of lighting the flame inside others. We certainly can't expect to be cooking up community!

## **A personal reflection**

### **Then...**

When I compare the experience I had travelling into the community three years ago, with how I feel now, I notice huge differences.

*“Don't travel alone at night.”*

*“Go during the day if you can help it.”*

*“As a whitey you are too conspicuous.”*

*“Always travel with someone.”*

These were the kinds of things people said to me – people who knew the area.

“What am I doing here? Have I a right to be here? Am I mad?” I asked myself.

I must admit that more often than not, I would leave my home wondering if I would ever see my family, my children, again. Sometimes when I left home at night to travel into Bonteheuwel, I had a tight, sickening feeling in my stomach.

After all, the newspapers recorded daily incidents of gang war – daily stories of bystanders being caught in the crossfire, of car hi-jackings, random attacks on individuals, and stabbings.

Would it be me this time, or would I be lucky tonight?

## **and now...**

Over the three years, there have been several incidents involving myself and my colleagues – exactly what we expected. But, by being sensible and vigilant, we managed to keep safe when danger was around.

When I travel into the community now, I feel relaxed and welcomed. My experience of getting to know this community has transformed the perception that others gave to me, that this was one of the most dangerous places in Cape Town. It is certainly economically deprived, but here is a community that has managed to create a reasonable level of safety for its residents.

I am greeted in the street by children and young men and women. I am greeted by the parents of these children. I am warmly received by the community leaders and the staff at the local school. This community has become a second home to me – it is no longer a strange and dangerous place. For me it is now a place of friendship, inspiration and support.

I have seen what is possible for me as a white man in South Africa, by stepping across a so-called boundary, by getting to know children, youth, adults and elders in a community through the work of our various programmes.

For me it has certainly made a real difference.

For my own children it has been an opportunity to get to know people who live in other parts of their city, to begin to build a wider picture of what it means to be part of a broader community.

For those we have worked with, I know we have made a difference. They let us know through their smiles and warmth, and through their open arms.

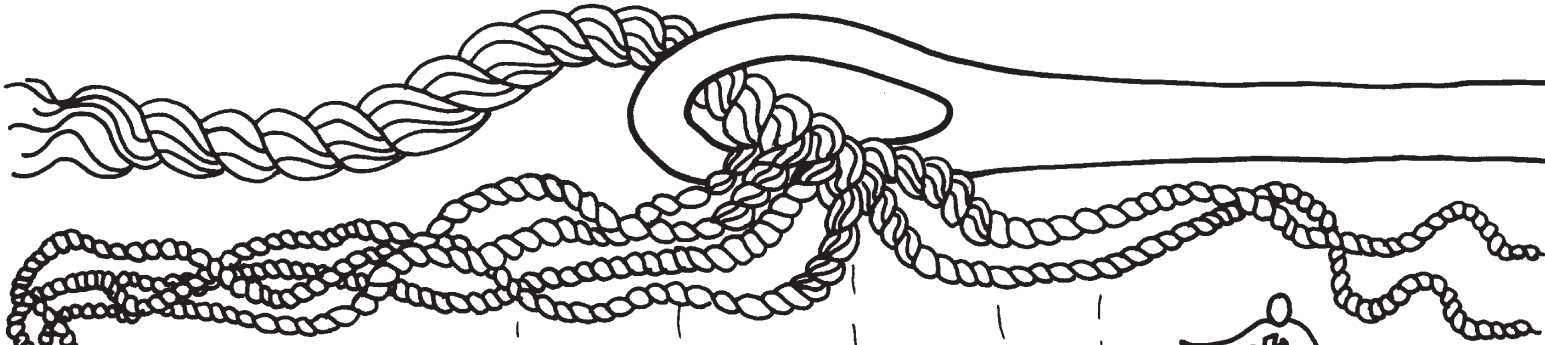
We have given hope to people who had lost their sense of hope.

And we have received two priceless gifts - hope and optimism - in return.

