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turning POINTS

Creativity in concert: Managing performance through collaborative inquiry

This issue of Turning Points features EASUN's encounter with Alternative Language Channels (ALC) as a way to intervene in the facilitation of individual / organisational development (OD) processes. The learning experience was organised through two workshops: one in October 2007 for EASUN OD Associates and Apprentices from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania; and another in March 2008 for EASUN staff, OD Associates and Apprentices, and leaders of civil society organisations. Both workshops were held in Moshi...

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IN FOCUS

power of ALC

CBO development

FAF and FOD training





facilitating

capacities
conscious practices

capacity building

Language is at the centre of consultancy work, similarly as it is for leadership. It informs the effectiveness of an intervention through its influence on interaction, relationships, learning, ownership and trust. Ordinary people (as opposed to experts acting on their situation) have the ability to bring about change, particularly when they can find the capacities and support to claim the authority, wisdom and fullness of their own experiences. This is the very question and challenge related to language choice...

Will language be alternative, drawing on the experiences and creativity of the people themselves?

Or must language impose the consultant's own experience, knowledge and ideas?

Development is in the process and in the outcome

Ethical questions for institutional development of CBOs in East Africa

In November 2007, EASUN made a rapid interim assessment of current strategies of service providers who support development activities of grassroots organisations in East Africa. Discussions with community groups, local government and community leaders in Kenya and Uganda revealed that intermediaries (service providers, donors, NGOs) tend to design their capacity building work for community-based organisations (CBOs) in ways that mostly address their own funding compliance needs. Intermediary project requirements are increasingly taking centre stage in defining what should go into capacity building for CBOs.

That approach is likely to be ineffective in terms of development impact, in that it can only represent a “short-termist”, output focus in capacity building work. The currently predominant orientation towards generating short-term evidence of results may give the impression of a breakthrough in managing accountability in the development sector. In reality, however, it has turned into a rather messy marketing industry where those who are able to master the technology (related to fundraising) will out-compete all the others. The big contradiction experienced in civil society “development” work today, therefore, is that its approaches are increasingly “un-developmental”.

While the prevailing technologies in CBO institutional development are thus “developmentally” unsound, there are also clear signs that the underlying dominant culture and approaches are ethically compromised, in that they are largely informed by the need to justify funding for marketing-savvy Transnational NGOs (TRANGOs) and the many local NGOs that tend to become their conduits for “capturing” local grassroots organisations. Such technologies and the ascendancy of marketing of services in civil society development work have become an effective means of justifying the strategies and survival needs of the intermediaries themselves more than they strengthen the institutional growth of the CBOs. Notably, EASUN's action research in 1999 through 2003 made the same finding.

Professor Tony Ghaye, in his “memorable moments” shared at the end of EASUN's workshop on ALC (March 2008), speaks of three connecting threads that characterise development, both as a process and outcome: 1) Emotional happiness; 2) Moral happiness; 3) Ethical happiness. He notes that practitioners need to know that what they are participating in is right, meaningful and moral. The ethical thread, on the other hand, is characterised by our actions and reactions to one another, moment by moment. Developmental practitioners live with ethics in their heart and consciousness -- a constant concern for their fellow human beings.

