

# TFT Training Consultancy

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CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR ORGANISATIONS WORKING WITH VULNERABLE GROUPS



## Community Systems Strengthening (CSS) Project

# Annual Report

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**Community Systems Strengthening for Health**

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## **Acronyms**

EU	European Union
BCHC	Belhar Community Health Committee
CMHF	Cape Metro Health Forum
CSS	Community Systems Strengthening
CPF	Community Policing Forum
SAPS	South African Police Service
SASSA	South African Social Security Association
TFT	Training for Transition
UCT	University of Cape Town
VEP	Victim Empowerment Programme
WFP	Women on Farms Project

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## 1. Community Entry

### Impact of the community-led Model within the Community Systems Strengthening Partnership

**Lessons learned:** Although our intention to act on expressed community needs as a method of interaction, was clearly articulated at the start of the project, it seemed to take many of the participants, at all levels of functioning a long time to understand what the concept of ‘community-led’ meant in practical terms. After negotiating collaboration at community level, the pace of implementation and all meeting and training dates were determined by the community members who were going to participate in the training.

The Belhar health committee had stated very emphatically at the onset; *“If an individual is not available, it does not stop the process.”* On more than one occasion, however, individuals from within the Community Systems Strengthening partnership were unhappy that either a meeting had gone ahead without them being available on the day or they had not been properly consulted about training dates or had not been properly introduced during the community entry phase.

The TFT team constantly found ourselves explaining; *“It was based on community negotiation.”*

It was an important lesson in the project. From within the partnership, this focus on prioritising community needs, turned the prevailing power structure on its head.

**Community-led:** On the community side, it was the first step toward building trust with the people concerned and letting them know that the relationship was based on absolute respect for their needs and based on their availability, not the availability of the people with power. Power is central to all interactions and in a project where relationship-building is used to create cohesion, the power in decision-making has to be on the side of the community members.

### Impact of the community-led model with Local Government Officials

During the information gathering phase, we were introduced to a range of players, where we again clarified to local government officials that the community members and the community partner determined our activities and any requests for participating in structures or initiatives, would have to be taken to the health committee members participating in the process. Again this was met with a level of astonishment as South Africa has rapidly returned to the power dynamic that we had become accustomed to during apartheid. Those with power and money and access to resources are put on a significant pedestal and community members are used to further the agenda of politicians or institutions. Access to resources becomes a bargaining chip, rather than a right.

## 2. Training Content

**Belhar:** Feedback from participants regarding the training content was very positive. Many participants expressed that they had gained new information and it also assisted with helping them to identify where they would like to invest their efforts, in this community systems strengthening initiative.

It was very clear in the early stages of the training that tensions exist between individuals in the various community based organisations, because of competition for resources. Because the training content focuses on consciousness raising, it served as a bridge toward building collaboration. It was up to the facilitator to raise consciousness about developing a culture of sharing resources and skills rather than competing for the meagre opportunities available to oppressed communities.

The context helped people to realise that the need for community services is so great, that all organisations could co-exist in the same space and should ideally be supporting each other. The group-work was also used to forge new relationships so that all participants could realise that they were working toward a common goal and experiencing similar frustrations. It was also clear that new friendships were being formed between community members, just by observing the laughter and interactive body language over time.

Some aspects of the training, particularly in child protection, were therapeutic and personal - and so bonds of solidarity were formed when people shared painful, personal experiences. It was, of course, emphasised that information shared in the training space was confidential.

**Klapmuts:** The content is technically accurate and up to date and presented in a logical sequence. The material is consistent with the proposed course curriculum learning objectives and outcomes. All the essentials are covered. Where there were too many elaborations for the participants, the facilitator improvised the content, without distracting from the core learning objectives.

The work covered went according to plan. Surprises were the participants' lack of nutritional knowledge. This meant that more time had to be spent on pre-exercises. In general, the training was covered in sufficient depths. Most of the participants should be able to apply the knowledge and skills taught. A baseline assessment for the Peace Building group could not be done, as no initiatives were present in the Klapmuts community. The observation is that the training material sustained the trainees' interest.

### 3. Training Methodology

**Belhar:** The training method used was experiential rather than didactic and participants, although taken through the theory, were also exposed to exercises that assisted with deeper understanding. Many of the participants, already active in other structures, expressed that the method of learning was new and appreciated. A specific request from Belhar trainees, was to be trained in this method of training.

It is, however, important to state that facilitation skills or knowledge of adult learning training methods is not sufficient to achieve the objectives within the community systems strengthening process. Facilitator's should be deeply immersed in development theory, act with complete inter-personal respect and should not have a condescending attitude toward the trainees. The training method is therefore important but the facilitator also has to demonstrate identification and understanding of living in resource-poor environment. Ultimately, the facilitator should be sufficiently skilled and intuitive to 'read' the needs of the participants and adapt the training methodology to meet the needs of the participants.

