



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
INTRODUCING

A S S E T

B A S E D

C O M M U N I T Y

D E V E L O P M E N T

Our learnings of an ABCD journey



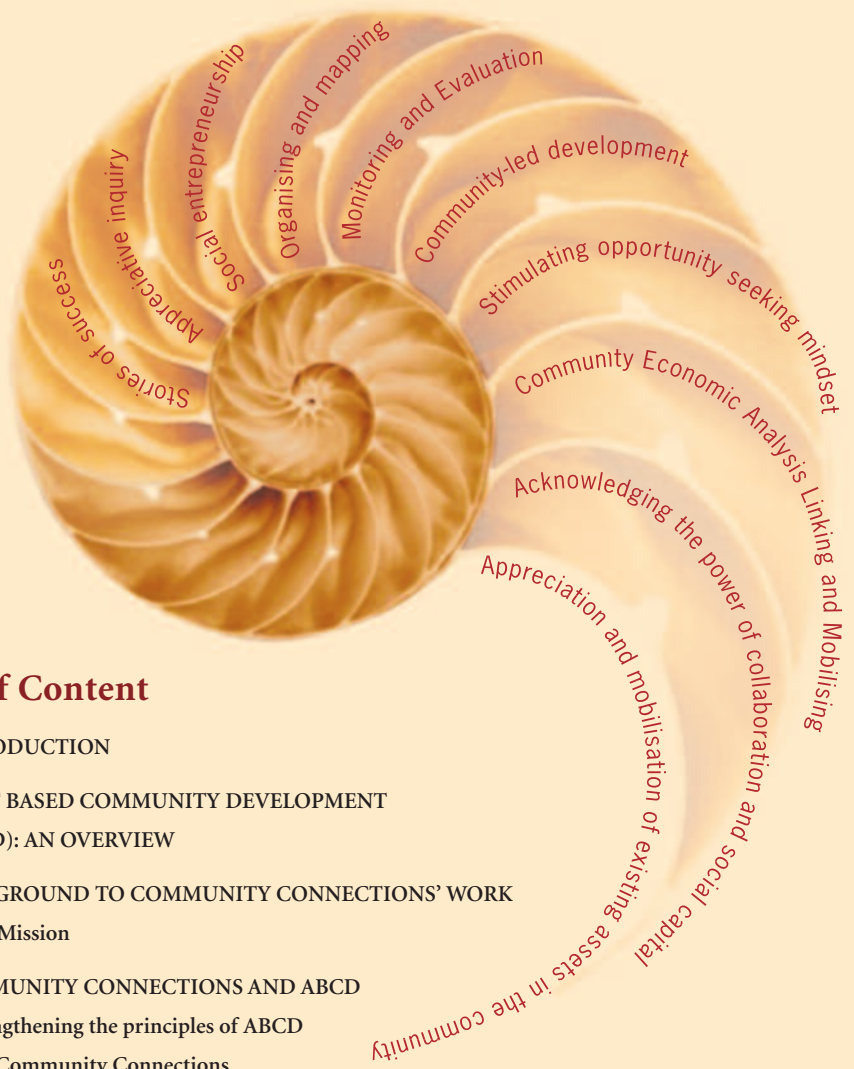


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INTRODUCTION

South's Africa's history is a real life example of the power of community activism, how it can lead to radical social and political change. However, after the new government took over, community activism decreased. Studies show that citizens in South Africa are even less active in operating the democracy than their neighbouring countries (Mattes, 2002¹).

Disadvantaged communities have internalized the perception that due to having little material wealth and formal education they are not able to do much to improve their circumstances. While government grants and social services are imperative to fight poverty, they increase this focus and create the expectation that it is solely the state's responsibility to bring about social transformation. This perception is confirmed through the predominant approaches to development that focuses mainly on problems and needs. Yet, due to the scale and wide variety of service delivery required—ranging from housing and health care and to education—it is not possible for the state to address all of the issues as swiftly as required. As such, in many instances, people's life circumstances have remained as dire as they were at the end of Apartheid, often leading to resentment from disadvantaged communities and not to constructive action.

Communities host a wealth of resources that could be mobilised for the betterment of the community. However, community members themselves will first need to realise that they have the capacity, power and resources to act. Community action can support government in its delivery, and, in turn, the government can financially support communities' efforts, leading to quicker social transformation. In addition, this kind of development, initiated and implemented by the people themselves, is more likely to create sustainability.