Strengthening CBOs identity and leadership

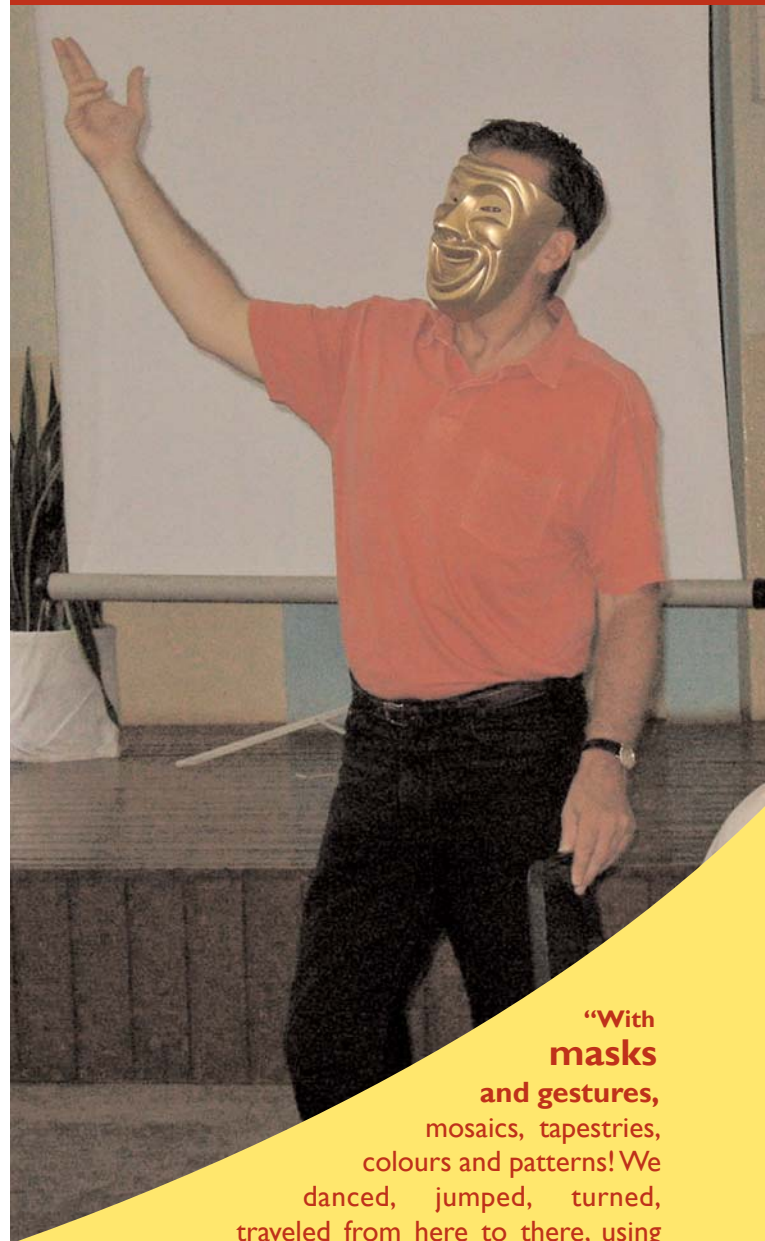
EASUN's capacity building strategies for community-based organisations (CBOs) focus on clarifying identity and leadership development, as well as strengthening responsibility-taking and ownership in project activities. These are moral, emotional, ethical and specific skills forces that are designed to increase CBOs abilities for joint action and advocacy for grassroots community development.

This approach obviously raises important questions related to strategies, relationships and the kind of support or services that local intermediary and transnational non-governmental organisations (TRANGOs) should provide to CBOs.

EASUN will organise a consultation in Moshi, Tanzania, from 17-20 August 2008, to examine how to further enable and encourage "developmental" institutional development support in East Africa.

In addition, EASUN is currently finalising a referral system of CBO service providers. This is one of the advocacy instruments recommended in EASUN's last consultation on CBOs' institutional development, held in 2003. The referral system is designed to close gaps in knowledge and information, and improve relationships between CBOs and intermediary actors. It will also profile CBOs' activities and facilitate their access to networking relationships, funding and other services.

For expressions of interest to attend the August consultation or to share views and experiences in institutional development of CBOs, contact:
edna.chilimo@easun-tz.org



"With masks and gestures, mosaics, tapestries, colours and patterns! We danced, jumped, turned, traveled from here to there, using patterns to perform, and to make the colours speak!" - EASUN ALC Workshop Participant

(Turn to page 4 for more photos of EASUN ALC Workshop participants...)

Advanced OD skills training in 2008: "Dealing with shadow"

Attention FOD course graduates: The workshop, to be held in Moshi, Tanzania, from 27-31 July, will develop intervention skills to assist organisations in unraveling situations that are polarised because of lack of consciousness. Participants will engage with archetypal manifestations of polarity in various realms -- emergence of color, drawing and movement, self, stuck patterns in the situations we encounter. Alan Kaplan, who will facilitate the four day workshop, refers to the essential skills content of the workshop as "Dealing with Shadow" (i.e. learning about polarity and the relationship between light and shadow as the underlying dynamic of developing organisms and social situations).