**THE  
RECIPES WE  
FOLLOWED**

**WORKING WITH  
NEEDLE AND  
THREAD**

# PROJECT WEAVE



## SOCIAL

THE WORLD

COMMUNITY

PEERS

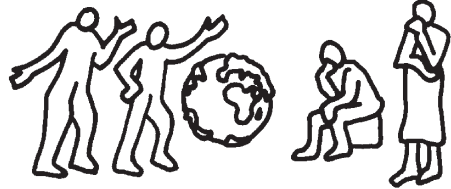
FAMILY

SELF



How we relate to ourselves, to people, to groups, to the world

## PSYCHOLOGICAL



How we think about ourselves, about others, about situations

## INTELLECTUAL



How we engage with exploring, questioning, reasoning, reflecting

## CULTURAL



How we develop a sense of history, community, togetherness

## EMOTIONAL



How we feel about ourselves, our families, other people



# THE SPICE OF LIFE

## GO FOR GOLD

Reflecting on and changing who we are, how we make and keep relationships

Working with conflict

Making change work for us

Reflecting on and deepening our understanding of the world and our place in it

Moving from being a victim of circumstance, to being a victor, overcoming all obstacles

Discovering and building our ability to think critically and creatively through games, exercises, group discussions, storytelling

Stimulating the imagination

Understanding history and the impact of forced removals on ourselves and our community

Critically reflecting on being coloured in a diverse society

Building group and community rituals

Standing tall and boldly walking through when confronted with an obstacle

Straight talk

Celebrating successes, acknowledging commitment and effort

## MAD

Reflecting on and changing how we make and keep relationships

Learning to share power across divisions of age, occupation and social roles (parents, educators and learners)

Understanding the root causes of the situation that the school is in

Owning what we as individuals contribute to the situation that the school is in

Victim vs victor

Creating a platform for dialogue and action between all sectors of school community

Building our ability to think critically and creatively through games, exercises, group discussions, storytelling

Re-examining traditional patterns of behaviour between staff, learners and parents

Facilitating new ways of relating and leading, as the foundation of a new school culture

Straight talking across traditional divisions

Celebrating successes, acknowledging commitment and effort

Re-introducing school rituals, ceremonies and extra-mural activities

## HEARTS OF MEN

Reflecting on and changing how we make and keep relationships

Reflecting on the role we play in our community as mature men and young men

Communicating the hurts of the past, letting go and moving on

Forgiving ourselves and others

Developing trust and support

Understanding what it means to be a man and what is possible for men

Understanding what it takes to build a powerful community

Understanding the gender stereotypes that are handed down to us as men and women

Generating a new respect for women and men

Using rituals, ceremony and acknowledgement by older men to build self-belief

Getting beyond where fear stops you in life



# GO FOR GOLD

**Vision:** To actively involve the community in improving their quality of life

**Goal:** To facilitate the growth of a dynamic leadership group to coordinate and initiate development programmes and projects, in partnership with civic leaders and local authority

	<b>GETTING INTO THE EARTH</b>	<b>STEPPING THROUGH FIRE AND WATER</b>
<b>CORNERSTONES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learning about the community</li> <li>Revealing the facilitators and their agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Aknowledging and making peace with our past</li> </ul>
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected street representatives</li> <li>Elected community leaders from the civic, health, sports and religious sectors</li> <li>Staff of primary school and school governing body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elected street representatives</li> <li>Elected community leaders from the civic, health, sports and religious sectors, and local authority</li> <li>Staff of primary school and school governing body</li> </ul>
<b>PROCESS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local authority initiates programme with Change Moves and community leaders</li> <li>Three months of presentations, discussions and designing of the process</li> <li>Establishing a core group of 30 leaders to be change agents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 x three-hour weekly and bi-monthly workshops</li> <li>Two days leadership training</li> <li>Local authority visits community regularly</li> </ul>
<b>CONTENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the history of the community and its present situation</li> <li>Meeting community leaders and getting to know each other</li> <li>Sharing information about the MAD programme in the local school</li> <li>Researching and designing content of intervention programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coalition building</li> <li>Relationships</li> <li>Conflict resolution</li> <li>Situational analysis</li> <li>Content was often determined by the group dynamics and provided in a direct way a context for learning new skills</li> </ul>
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intervention programme is designed and ready to implement</li> <li>Learning group established consisting of 30 residents, school staff, two development facilitators from local authority, and two facilitators from Change Moves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Within the core group - resolution of past personal conflicts, building of new relationships and claiming one's history</li> <li>New ideas of how to trigger change begin to emerge</li> <li>'Hello campaign' to build new relationships among community leaders</li> <li>Visibility in the community, in the street, at meetings</li> </ul>



# A COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME



## BREATHING AIR

## FROM AIR TO EARTH

## BACK INTO THE EARTH

Dreaming big, beyond personal and social boundaries

Realistic, achievable plans

Movement, action and sustaining development

Elected street representatives  
Elected community leaders from the civic, health, sports and religious sectors  
Staff of primary school and school governing body