In order to be better able to take a strengths-based focus and to induct new staff members into an asset-based method, Community Connections decided to engage in an intense capacity building process led by the COADY International Institute and made possible by the generous support of CIDA. This publication is an internal reflective evaluation on this process. We chose to do this in a form of a publication because we feel that ABCD has a lot to offer to the development sector. Furthermore, this effort to align our strategy and our practice to the principles of ABCD can provide a valuable learning experience for other organisations embarking on this journey.

1 Mattes, R. (2002). South Africa: Democracy without the people? *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (1), 22-36

ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (ABCD): AN OVERVIEW

‘using what you have to ensure what you have not’

Asset-based community development has happened since the beginning of mankind and has been taking place all over the globe... often out of necessity but also out of a natural inclination to collaborate and utilize what is readily available.

Recently, the principles of ABCD have been formulated into an approach to development, pioneered by the ABCD-institute (U.S.) and the Coady Institute (Canada). ABCD builds on the principles of the participatory approach to development. It is a response to the needs- and problem-based approaches to development, which assess communities in terms of what is lacking and is often conducted by outside agencies. The identified problems and needs translate into necessary interventions by external entities. This approach turns citizens into clients and also paralyzes and neglects the assets, resources and energy that exist within people and their communities.

The Asset-based core principles to development are:

- **Community-led development** is one of the main strategies to sustainable social development—development processes driven by people who are directly affected by the challenges they seek to address
- **Stories of success:** the starting point is the shared history of success stories in bringing about change in the community
- **Acknowledging the power of collaboration and social capital:** the main resource in communities is the strong social ties that exist between community members and the different forms of organisations that are formed
- **Appreciation and mobilisation of existing assets in the community:** every community, no matter how poor, has access to different physical, social, financial, human and natural assets, which can be mobilised for community action
- **Stimulating opportunity seeking mindset:** ABCD is about changing mindsets towards a ‘glass-half-full’ approach to life
- **Social entrepreneurship:** is about creating social and economic value with available assets

Crucial in the ABCD approach is that the power over development processes is held by the communities themselves. This is one of the main strategies to sustainable social development. Through an ABCD process, communities become empowered from the inside out, which is crucial in active citizenship and ensuring government accountability. Also, communities become better positioned to claim their rights.

The role of NGOs within this approach is one of facilitating and connecting to other stakeholders. The ABCD methodology supports the ABCD process by providing tools to map out all the existing assets in a community... by community members themselves:

- **Appreciative inquiry:** to draw out strengths and successes in a community's shared history as its starting point for change
- **Organising and mapping:** identification of the human, social, natural, physical and social assets in the community
- **Community Economic Analysis (by means of the Leaky Bucket):** helps a community to examine its local economy and assists in identifying ways to increase and strengthen the local economy
- **Linking and Mobilising:** after all the assets are identified, linking and mobilising explores what opportunities are available for the community to start or strengthen new initiatives in support of the community
- **Monitoring and Evaluation (Significant Change Technique):** a qualitative method that allows the community to share stories of the most significant changes that have taken place

The ABCD methodology provides tools to map out assets in a community

Appreciative inquiry

Linking and Mobilising

Organising and mapping

Monitoring and Evaluation

Community Economic Analysis

BACKGROUND TO COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS' WORK

Community Connections is a community development agency that promotes community-led development. The organisation was initiated in 2000 by a group of volunteer community workers who identified an urgent need to strengthen civil society by supporting community-led development and addressing the isolation of CBOs and community workers. Based on a comprehensive needs assessment, a capacity development programme was piloted. The organisation was constituted and launched in May 2001 and formally registered as an NPO in August 2002.

Our Vision... a world in which justice and sustainable development prevail through an active civil society

Conceptual Framework for Community Development



As our vision is a society in which justice and sustainable development prevail through an active civil society, our interventions are aimed at community-based organisations and community workers. We particularly target those community members that currently do not have equal opportunities, as we believe that they will have a stronger aspiration to

transform society. For society to transform in a sustainable manner, members of civil society need to take conscious and organised action. Conscientising, organising and action are thus crucial elements of social transformation, and while one of them might be more prominent than the others at any point in time, they need to take place concurrently.

