

Drivers of Change

People get a meaningful voice

Finalist — Drivers of Change Civil Society category: The Foundation for Civil Society in Tanzania

Yazeed Kamaldien

A disconnection between governments and citizens results in public sector strikes, community protests

and violent confrontations. It is difficult to get leaders to listen to the people they are meant to serve.

In Tanzania the Foundation for Civil Society (FCS) works as a mediator between the people and the elected officials.

The FCS is an independent, non-profit organisation in the development sector. Its primary goal is to support other NGOs by strengthen-

ing capacity and making grants.

Building capacity includes creating platforms where marginalised citizens can meet decision-makers. The FCS joins the dots — parliamentarians, legislators and donor bodies meet civil society at training courses, seminars and conferences to discuss social change. The platforms have included public dialogues and programmes on local radio and TV

shows, in which stakeholders “share their success stories and challenges encountered”.

The FCS also hosts an annual civil society organisation forum at which Tanzania’s community workers exchange ideas and skills and discuss policies that affect their work.

As a grant-maker the FCS focuses on programmes that “strengthen effective engagement in poverty

reduction”.

Its mission is to “empower citizens through the provision of grants, facilitating links and enabling a culture of ongoing learning to civil society”. This entails working on policy, advocacy and strengthening governance.

A grassroots approach — as opposed to a purely administrative or policy lobbying stance — has also ensured that the FCS yields real-time results.

A community-driven fund for disabled persons was initiated after the FCS organised training workshops with a partner body to discuss Tanzania’s National Disability Policy. The workshops were held at places where disabled persons could participate, including in hospital wards.

Judith Baige, a representative of a local women’s group, says the workshop inspired disabled women to work together “just like other women without disability”.

In a documented FCS case study she reported that the disabled women formed their own organisation to represent their concerns.

“We were isolated by the community. Persons with disability were regarded as a curse. That’s why most of us did not go to school.

“The FCS has stimulated us to search out even those people with disabilities who are hidden indoors,” says Baige.

The foundation also assisted with a project to lobby for the rights of the elderly.

An old-age facility in Nyanza had 40 elderly people in its care and needed medical services. The FCS ensured that they got the identity cards required to access free medical services, as outlined in Tanzania’s National Ageing Policy.

Other old-age homes are now taking similar steps. One of the beneficiaries, Emilia Kaswahili (60), from Kakebe village, says poverty had always prevented most people from getting access to medical services.

“When you succeed to get money to see the doctor, you don’t have enough money to buy medicine. It was a nightmare to most of us,” she says.

Joan Mungereza, who nominated FCS for this award, says it had motivated others “towards solidarity and networking”.

“It inspires organisations to believe in their work and deliver results through working together in the fight against poverty,” says Mungereza.

The judges praised the foundation as “a driver of change for building civil society capability to engage policymakers in Tanzania and beyond”.

Change is Constant



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The Nedbank Foundation was established in 1992, when the Nedbank Group began directing major investment and resources towards helping address the country’s challenges in various areas of need. As the CSI arm of the Nedbank Group, the Nedbank Foundation envisions a better future for all South Africans – something that, with the dawn of the New South Africa, was suddenly a possibility. It was time, said Nedbank, for concerned companies to play their part.

18 Years on, the Nedbank Foundation maintains a huge role in activating Nedbank’s Deep Green aspiration of being highly involved in the community and environment – one of the Group’s guiding principles. This it does by contributing to community upliftment and development programmes that are sustainable – and by inspiring other companies to do the same.

Funding is granted to non-profit organisations, NGOs, community organisations, schools and tertiary institutions. To date the Foundation has invested in excess of R390 million in projects across all nine provinces. Some of the projects that have been funded include:

Education

The Nedbank Matric Revision Programme required a R2.6 million investment, allowing Grade 12 learners from five provinces to attend a dynamic revision programme in advance of the 2010 matric exams. Run out of LoveLife Youth Centres, the programme has proved invaluable in a year disrupted by football fever and strike action.

Elsewhere, the Nedbank Foundation funds a Teacher Development and Support Project, run by Protec. This project focuses on Maths, Science and Technology, with a total of 3 000 learners expected to benefit from the project in 2010, as a result of their teachers delivering the subject matter in a more effective way.