Book early. Only 30 places available. This workshop is open to a maximum of five CSO leaders or capacity building practitioners who have not attended the EASUN FOD course.

For more information about the workshop and registration, contact:
lydia.bwenda@easun-tz.org

FEATURE: Mastering OD literacy

A rare glimpse at the power of ALC

memorable moments of learning in ALC



Peter: As a small boy I used to see face masks in different situations, but I paid little attention to the messages they were communicating. During this workshop the expressive power of symbols became "un-ignorable".



Philip: The positive group dynamics were particularly evident in the language of dance. The individual, pair and group inventiveness, interaction and communication was magical! This was demonstrated, for example, during our abstract dance performances.



Fidelis: We learnt about new languages that go way beyond our usual channels of communicating. It was a week filled with physical exercises, learning and excitement in developing our abilities to facilitate "self" and organisational transformation.



Nyantito: I learnt that "alternative language channels" of colour and pattern, body, gesture and spatial awareness create opportunities for sharing or accessing meaning from lived experiences. I felt liberated from the usual effort to work with standard perceptions.

EASUN consultants have often noted, with much amazement, the high levels of energy, engagement and commitment that emerge in client situations whenever they venture to use Alternative Language Channels (ALC) in interventions. Examples include the use of human sculpture to show that management is about "holding organisational space" in working towards the stated vision. The form and gestures with which that space is held, whether through consciously managed dynamic human relational processes or hierarchical bureaucratic procedures, provide the difference with regard to positive engagement in the situation and the likelihood that an organisation will achieve its purpose. EASUN consultants have also used colour and pattern to strengthen active listening and increase awareness of how consultants, leaders and team members need to manage their individual "wills" with optimal emotional literacy (openness, creativity and sensitivity) in situations of collaboration and shared decision-making.

In the ALC workshop organised by EASUN in October 2007, participants highlighted their own stories of previous OD interventions. With the support of others, they also created and analysed images of their own OD practices in comparison with the value-based approaches that OD practitioners claim. It stood out in the proceedings of the workshop that facilitators often pre-suppose some kind of transformation to be the outcome in all consultancy work, both in organisations and project activities in communities.

The experiences and insights from the workshop, however, added an important reality check to such OD practice claims, i.e., the understanding that unearthing the "will" is necessary, if people are to commit to the rigor and emotional challenges of transforming competencies, culture and systems. This normally requires facilitators to be able to "let go" of their own processes (including approaches, methodologies and gestures) that seek to shape their clients or development partners in accordance with their own embedded logic, knowledge and assumptions.

In March 2008 another ALC workshop was organised by EASUN, to take it all to a much deeper level of understanding for a growing OD practice in East Africa. In the first place, it was facilitated by two highly experienced professional individuals: Professor Tony Ghaye, founder and Director of a UK based social enterprise, Reflective Learning-UK and Dr. Philip Chambers, who has been professionally involved in dance and drama for many years and now also works with Reflective Practice-UK...

Continued top of p.5 ►

ATTENTION FOD GRADUATES:

Stay on the look out for ALC as 4th module training in 2009.

Book your place early!

The preceding feature article was written by EASUN's Executive Director, Mosi Kisare: mosi.kisare@easun-tz.org

For more information on ALC training and similar events, contact EASUN's Young Women's Leadership Intern: doly.anyona@easun-tz.org

What both Prof. Tony Ghaye and Dr. Philip Chambers added quite competently and gracefully to the ALC workshop was an introduction to alternative vocabularies, which helped to move participants out of the verbal linguistic channel.

OD literacy through ALC

ALC engage people in powerful processes of “re”-membering their lived experiences, while also generating insights and emotional capacities (commitment) to sustain their will in the direction of choices and plans they make. This was demonstrated in the workshop by the “metaphors” that ALC is able to offer OD work; for instance: Gesture, Jump Travel and Turn.

The language of dance is a particularly good example of image-based vocabulary that can inform the posture, process and interventions of a consultant. “Gesture”, for instance, might refer to the importance of relationship building in the clarification stages of an OD process. “Travel”, on the other hand, may underline the significance of creating movement in the client situation, which depends on the ability of the consultant to “travel light” in his/her own posture. “Jump”, is akin to the “great leap of faith” that comes with new learning (or insight). “Turn,” finally, is the result of the “great leap”, which leads to improvements and development of new systems that sustain any transformations made.