- **Conscientising** is an ongoing process that aims for individuals and the collective to become aware of themselves, their self-worth, their environment and of the interconnectedness of these elements. Through consciousness building, critical thinking skills are developed, as well as the ability to see possibilities for individual and collective action.
- **Organising** is an ongoing process in which possibilities and challenges are visualised and mapped out in order to provide and reflect on a framework that specifies what is to be achieved, why and how. It is also a process through which structures are formed to gather and manage ideas, processes, people and other resources so that individuals, community structures and communities are better organised and stronger.
- **Action** is a community-led effort to materialise plans through implementing activities led by community formations or structures. By taking action, community structures are driving their own development and forging their own destiny.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to promote community-led development by strengthening the capacity of community workers and community structures to conscientise, organise and act towards the transformation of society.

Our Approach

We utilise an “asset-based” and “people-centred” approach towards development. We believe that the development of people is integral to any transformative process. This transformative focus is taken into account in all of our facilitated processes. We believe that a meaningful learning process consists of four major components (knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes). Our interventions deliver these components in a participatory and experiential manner, while taking into consideration the indigenous knowledge and strengths inherent in our target group. We value the indigenous knowledge in the communities that we work in and see ourselves in a learning journey with them. We draw from their strengths in ensuring that our work is impacting positively in society.

Our Work

Community Connections' work is based on the following strategic goals:

To provide a platform for community workers, CBOs and other community structures to organise and advocate for the interests of communities and facilitate linkages with other role-players.

**Networking
& Advocacy**

To increase our internal organisational capacity and effectiveness stimulated by a learning culture.

**Organisational
Sustainability /
Internal
Learning**

**CBOs and
community structures
at the centre of
community-led
development**

**Organisational
Capacity
Building**

To provide capacity building interventions through access to training courses, ODS, information/ infrastructural assistance to community structures.

**Research
& Publications**

To contribute a grassroots perspective and voice to development processes through research and publications.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS AND ABCD

Community Connections has accumulated a wealth of experiences and knowledge about grassroots development, which has enabled us to discover the merits of ABCD not merely from a course or reading but rather from our ability to learn from our practice. It has galvanised our beliefs about the action-learning principles and the notion that learning does not only happen through academia but that humans have the innate ability to learn from reflecting on lived experiences.

Our evolution as an organisation is mostly driven by the constant reflection on our work and our thinking. Over the years, this has led to some shifts in how we work. Community Connections learned about the Asset Based Community Development approach through attending the COEP 1st International Conference on 'Sustainable Networks for Community Development' in Brazil in 2004. In this conference, we got to know the COADY International Institute (www.coady.stfx.ca) and the concept of asset based community development. This approach to development had an immediate appeal to us and resonated with our experiences and beliefs of community development. Furthermore, it links very much with the principles of 'ubuntu'²⁷, which we hold as our own.

Since then, the organisation has made real strides in adapting our practice to the principles of ABCD. We started shifting our thinking and focus away from addressing gaps and lacks to supporting social transformation by building on existing strengths in communities. It was at this stage that we looked at increasing our support programmes to community organisations. Even the terminology we used shifted due to this new understanding that we were adopting.

In 2008, we realised that we didn't have a common understanding of the approach. As such, we decided to embark on an intensive capacity building process led by the Coady International Institute. This process would allow us to deepen our organisational understanding of ABCD and strongly anchor it in our identity. This would ensure a coherent approach to the work and a common understanding for our staff members.

STRENGTHENING THE PRINCIPLES OF ABCD IN COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Below, is an overview of the different steps we took to achieve this coherent and deepened understanding of ABCD in the organisation:

I. Two staff members attended a three-week course in Mobilising Assets for Community-led Development at the Coady Institute, Canada

This course imparted many theories, case studies and stories from around the world on community driven asset based development. It provided an in-depth understanding of the ABCD principles and implementation. The course was very interactive and story telling was one of the key methodologies used. The practical nature of the course allowed participants to become community members as part of a role-play, implementing the ABCD methodology in their community. The interactive and practical components allowed us to internalise the approach on an individual level, making it no longer a theoretical concept, but a way of life. Furthermore, we established many relationships with people and organisations from around the world during the course. These relationships have proven to be useful in sharing ideas, supporting each other with challenges, and inspiring one another... long after the course was completed.