Community Development

In 2010 Nedbank launched the Hippo Water Roller Project, helping to address the challenge of lack of access to clean water in rural communities. The Hippo Roller is a sturdy barrel that makes it possible to easily roll 3-4 days’ worth of water for a family of seven across any rural terrain. The Nedbank Foundation has invested R1.3 million in rolling out the device to poor communities in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga. In providing a holistic solution the Nedbank Foundation has also sponsored boreholes and water tanks for these communities.

Jobs & Skills Development

The Vezokuhle Youth Development Project empowers young people in the Eastern Cape and reintegrates them into society, whether they have clashed with the law or are facing academic, health and/or socio-economic challenges. Nedbank is a partner in the initiative and donated R760 000 in its inception.

The Topsy Foundation empowers rural women with bead-working skills, and runs a massive assistance programme for families affected by HIV/Aids, particularly in the ‘forgotten areas’ of South Africa. The Nedbank Foundation has invested R320 000 towards the initiative.

Volunteerism

Committed to encouraging and enabling our staff to share their skills and talents in the service of others, Nedbank’s staff volunteer programmes provide ample opportunities for involvement. Initiatives include Payroll Giving, Team Challenge and the Local Hero Programme, which also recognises clients for their contribution.

Pictured above: Laura Theobald, a Nedbank Team Challenge volunteer who helped raise R30 000 for the Ethembeni Disabled Childcare Centre in George.

The Nedbank Foundation is exceptionally proud to feature in the *Mail & Guardian Investing in the Future Awards*. The Nedbank Group understands that ‘the future’ lies always ahead – and that no genuinely concerned South African company can ever say: ‘We’ve done enough.’



MAKE THINGS HAPPEN

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Drivers of Change

Helping pupils help themselves

Winner — Drivers of Change Civil Society category: Ikamva Youth

Yazeed Kamaldien

For the past seven years high school pupils at under-resourced township schools have accessed supplementary lessons at the non-profit Ikamva Youth project to ease their journey through an overwhelmed public education system.

Joy Olivier, one of Ikamva Youth's founder members, says the project started when she was involved in researching "how science and technology drive the economy". A visit to schools in Khayelitsha township in Cape Town revealed an "education crisis", she says.

"Learners needed extra help, so we contacted our friends and started tutoring them on Saturdays. We didn't really have a plan, but wanted to go there and see where they needed help."

"That's still our approach. Learners identify the areas where they need help," says Olivier.

A lack of funding meant Olivier could join the organisation full-time only this year. She's had to hold down other jobs while running the project with volunteers.

Funding breakthroughs helped Ikamva Youth secure a R2.5-million budget in 2010.

It now has eight full-time staffers who manage after-school classes for 410 learners spread across three

Western Cape townships, a township in KwaZulu-Natal and another in Gauteng.

Technology has ensured that Ikamva Youth's curriculum notes, including its computer literacy syllabus, is able to be shared between centres and with other organisations. Volunteers are able to share lessons and implementation know-how through the network.

"Partnerships are key to our model and low-cost efficiency. We're based at municipal libraries, schools and youth centres and hold our holiday programmes on university campuses.

"Partners enable us to have a quality, high-impact reach in spite of minimal financial input," says Olivier.

The big picture is that education "enables disadvantaged youth to pull themselves out of poverty and into university".

Student volunteers from nearby universities and local professionals offer their time to assist high school learners from grade eight to 12 to navigate all their school subjects.

Olivier says Ikamva Youth's foundation rests on "peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, volunteerism and cross-sector partnerships to redress inequality and transform South African education".

"The model draws from a large and growing pool of volunteers. Ex-learners who gain entrance to tertiary institutions return to tutor the following set of learners," she says.

More than half the volunteers at



Ikamva Youth has after-school classes for 410 learners spread across three Western Cape townships, a township in KwaZulu-Natal and another in Gauteng. The project is sustained by volunteers from nearby universities and local professionals who offer their time to assist learners

the Khayelitsha branches comprise former pupils. "Learners become agents of change, which is a real and sustainable example of grassroots empowerment in which the community becomes both beneficiary and benefactor," she says.

The results show in the pass rate of Ikamva Youth matric students. Since inception, it has ranged between 89% and 100%.

The only requirement from pupils is that they maintain attendance at class and work hard for results. It's a long-term intervention that leads youngsters to understand that success does not come through quick-fix shortcuts.

Olivier says the lazy students soon find their way out of the classroom. "The results prove consistently that the learners who work hardest achieve highest.

"To keep their place in the programme, learners must maintain a minimum 75% attendance for all sessions. We have 'kick-outs' three times a year to ensure that only committed learners remain and work consistently throughout the period," she says.