Elected street representatives  
Elected community leaders from the civic, health, sports and religious sectors  
Staff of primary school and school governing body  
Individual community members start to join

Elected street representatives  
Elected community leaders from the civic, health, sports and religious sectors  
Staff of primary school and school governing body  
Individual community members continue to join  
Youth leaders join

3 x three-hour bi-monthly workshops  
One-day leadership training  
Local authority and Change Moves keeping in touch with impact of programme on community

4 x three-hour bi-monthly workshops  
Local authority and Change Moves keeping in touch with impact of programme on community

8 x two-hour workshops, weekly/bi-monthly  
Consistent and regular visits to community

Social analysis  
Action research  
Community survey  
People-centred development  
Relationships between the community and leaders

People-centred project design and management  
Introduction of Hearts of Men programme  
Selection and design of three community projects: Neighbourhood Watch, Hearts of Men, Clean-up

Mutual and self criticism  
Monitoring and evaluation  
Problem-solving  
Learning to keep your focus on solutions, not problems  
Learning to manage the complexities of community projects

Personal dream and vision for participants  
Community dream and vision  
New relationships with community emerge sporadically

Adoption of Hearts of Men as one of the core group's projects  
Selection and design of change projects to initiate in community with local authority  
First implementation steps of three projects

Hearts of Men programme up and running  
Regular community clean-ups  
Neighbourhood watch receives training and equipment  
MAD programme in the local primary school and community leaders work together on clean-ups with boys from Hearts of Men



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE (MAD)

**Vision:** To make a qualitative difference in the culture of learning and teaching in the school

**Goal:** To mobilise leadership across all sectors of the school to move the school from where it is now to where it wants to go to

	<b>GETTING INTO THE EARTH</b>	<b>STEPPING THROUGH FIRE AND WATER</b>
<b>CORNERSTONES</b>	Commitment to change	Relationships, communication, support, responsibilities, commitment
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	Principal Staff Management team School governing body	All staff and governing body members  Student leaders from across the school selected by staff
<b>PROCESS</b>	Presentations and meetings to introduce the programme and facilitators, setting up design/project management team  Researching the situation, co-designing the initial intervention  Developing detailed agreements on delivery of the programme	40-hour workshops  Staff: one full and three half days  Students: five school days  Governing body: evening sessions (fewer hours due to their time constraints)
<b>CONTENT</b>	Nature and scope of intervention  The nature and complexity of change  Making change work for you  Initiating the process of grounding the programme in the heart of each individual	Understanding and analysing the situation that the school is in  Taking personal responsibility for the situation  Reflecting on relationships within the team  Acknowledgement and celebration of successes
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	Programme is grounded with key change agents who are committed to designing and implementing the change  Design team operating and beginning to manage the programme  Detailed agreement to delivery of the programme including dates for weekly contact visits and workshops plus responsibilities of all participants described	Situation of the school is owned and acknowledged by all leaders  Problems in relationships between team members acknowledged and begin to be resolved  Straight talking is seen as key to success of the change programme

# A SCHOOLS LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME



## BREATHING AIR

## FROM AIR TO EARTH

## BACK INTO THE EARTH

Personal motivations  
Acknowledging and dealing with resistance to change

Realistic, achievable, step-by-step plans

Witnessing change and seeing a new future emerge

All staff and governing body members  
Student leaders from RCL, extra-mural, sport and classroom activities, selected by staff

All staff and governing body members  
Student leaders from RCL, extra-mural and classroom, selected by staff

All staff and governing body members  
Student leaders from RCL, extra-mural and classroom, selected by staff

Last part of Fire and Water workshops  
Weekly support meetings that take place on a day agreed to with the school. A regular day for the whole school, which is part of timetable and involves all leaders or the whole school

Weekly support meetings - each programme has approximately 30 support sessions spread out over the year, which start after the Fire and Water workshops have been completed

Weekly support meetings - each facilitator works with a different project  
Parliaments to monitor and evaluate progress  
Design team meetings to manage process

Statement of intent to change  
Dreaming personal change projects  
Dreaming two or three key projects which would change the situation in the school  
Understanding the need to realise dreams slowly, step-by-step  
Acknowledgement and celebration of successes

Planning to implement personal and organisational dreams  
Planning framework incl. title of project, sub title, vision, goal and objective for the first month; objectives for each week and a work-plan laying out activities for the month  
Acknowledgement and celebration of successes

Planning and problem-solving with leaders and project teams  
Acknowledgement and celebration of successes  
Evaluation workshops