II. Presenting learnings from ABCD course to staff

During our monthly reflection session (which we call home week) the two staff members presented their learnings and engaged the organisation in different activities and debates to

² This is an African phrase which means humanity.

encourage a deeper understanding of ABCD on an organisational level. We also engaged with this understanding so to weave, more purposefully, the principles and practices of ABCD into our programmes.

III. Attendance of ABCD seminar at Unisa, Pretoria

ABCD has gained a lot of interest in South Africa. For example, Unisa has adopted ABCD in their geography department. This was initiated by a seminar organised by Unisa and the Greater Rustenburg Community Foundation. The seminar stimulated learning about the ABCD approach, and provided a space to share South African stories of ABCD. The seminar also created a great networking opportunity and a chance to build upon existing relationships. Our organisation walked away with good insight of ABCD developments and experience in the South African landscape, along with new and deepened relationships.

IV. Organisational Mentoring workshop, facilitated by Coady

As part of our endeavours to work more consciously and holistically with ABCD, as an organisation we requested support from Coady in the form of a 5-day mentoring workshop. This was made possible by the generous support of CIDA. This workshop allowed us to gain a solid understanding of ABCD, to fine-tune our practice according to ABCD principles, and to look at how to integrate ABCD into the pilot we are implementing this year in Philippi, Cape Town. The organisation was able to engage and discuss crucial aspects related to the implementation of ABCD. One of our main challenges was to agree and understand the dynamics of a 'needs-based' versus 'asset-based' approach to development, considering the reality that communities have needs besides the assets that they possess.

V. Formation of a learning partnership with the West Coast Community Foundation (WCCF)

One of the outcomes of the increased networks with organisations adopting ABCD was a learning partnership with the WCCF. Because we share a similar approach to development, we recognized the value in learning from each other's ABCD undertakings. As our first partnership endeavour, we conducted ABCD training for urban gardens in Atlantis. ABCD methodologies were used to stimulate the farmers to recognise and take advantage of the opportunities that exist within their gardens and in the community. The main outcome of this course has been that their attitude and mindset has changed; now fully grasping the value of utilising their own assets to improve their situation.

ABCD AND OUR PRACTICE

Here follows an overview of how ABCD is reflected in our work and how the intense capacity building programme we embarked on has impacted on our practice.

ABCD to enhance ODS & Training

Since our inception in 2000, we have been facilitating training modules and Organisational Development Support (ODS) interventions for community workers and community based organisations. We are guided by our understanding that organisations, like humans, are responsible for their own well-being. Thus, our role is focused on assisting organisations to understand their organisational health and to offer guidance for their growth and self-empowerment. Our approach takes into consideration where people and organisations are in their development and builds on their skills, experience, and abilities in an organic way. This section looks at how ABCD prevails in the two elements—Training and Organisational Development Support.

- The ODS process requires ongoing engagement with the partner organisations from the initial stages. Our main guiding principle for our work, inspired by ABCD, is building from the inside out. For ODS, this means first gaining an understanding of the request, the organisation and how the organisation has dealt with their identified challenge. Then, we work to strengthen what is already there in the organisations—building upon existing systems, organisational culture and approach to challenges. Further, this also means that the organisation is responsible for their own processes, including approaching us for support, engagement and commitment to the process and deciding on their growth areas. In our experience, organisations are sometimes frustrated by our approach, because they are used to being the receivers of training and support. However, organisations soon realise that this approach holds great value, because they learn about their organisation and are better able to sustain improved practices.
- For our training, the inside-out approach means that we depart from the learning partners' understanding of the subject matter. Prior to giving our input, we first request the learning partners' knowledge on the issue at hand. Our contribution is more on acknowledging what has already been said. Throughout the years that we have facilitated trainings, we have not yet come across an incident where the learning partners did not have an idea of the subject matter. This confirms that our work is on facilitating processes where learning partners realize their abilities, capabilities, and knowledge. While we are sometimes seen

as experts on the subject matter, our approach is what makes us experts in this field as we take people through processes of self realization. After the intense capacity building programme, the emphasis in our ODS and training has shifted more towards assets and strengths and what these could mean to the learning partners. Also, in our Community Research training we have adopted the ABCD methodology that allows community members to map their organisations' and community's assets.