OD as positive engagement

Positive engagement through ALC is driven by creativity in the local situation. It is the connections that give us big impact. This comes about from interventions that raise the ability of an organisation to experience their situation holistically and make meaning out of the situation.

In addition to making connections with OD, specific reflection tools were used to generate shared learning from the threads of individual insights gained on each day of the workshop. One such tool was “visual narrative”, through which creative reflections of individuals' experiences of the day were captured and pasted on a story board. “Footprint”, “empty hands”, “chain” and “spiral” are examples of marks that participants put on the story board to reflect how they had individually experienced Day One of the workshop.

Using images in reflective learning enables us to stand back and ask: How does that help us to make some sense of the situation? For OD practitioners, getting people in the client situation to write the story themselves adds authenticity and ownership to the process.

Other reflective tools that participants worked with included:

- (1) Tapestry, through which colour and pattern were used by each participant to express how he or she currently felt as an OD practitioner and how they wished to see themselves develop in the practice;
- (2) Mosaic, used by each participant to depict their understanding of the word: “transformation”.

ALC broaden the bandwidths of both skills and sensitivity, thus enabling OD practitioners to be developmental in their interventions; i.e., supporting individuals and organisations to positively engage with experience and make connections through reflective learning.

The purpose of OD as a positive engagement is to increase an organisation's capacity for learning, making connections and acting through openness, creativity and collaboration. ALC as a way of intervening are extremely effective in creating the urgency and reflexes for collaboration and generating insights on the right amount of structure needed to hold core organisational processes.

Key to positive engagement is being able to effectively link thinking and action with message. It is not always the outcome that is important. The mere process of thinking about it is useful. OD practitioners are often under pressure to make interventions that are moving in a particular direction towards a particular product. For OD to be developmental, however, there is need to move away from such determinism and begin to intervene with processes that are open to what may emerge.

Language plays a role in either “bringing people closer” or “creating distance”. How we use words is important and, particularly, how we say them with “gesture”. OD requires “linguistic dexterity” in order to communicate or facilitate communication that brings people closer and increases their capacity to collaborate or work together effectively.

DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE:

Application of skills, approaches and sensitivity that support individuals and organisations to positively engage with their lived experiences and make connections through reflective learning. Developmental OD interventions increase an organisation's capacity for learning and acting through creativity and collaborative processes. They also generate insights into the right amount of structure needed to support core organisational processes while allowing the necessary freedom for innovative initiatives.

UNDEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE:

Approaches, methodologies and relationships that seek to shape client organisations in accordance with the embedded logic, knowledge and assumptions of the consultant or other parties which are extraneous to an organisation's development process. Such un-developmental processes result in de-capacitation.



leadership

that is facilitative
that is transformative

interested in FOD?

EASUN's FOD course equips leaders and senior CSO programme staff with skills and knowledge for facilitating OD. It includes the use of tools for diagnosing organisational questions and skills for developing structures, systems, teams and processes that contribute to effective organisational learning and collaborative task performance. Module 1 of the next cycle will start in November (2-8) 2008. Modules 2 & 3 will take place in March and June 2009. Each module is one week in duration.

Apply immediately for cycle "L" and guarantee yourself an opportunity to acquire new capacities in leadership, OD facilitation and conscious management of organisations. Learn more / register today: lydia.bwenda@easun-tz.org

How to get leadership returns from your fieldworkers...

In March 2008, 17 fieldworkers from 10 organisations in Tanzania and Kenya completed a two module training course in facilitation skills. The training took place in Arusha, Tanzania. Participants came from organisations in Moshi, Mwanza, Dar es salaam, Coast Region and Morogoro (Tanzania), and in Machakos (Kenya).

The course, known as Facilitation Skills for Fieldworkers (FAF) is offered by EASUN upon request by one or any number of organisations. It is designed to equip fieldworkers with facilitation skills that provide critical links between organisational learning, participatory governance and developmental practices in service delivery.