Ikamva Youth does not limit its focus to getting pupils through high school. Life skills form part of its winter schools programme, which offers career guidance and exposure to post-school opportunities so that the youth can "realise their dreams".

After high school the pupils will, ideally, move on to tertiary education and Olivier's team also assists by building their "skills sets, experience,

confidence and networks".

"We pay their university application and registration fees and we also help them source bursaries. It's a struggle to get university fees for a family whose entire monthly income is equal to the university registration fee," she says.

Statistics show that less than 10% of pupils at township schools access tertiary education.

By contrast, Ikamva Youth has been able to assist more than 70% of its past two grade 12 groups to gain access to tertiary education.

The university graduates from its matric classes of 2005 and 2006 are accessing postgraduate study, scholarships to study abroad and great jobs, she says.

It's a development approach that works to end a poverty cycle, Olivier says.

"It not only alleviates poverty for the individuals, their families and the wider community, but the development of young black professionals contributes to economic development and transformation at higher levels too."

The Drivers of Change judges praised Ikamva Youth's achievement in breaking the cycle of poverty through education and for helping pupils to take responsibility for their own education and future.

"These learners are the true drivers of change as they are also setting a good example for younger learners to become agents of change for their own success," the judges said.

"It's a struggle to get university fees for a family whose monthly income is equal to the registration fee"

HIV legal-activist group grows from a meow to a roar

Finalist — Drivers of Change Civil Society category: Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/Aids

Yazeed Kamaldien

HIV/Aids-related human rights issues are often overshadowed by statistics. But what about the survivors; what are the societal and legal responses required for an increasingly complex epidemic?

While antiretroviral drugs help manage the disease, solutions are needed for the destructive social forces it has unleashed.

That's where civil society voices of reason such as the Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/Aids (Bonela) step in.

Bonela operates from Botswana's capital, Gaborone, a deceptively tranquil place — it's a pretty mellow city — for a nation dealing with one of the

world's most severe HIV/Aids scenarios. Statistics in recent years have indicated that one in four adults in Botswana is HIV-positive. Close to 95000 children in the country have lost a parent to Aids. That's in a population of less than two million people.

A small nation's economy can crumble if most of its workforce is dying. The Botswana government learned this early on and it was the first African state to provide antiretroviral drugs to those in need.

The government also formed a National Aids Coordinating Agency in 1999, a nationwide, multisector response that included public education, condom distribution and voluntary counselling and testing services.

There is also a range of local and international organisations that offer care and treatment for people affected by HIV/Aids.

Bonela's mission is "to create an

enabling and just environment for those infected with and affected by HIV and Aids".

Its interventions include ensuring access for the marginalised to fight legal battles, like the aircraft engineer who was fired from his job because he was HIV-positive.

There have been other workplace successes that are listed on its website, which is a window into and a conversation about a range of legal issues relating to HIV/Aids in the country.

Bonela's programmes focus on legal assistance, advocacy, research, education and training and a media campaign.

It has internship and volunteer efforts that beef up the output of its 20 full-time staffers. Its director, Uyapo Ndadi, is also a National Aids Council member.

Keolepile Motshusi, who nomi-

nated Bonela for a Drivers of Change award, said this independent NGO has been a "wake-up call to others that they could also influence change in the country and stop relying on the government as the sole key influencer of public policies".

"Bonela has been advocating for human rights and there have been several cases of people who were expelled from jobs just because they had HIV/Aids and have been reinstated.

"The job losses were going to increase poverty as these people would have been unable to take care of their families," said Motshusi.

Apart from fighting discrimination and advocating for equal treatment for HIV-positive employees, Bonela campaigns for antiretroviral drug treatment for prisoners and foreigners with HIV/Aids.

Its journey so far reads like a David and Goliath tale.

From humble beginnings in 2001 "in the tiniest room staffed by one woman with a table, a chair and third-hand computer equipment", it has built up to a roar in the face of the gigantic epidemic.

The judges commended its work in promoting the rights of homosexual men and women in a region hostile towards homosexual citizens.

"It is working towards legalisation to recognise gay and lesbian relationships in Botswana.

"Its work has great potential to shift attitudes and practices towards HIV-positive workers and the rights of homosexual citizens.

"Bonela is a driver of change for advocating against the discrimination and stigmatisation of people and strengthening the integration of human rights into the development of national policy and programmes," the judges said.