Tracing ABCD influences in the Integrated Community Development Programme (ICDP)

The ICDP is a pilot programme which started in June 2010. The pilot was conceptualised during our strategic review process in 2008 where we reflected on our three year implementation cycle (2006/2007 to 2008/2009). The review enabled us to identify a number of strengths and challenges that impacted significantly on the level of social transformation achieved through the previous strategy. As a result, we brainstormed and conceptualised a programme what we called an 'Integrated Community Development Pilot' programme.

The ICDP is distinctively different than our previous approach in the sense that it focuses on one geographic area. This will allow us to make a deeper and more meaningful impact on a community as a whole. We are testing the concept by initially implementing it as a two-year pilot.

The foundation of the ICDP involves components that reflect the main principles of an ABCD approach— collaborative action, mobilising assets, and identifying opportunities.

- Institution building of 20 CBOs in Philippi that serve vulnerable groups (HIV/Aids, Women, Youth, Children, Elderly and Disabled)—ODS, training, peer learning events and issue-based workshops for the 20 CBOs
- The creation of an effective platform for CBOs working in these sub-sectors in Philippi to systematically engage with relevant stakeholders
- Supporting CBOs to link up with like-minded CBOs, NGOs, government departments, business entities and other role-players (multi-stakeholder approach) as a way of countering the isolated manner in which CBOs tend to operate
- Strengthening the ability of local CBOs to participate effectively in local government processes (community participation processes), thus reclaiming their political right to actively participate in determining their future
- Maximising existing local resources/assets (infrastructural, social, and others) for the benefit of local CBOs and broader development processes taking place locally

Reflecting on how ABCD principles, approaches and methods are incorporated into the ICDP is like; ‘a tale of identical twins who, after having been separated at birth, get to meet again’. The initial ICDP principles were based on the values of ABCD, as it had become part of our approach to development. However, the intense capacity building programme has allowed us to get a ‘helicopter view’ of community development. This provided us the opportunity to examine community development from a theoretical foundation, helping us to fill in some gaps in our experience-based understanding of community development. It has really been a great example of how grassroots action learning meets academia. This is an affirmation that people at the grassroots have a wealth of knowledge coming from their ‘life laboratories’ that may be at the level of laboratories found in the most prestigious of academic institutions.

With a more full understanding of ABCD, we were able to engage deeply with critical aspects of the pilot. One of the main discussions centred on the merits and applicability of an asset-based approach versus a needs-based approach in the township communities in which we work. We arrived at the understanding that while an asset-based approach was healthy for sustainability, the prominent existence of a needs-focused mentality in townships must be given full appreciation. In fact, the needs are the very reason why CBOs and NGOs exist. As such, we decided to utilise a combination of the two approaches in the pilot.

ABCD principles in Advocacy work

There is little doubt that CBOs have a critical role to play in our country’s transformation. The Masikhulisane campaign came about as a result of realising that CBOs, although embedded in communities and doing work on the ground, remain the least recognised and resourced organisations within the development sector. CBOs frequently have to compete with larger well-established organisations for access to resources in what is often a bureaucratic and intimidating environment. The Masikhulisane campaign is a perfect example of CBOs lobbying and advocating for their own issues. (Masikhulisane—Xhosa phrase for ‘growing together’—is a campaign initiated by Community Connections and CBO Associates.)

The Masikhulisane Campaign

The Masikhulisane campaign supports and promotes a stronger and more sustainable CBO sector through dialogue and partnership building. In launching the campaign in 2005, funding of CBOs and CBO appreciation were prioritised as the first themes to draw awareness to the plight of CBOs. This resulted in a three tier dialogue, with the first one taking place in 2006.

- **CBO-Donor Dialogue 2006:** a three-day residential workshop that looked at lowering benchmarks and standards for CBOs seeking funding. The workshop also explored ways in which donors can support CBOs in improving their impact. Through this initiative, the Multi-agency Grants Initiative (MAGI) was established to assist with grassroots funding of CBOs.
- **CBO-Government Dialogue 2007:** a three-day workshop that looked at what government and CBOs need to understand about one another as well as what needs to shift in terms of thinking
- **CBO-NGO Dialogue 2008:** a one-day workshop that looked at strengthening relations between CBOs and NGOs

Masikhulisane promotes:

- **Recognition and appreciation of CBO strengths and assets**
- **Dialogue, networking and partnership-building between CBOs, donors, government, and NGOs**
- **CBO friendly policies and practices**
- **Accessible funding and resource opportunities**

Community Connections' advocacy approach has as its foundation ABCD principles combined with a rights-based approach. Its mandate is to provide a platform for CBOs and other community structures to organise, lobby and advocate for the interests of communities and to facilitate linkages with role players such as government, donor agencies, and NGOs. In the process, the CBOs organise themselves into a more unified network with a shared platform. They also learn from one another, strengthening each other and increasing their sustainability.