Fieldworkers of CSOs are today exposed to a wide range of facilitation techniques and tools. A major question, however, lies at the intersections between managerial type pressures for programme management (reflected in targets and their evaluation) and the challenge to build capacities that are likely to bring about transformations in CSO governance practices and their ability to influence deep institutional growth and sustainable development at grassroots levels. Some participants shared their views on the training as follows:

"Many other courses provide toolboxes for facilitating participatory processes in group or community activities. FAF, on the other hand, has turned us into facilitators who are able to design and manage group learning and development processes with a deep understanding of how participation sustains economic and social justice, shared learning, shared commitments and shared leadership."

"The course has given me the ability to stand behind my tools with "facilitator values" and a keen understanding of how a facilitator enables participation and empowerment of groups and communities collaborating to achieve specific project results."

As they assessed their organisation's methodologies and principles guiding fieldwork practices related to programme implementation, the fieldworkers overwhelmingly expressed the view that they had now acquired the skills, tools and conceptual grounding that would enable them to influence the learning of their organisations in order to uplift their relevance, performance and quality of interventions in grassroots communities.

Facilitation Skills for Fieldworkers (FAF) is delivered by transformational facilitators whose knowledge and facilitation skills are based in the field of OD

Did you know? (Organisation Development).

You can train up to 20 fieldworkers in two modules of five days each. Contact EASUN to explore opportunities for training your fieldworkers during the 2008 - 2009 timeframe: edna.chilimo@easun-tz.org

Why Alternative Language Channels in organisation development?

"The difference between management and leadership is quite similar to the difference between science and art" Denhardt & Denhardt (2006)

In EASUN's work, we equate facilitation with leadership, in situations where client organisations are being supported in processes of exploring their development questions. EASUN's approach is rooted in the understanding that "ordinary" people (as opposed experts acting on their situation) have the ability to bring about change through hope, particularly when they can find capacities to claim the authority, expertise and creativity of their diversity. As noted by Heron and Reason (2001/2006): "Everyone can take initiative and exert influence on the process."

One participant, in his "memorable moments" story shared at the end of the March 2008 workshop, highlighted his discovery of how the use of colour and pattern, body, gesture and spatial awareness provided him with new means of sharing or accessing meaning from experience. He concludes by saying that as an OD facilitator, he was happy to discover ALC as an approach and methodology that will enable people in organisations to create shared meaning and better manage the passage from feelings into shared commitment to bring their future into focus.

The authors of "The Dance of Leadership" (2006) highlight three key reasons why learning more about how artists, especially dancers, approach their work is helpful to understanding the world of leadership: 1) both dance and leadership combine deep personal commitment and insight with specific skills to help us bring the future into focus; 2) both work within specific structures, but do so with an eye towards deriving the greatest possible creativity from the context within which they occur; 3) both ultimately aim at establishing a sense of moving forward together.

Language is at the centre of consultancy work, similarly as it is for leadership. It informs the effectiveness of an intervention through its influence on interaction, relationships, learning, ownership and trust. All these have an effect on shared sense of purpose, commitment and energy, hence the quality of participation likely to permit different personal experiences to work together in processes of shared decision-making or problem solving. As noted by Professor Tony Ghaye at the Moshi ALC workshop (March 2008): "It is important to have a repertoire of languages to communicate to different kinds of people... what works with one group of people might not work with another."

At a much deeper level, the use of ALC increases the ability of OD practitioners to facilitate organisations or communities to manage their situations with creativity and confidence. ALC as a methodology empowers organisations and communities to draw on the spiritual, emotional, historical and material resources of the local situation. Obviously, unearthing the will requires approaches that challenge the dominant structures of exclusion that are often embedded in the work and methodologies of management consultants. These include the consultants' own knowledge, logic, experiences, ideas, and intellectualism. This is the very question and challenge related to language choice -- will it be alternative, which draws on the experiences and creativity of the people themselves or must it be such a language that can only impose the consultant's own experience, knowledge and ideas?

References:

1. Heron, J. and Reason, P. (2001/2006) Quoted in Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (Eds.) 2008, The Sage Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice (2nd Edition). Sage Publications Ltd., London, pp. 494-495.
2. Dehardt, R. B. and Denhardt, J.V. (2006) The Dance of Leadership: The Art of Leading in Business, Government, and Society. London: M. E. Sharpe, pp. 16-15.
3. Notes from EASUN's ALC workshops of October '07 & March '08.