Statement of intent to change  
Ideas for personal change projects  
Ideas for two or three key change projects  
Motivation of majority of participants improve; some participants feel antagonistic, depressed, apathetic about the changes  
Celebration of first signs of a new future

Detailed project plans for one month  
Movement and action for change begins to happen  
Personal and organisational changes begin to be noticed, encouraged and celebrated  
Consistent support for and celebration of small successes

Change is noticeable and a momentum around change in the school is developing  
Dreams are beginning to be realised



# HEARTS OF MEN

**Vision:** To transform young men from being community destroyers to becoming community builders

**Goal:** To create a powerful community-based support system for both young and older men, and to mobilise older men in the community to become mentors and role models for young men

<b>CORNERSTONES</b>	<b>GETTING INTO THE EARTH</b>	<b>STEPPING THROUGH FIRE AND WATER</b>
	Learning about the community: what young/older men are doing how women and the community regard their young men	Relationships between men and boys, and their families Taking responsibility for the past, forgiving themselves/others Commitment to make a difference
	Community Going for Gold leadership School management teams Sports, cultural, religious and community based organisations Adult and youth residents, families and parents	15 men selected for mentor training 21 young men selected for programme 2 facilitators and 2 Interns Community advisory support team
	Enter community together with programme partners 2 months of presentations/discussions Contracting agreements with schools Presentations to prospective mentors and youth participants Liaising with parents and teachers Signing participation contracts	Intensive urban weekend course and weekly workshops for men Evening preparation sessions for young men Intensive wilderness/outdoor weekend experiential training for men 10 days intensive wilderness excursion for boys, leaving and return ceremony
	Detailed description of all stages and components of the programme Description of the methodology used and the challenging nature of the work Detail of finances, staff team and safety procedures, management and communication structures	Reclaiming Manhood – what it means to be a man Specific role of a mentor Communicating pain, anger, loss, sadness and grief with other men Being vulnerable with men Community involvement in ceremonies
<b>OUTCOMES</b>	15 men signed up for mentor training Schools identifying young men 21 young men selected Assessments/health checks completed Parental permission granted Facilitators and all logistical arrangements in place	Developing a closer bond between older and younger men Starting to develop a new sense of what it means to be a man, and what it will take for a boy to become a man All the participants feeling a sense of shared experience and beginning to trust in the support that is available



# A MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG MEN



## BREATHING AIR

## FROM AIR TO EARTH

## BACK INTO THE EARTH

Dreaming what is possible  
 – how can I create a future for myself different from my past?  
 - how can the community create a future different from the past?

Concrete plans of action with weekly and monthly objectives  
 Dividing up into operational teams  
 Electing adult and youth team leadership

Consolidating experience and learning  
 Preparing to end the programme  
 Planning an ongoing support system  
 Working with the family

Mentors, participants and facilitators

Mentors, participants and facilitators  
 Other role players who support project implementation

Mentors, participants facilitators  
 Other role players supporting the programme  
 Parents

Intensive urban weekend course and weekly facilitated workshops for the young men supported by their mentors  
 Inviting motivational speakers to address the young men  
 Monthly parent and school feedback meetings

Ongoing facilitated weekly support sessions  
 Ongoing informal weekly team planning sessions  
 Project implementation

Ongoing weekly support and team planning sessions  
 Final six day wilderness excursion – creating a powerful vision for oneself and one's community to take into the future  
 Parent support sessions

Taking A Lead In Life - a course for young men focussing on communication, responsibility, commitment, receiving and giving support  
 Developing a vision statement  
 Designing a project of service

Project design and management  
 Problem solving and teamwork  
 Implementing and reflecting on successes and failures  
 Designing holiday programmes for themselves and others

Solo experience – 24 hours in the wilderness on one's own  
 Mask making  
 Bandana painting  
 Naming and acknowledgement ceremony  
 Graduation ceremony

Personal dream and vision identified for each participant  
 Starting to develop community service initiatives  
 Taking the learning from the courses and applying it at school and at home  
 Getting feedback from parents and teachers

Community clean-up campaigns  
 Shifting the perceptions of the community and schools  
 Activities organised for holidays  
 Young men acquiring confidence and skills  
 Starting to become role models for other young boys and girls in the community

Community confidence that such interventions can make a difference  
 Schools willing to support a second programme  
 Young men begin recruiting their friends and peers into programme  
 Some mentors choosing to serve for another year  
 Men persuading other men to become mentors

## **THE PEOPLE WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK**

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