After our intense ABCD capacity building process, some shifts were made in the Masikhulisane approach. The major shift came from the realisation that the CBOs would greatly benefit from a sectoral focus, with emphasis on learning exchanges between organisations and on collaboration.

The role of the Resource Centre in an Asset Based approach

Our Resource Centre's mandate has been adapted after integrating ABCD into the resource centre strategy. Social relationships are one of the greatest assets according to ABCD. As such, the main value of the Resource Centre lies in its potential to create platforms for networking and collaboration. These platforms enable CBOs to form relationships with other organisations and develop partnerships critical to enhance impact and sustainability. In turn, this will create opportunities for an even more organised and stronger civil society to drive its own development.

The Resource Centre's main mandate is to inform, support, and connect community-based organisations (CBOs). Its approach is based on the idea that CBOs drive their own development and identify their areas of needed support. The Resource Centre's functions are:

- **Informing:** The Resource Centre supports CBOs by providing access to information—for instance, books, publications and articles. It also provides information about relevant events and deadlines of funders.
- **Supporting:** The Resource Centre provides infrastructural supports to CBOs, like access to computers, internet, and a printer. Further, it offers walk-in support on ad-hoc issues and organises workshops around emerging trends in CBO requests.
- **Connecting:** The Resource Centre offers access to a database of external stakeholders, like NGOs, government, Chapter Nine institutions, and funders. It also maintains a database of CBOs, enabling CBOs to find local partners. Lastly, it organises events with the main focus of forming relationships and increasing networks.

The adapted mandate for the Resource Centre has already resulted in two new sector-specific events—youth and women. The main focus of these events is networking and creating a stronger civil society.

Celebrating Youth Leadership

In June, a Youth Week was organised together with other local youth NGOs and CBOs. This week celebrated the leadership that young people demonstrate on a daily basis in their communities. Thirty-four years ago, the landscape of this country changed when youth stood up and claimed their rights for education and language. The student movement was one of the strong and vibrant forces that led to the end of the Apartheid regime. The same spirit and activism is still vibrant in communities.

The Youth Week provided a platform:

- for youth CBOs to work together in organising the event
- for horizontal learning—young people engaging in issues affecting them with their peers and identifying solutions together
- for networking and collaboration

The main outcomes of the week were that a core group of youth leaders was established, the youth activists were united during the event, and a step was made towards a more organised youth movement that can advocate for its own issues.

ABCD AND ITS PRACTICALITIES: ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES

As mentioned in the previous sections, ABCD is a powerful and well-conceived approach in facilitating development processes. However, it has challenges that should be taken into consideration. These are some of the challenges we faced upon learning more about ABCD as an approach for our work.

Innovative M & E ABCD requires a different framework of M&E, one that is able to capture unpredicted and unplanned change. Since ABCD is a community-led process it is more difficult to develop indicators and expected outcomes. As such, it requires the organisation to be more creative in its methods to gather the impact of the work. Further, the framework itself should be one that ensures the process is really community-led, making the community itself responsible for evaluating the progress.

Funder requirements vs. ABCD An ABCD approach suggests that developmental processes are led by communities themselves, as opposed to communities being recipients of development. Due to the need to have financial support from donors, an organisation is bound by a donor's requirements. In most cases, donors are concerned about whether their money is spent in a way for which it was provided and within the given time frame. While this ensures accountability, it poses a challenge for ABCD and its approach to community-led development. If processes are led by communities, outcomes and time frames become much less predictable.

Facilitator role vs. driving the processes It is possible that we can unconsciously slip into the 'driver's seat' if we are either pressured by the need to deliver specific outcomes or the process is taking too long. As ABCD requires us to play a facilitator role, we are much less in control of achieving specific outcomes and within a provided time frame. This is a point of tension and needs to be monitored consistently.