Why is FOD an outstanding leadership and OD intervention for your organisation?

Module II of Cycle "K" of the Facilitating Organisational Development (FOD) course was held from March 3-8, 2008. EASUN is celebrating the fact that 70% of participants in the current cycle are from Tanzania. We have in the past enjoyed higher participation from Kenya and Uganda. At the same time, we have always wished to see Tanzanian CSOs benefit as much from this important course as their counterparts from other East African countries.

Cycle "K" participants have shown that FOD continues to be a powerful transforming intervention for those who attend. They did so by writing "invitations" to their friends and colleagues, encouraging them to consider attending the next cycle of the course. In so doing, they highlighted the seven points which, based on their own experience, make FOD an exemplary intervention for leadership and OD in East Africa:

1. Mastering tools for creating movement in stuck organisational situations.
2. Learning about teams and how teamwork transforms organisational culture.
3. Becoming the person "I always wanted to be".
4. Becoming a more intentional leader in building effective teams.
5. Becoming a change agent.
6. Transforming "self" for the effective leadership of others.
7. Facilitating organisations to deal with visible and invisible processes.



Transitions @ EASUN

EASUN's Internship Programme for young women leaders was launched with the enrolment of Edna Chilimo (September 2007) and Doly Anyona (March 2008). New intakes are planned for September 2009 and March 2010. Expressions of interest to join the internship are invited; contact: mosi.kisare@easun-tz.org

Wangui Karanja, EASUN's Programme Officer for OD & Change Management, left formal employment with EASUN in February 2008. However, she continues to be available for OD interventions with EASUN's clients and as a trainer in the FOD course: wangui.karanja@easun-tz.org

EASUN's Internal Programme Officer position is now filled by Nyantito Machota, a Tanzanian citizen with extensive administrative and social development experience. Nyantito is also an FOD graduate.

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five ways to improve your practice...

1 Develop systems to support learning

2 Focus on quality of relationships

3 Build facilitative leadership skills

4 Use language to change perceptions

5 Limit "structure" to needs only



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EASUN's ALC workshops...

The ALC workshop in March 2008 was facilitated by Professor Tony Ghaye and Dr. Philip Chambers of Reflective Learning-UK. The four-day workshop was a creative exploration of ALC as a means to make connections and capture "lived experiences" in learning situations of human / organisational development.

The workshop was alive with "skills development" activities during the day, while reflections to connect new language to OD practice took place in the late afternoons. All activities employed creativity and simplicity to achieve impact in the learning process. The wisdom of "small intervention - big impact" was offered as valuable advice to OD practitioners working for transformational development in organisational situations. The concepts of learning, organising and performing were particularly captured in the theme of the last day of the workshop, i.e., "**creativity in concert**," which also seems to be a fitting metaphor for organisations that are effective in their performance and relationships.

Overall, EASUN's two ALC workshops underline EASUN's growing interest in entrenching the use of ALC in the effective management of collaborative inquiry between consultants and clients in OD processes.

In this issue of Turning Points we are also providing an opportunity for you to reconnect with other experiences of EASUN's work during the first quarter of 2008. In particular, this includes a fresh glimpse of the central themes of our eNews shots from January to March 2008. As we reconnect in this way, we also want to take this opportunity to thank all those who have shared warm and much appreciated feedback regarding their experience and perspective of EASUN's eNews to date.

About the facilitators of EASUN's March 2008 ALC workshop:

Tony Ghaye and Phil Chambers have worked together for many years, teaching at different universities in England before their current engagement in social enterprise promotion through OD. Tony is the founder and director of the not-for-profit organisation called Reflective Learning-UK (www.reflectivepractices.co.uk). He has worked extensively at the interface between personal and organisational development in public, private and third sector organisations in the UK, China, Japan, East Africa, Nigeria, Sweden, the Middle East and Australia. Dr. Philip Chambers, has been professionally involved in Drama and Dance for many years, and also reflective practice and learning while teaching. He joined Reflective Learning-UK five years ago.

Doly Anyona

On behalf of the Turning Points Editorial Team