**Klapmuts:** The ability and level of knowledge of the group played an important role in the choice of a training method. The skill level of the target group is basic. Their reading level for text-based materials is also elementary. Other factors which determined the method of training were age, past NGO/community development experience, and level of education.

**Didactic learning used at the start of training:** It met the needs of the particular trainees. Facilitator could present a large amount of new information. The co-facilitator and trainees could model how the presenter worked through questions or problems. Participation was elicited through questioning and relating of personal experience. Stating the purpose and main points of the message, encouraged the participants to focus on the information and be more receptive. They were not distracted by trying to guess what the point was.

Disadvantages of the didactic approach at the start of the training: Some trainees were often passive in the learning process. Stronger participants would dominate during questioning, etc.

## 4. Best Practice & Success Stories

**Social Media Activism in Belhar:** It is still early in the project lifespan but best practice models are beginning to emerge. The Belhar trainees have set up a group whatsapp which is being used to share all kinds of information important to the community systems strengthening initiative. This was a safe method for sharing information e.g. A picture of a known human trafficker in the neighbourhood, said to be preying on young women was circulated and could easily be shared on wider networks such as facebook, without putting any of the people in danger. Parents can immediately whatsapp their children who then share widely with their friends. Other information shared include work and learnership opportunities.

This quick turn-around from people who had come into the training a bit antagonistic toward each other, to people working together to support each other and the wider community, must be acknowledged as a success of the Community Systems Strengthening Project.

**Hosting Community Dialogue in Klapmuts:** The Klapmuts event was a huge success. The model of getting the community based organisation to take full responsibility for hosting the event was an example of community owned and community led processes. In Klapmuts a wide range of people from the community including local government officials, City of Cape Town officials, health officials, and other community based organisations attended the community dialogue. It was an opportunity to introduce individuals working in the CSS project and for each organisation to present an aspect of their work. It was an opportunity to fully explain the purpose of the project, inter-act with community members, and make sure that all relevant role players were aware of the EU initiative, in collaboration with the Department of Justice.

## 5. Community Systems Strengthening Partnership

**Challenge 1:** Very early on in the project it was clear that trust is a scarce commodity at all levels of interaction. Relationship-building between partners and individuals, therefore, started out slowly and there were moments of real hostility, especially in trying to establish the third site. Whilst the relationship between the three contractual partners seems to be strengthening, the third site has not been established due to a complete breakdown of trust. TFT has requested that we move to a site where we can work with a new partner but will be guided by the UCT leadership role on this matter.

**Challenge 2:** We did not achieve the numbers that we set out to work with. The year, however, is not yet completed and we will look at new opportunities to recruit additional trainees in 2017, but proceeded with training those who showed commitment to the process.

**Success Belhar:** Due to considerable misinformation in the background, negotiations with the Belhar health committee started out with having to set the record straight. In a show of transparency, electronic communication over a period of time, was put into a presentation, so that it could be clarified how the project got underway. This openness led to a breakthrough and a new understanding of the process and opened the door toward building trust with the Belhar health committee.

The health committee has a track record of being committed health and human rights activists and once the misinformation had been set aside, full cooperation emerged between the leadership of the Belhar health committee and the Community Systems Strengthening project. The Belhar health committee has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to their community and for that reason, full cooperation with the CSS initiative. As soon as mutual agreement was established a coordinator was identified and a range of health committee members participated in playing a constructive role in sourcing a venue, taking responsibility for the administrative budget, assisting with decision-making, recruiting trainees, supporting activities and popping in on the training as part of their monitoring function.

**Success Klapmuts:** Women on Farms Project played an important role in terms of accomplishing the overall goal of the training process in Klapmuts. Discussions and regular interaction and sharing of resources helped to identify suitable training candidates, build networks and created sustainability within the programme. The partnership has certainly evolved over time. Having clear goals and a mutual understanding assisted with the ebb and the flow of the work in the field. Because of the good working relationship between TFT and WFP, flexibility was exercised, and trust and confidence increased over time.

Leadership was displayed by both sides, which created a win-win situation. Example: TFT took a leading role in the training process, while WFP played a key role in coordinating the CSS Klapmuts Community Dialogue.

In essence, the organisations worked well together as a team, and inclusive decision-making benefitted all involved. Throughout the implementation phase the NGO's operated on an equal footing, and functioned effectively, for the purpose at hand. All in all, a professional collaboration, mutual interest, and proactive approach helped to drive the partnership in a constructive way.

## 5. Conclusion

**Mentoring:** We are now moving toward the mentoring phase of the project which will introduce new players such as local government officials and other trainers.

The participants, who now have a clearer understanding of the projects intention and the basic information in order to make the right decisions, are keen to become sufficiently skilled in order to impact on their environment in a positive way.

The relationship building with new players, will have to be treated with sensitivity, especially working with local government officials who always seem to have a political agenda rather than responding to the rights of community members.