Mindset Shift: Needs Based- asset based Because most of us are used to seeing development from a needs-based approach, it is challenging to get everyone's mindset aligned to an asset-based approach—within an organisation and with the target group. Every organisation should decide for itself the degree to which it will use an asset- or needs-based approach, or a balance of the two.

Internal (organisational practice) vs. External (field work practice) After learning and acquiring knowledge on ABCD, our time and efforts have gone into interrogating our practice with regard to field work. A challenge for us has been to ensure that what we preach out in the field, we practise internally.

An organisation consists of people who have acquired specific skills and knowledge of the sector. How does an organisation use those skills and knowledge to its benefit? How can the internal staff of any organisation work in an ABCD mindset in relation to their skills and knowledge? When we speak about collaborative action and mobilising assets for social change, what can this mean for us NGOs in the development sector?

IMPLICATIONS OF ABCD FOR THE BROADER DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

ABCD consolidates the complexities of community development into a comprehensive, holistic and yet simplistic concept. As a framework, it encompasses many core principles crucial for sustainable social development in an integrated manner. In this section, we conclude by reflecting on the ABCD approach, its value to the sector, and the challenges in implementing it.



Community Connections has from its inception made use of ABCD principles. This opportunity for us to deepen our understanding of this approach has been immensely fruitful, as if the final pieces of the puzzle have been put in place. To engage with a development approach at such depth has allowed our organisation to get out of our daily routines and observe the bigger context in which we work with a 'bird's eye view'. This understanding of the bigger picture and its dynamics has given extra meaning to our work and our existence as an organisation.

Below is our perspective of the main contributions that ABCD can provide to the sector:

- ABCD provides a comprehensive and holistic understanding of community development and its complexities. Yet its simplicity (in understanding its principles and methods) allows grassroots community members to understand the framework that guides their development processes, thus ensuring more effective participation in decision-making and implementation (community-driven development approach).
- It proposes a flexible framework, methodology and tools, which makes it easy to implement its theoretical underpinnings. The tools ensure that all existing assets in the community are assessed by the community and that plans are developed and implemented to maximise those assets (social and economic entrepreneurship approach).
- NGOs and other intermediary agencies become facilitators in the process and the community becomes the driver. This is key to ensure sustainable development, as it affirms the power community members have in determining their development.
- The community empowers itself from the inside out and mobilises itself into a comprehensive network, which generates a strong collaborative energy and voice to keep government accountable (multi stake-holder approach).
- ABCD is a 'breath of fresh air' compared to the needs-based approach whereby community members are reduced to being 'problematic creatures' that need to be rescued and built up to become esteemed community members who have the capacity to translate their political rights into future realities (rights-based approach).

ABCD brings together a variety of different development approaches, which further attests to the thinking that one does not have to 'reinvent the wheel' but rather take elements of what is good to come up with more effective mechanisms.

The following are some of the challenges that could be encountered in ABCD processes:

- The foundation of ABCD is community-driven development. This threatens and challenges NGOs who have been used to driving development. As such, it could complicate project planning, funder commitments and project time frames.
- NGOs need to be comfortable playing increasingly smaller roles than they are used to playing and be more conscious of working toward their own redundancy, as this is ultimately necessary for community-driven development.
- The shift from a needs-based to an asset-based approach doesn't happen overnight. It is a process. This understanding presents a challenge for community members who have been inundated with images of dependency and now have to make the shift toward realising that they have the potential to co-create the future they espouse.
- The whole development industry is based on the notion that there is a sector of the world population that is deprived of basic human needs. Donors predominantly give money where there is more of a proven need (prevalently desperate areas) and less to those that seem to be prospering. This means the shift toward asset-based thinking needs to spread throughout the major players in the development sector to avoid being 'punished' (by not being funded) for not addressing needs.

In conclusion, ABCD asks for a shift in mental models—not only for NGOs and CBOs, but also at the level of international donor agencies, government, and other key development bodies like the UN. The wonder of it all is that ABCD presents the opportunity to shift this mental model from the 'bottom-up'. It has the potential to position ordinary people as 'trail blazers' when it comes to sowing the seeds for a new, more just world order!



LEARNING GROWING TRANSFORMING
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This publication has been made possible by the generous support of CIDA



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