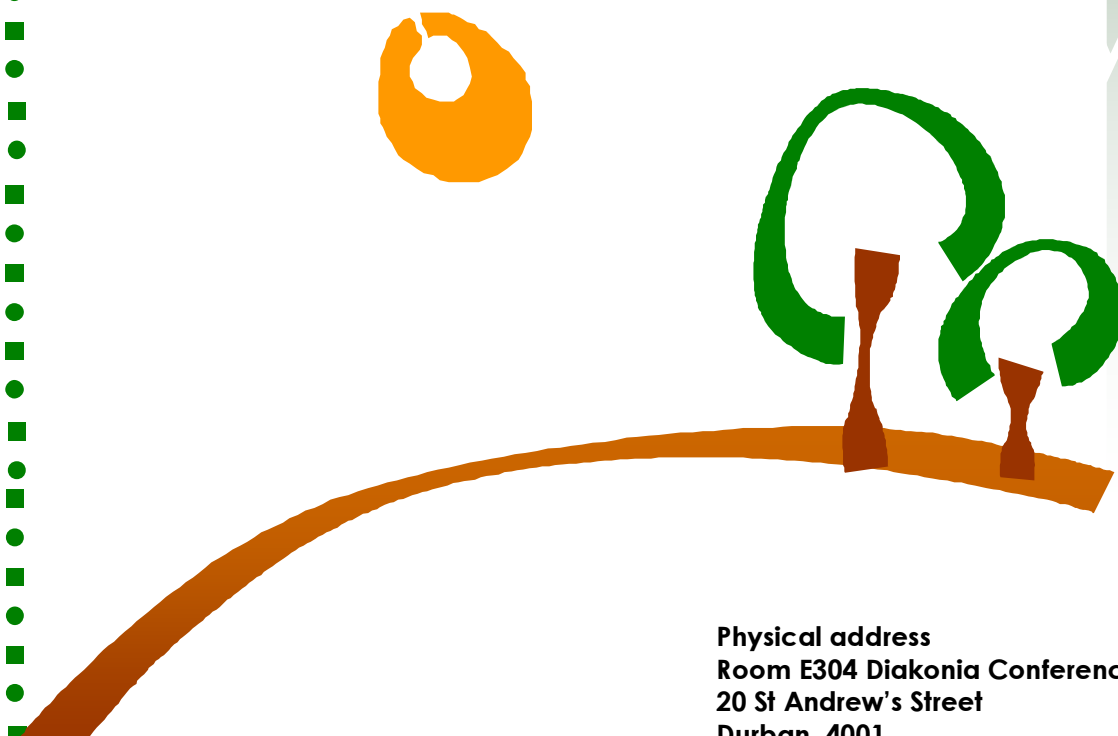
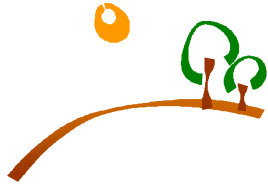


**Annual Report
2005/2006**

Reflections on Our Journey



Physical address
Room E304 Diakonia Conference Centre
20 St Andrew's Street
Durban, 4001
Kwazulu Natal
South Africa
Tel : +27 (0)31 310 3565
Fax : +27 (0)31 310 3566
Email : info@projectempower.org.za

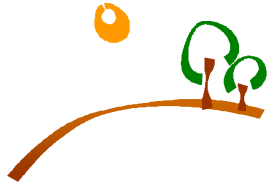


Annual Report – 2005/2006

Project Empower has traveled a long road over the last five years. And, like with all journeys it become necessary that we stop: to reflect on what has brought us to this point; to plan our way forward and to catch our breath.

This, our first 'public' annual report, is an attempt to tell some of the story of our journey and to provide us with a snapshot of what the future of Project Empower could look like.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all of those people and organisations that have supported us over the years – through all of our trying time. Thanks to the donors who have stuck with us and thanks to civil society organisation like our own who have collaborated with us and shared their experiences. But most of all, we would like to thank the organisations and communities that have allowed us into their spaces and supported us by sharing their invaluable knowledge, experience and insight into their communities. Without them, Project Empower would not have become what it is today.



Annual Report – 2005/2006

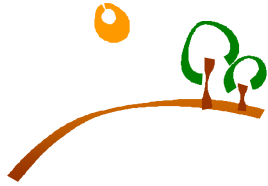
Civil society organisations in South Africa face difficult times in an era of reduced international funding flows and an increased emphasis bilateral and government to government aid. In addition the development sector as a whole is faced with the challenge of proving that decades of work has resulted in improved standards of living for marginal communities.

This emphasis on impact has resulted in a sector that is becoming more output oriented and less concerned with the process of development. This trend has seen drive for higher levels of accountability and strengthening of governance of the non profit sector. While this is not a bad thing in itself, accountability and good governance have been interpreted to mean stronger financial accountability and rigid, objective oriented planning methods, the products of which are easy to discern and measure

Perhaps the most significant learning Project Empower can carry through from its first five years of existence is that development is a process. That is, if we accept that the fundamental change we seek in society begins with individuals who are more able to engage with, and influence, their environment to improve their overall condition. Change can only be effected in a society where individuals are aware of, and work to change power imbalances.

Improving accountability does not mean forfeiting process, on the contrary it demands that we ensure that allow people to learn and change at a pace that suits them. That we allow people to decide what value has emerged, and continues to emerge, from the work we do.

Our programme work is anchored around a contextual understanding of issues. By helping people in organisations to critically assess the impact of HIV and AIDS in their own lives and the network of relationships that support them



Annual Report – 2005/2006

people are better able to develop workable solutions challenges they are confronting.

What follows is a summary of the programmes and projects we have been involved in over the last year. We share our approach and some of the lessons that we are learning from our engagement with partner organisations.



The Circles Network

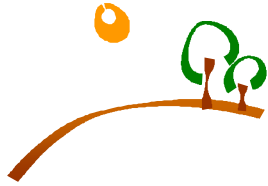
Since the inception of this programme it has been evolving in a direction dictated by the participants. The 2005/2006 Circles Network has been no different and, in fact, probably represents the culmination of process driven approaches that Project Empower has been working with over the years.

The 2005/2006 group was drawn from organisations active in the Kwazulu Natal Midlands and was made up largely of volunteers working with orphans and vulnerable children and a women's group

This programme proved to be very successful. Although assessing behaviour change can be quite tricky. We have to accept that meaningful change in attitudes takes time. Constant reflection and debriefing of the facilitation teams working with the group provides us with some confidence in reporting the following changes.

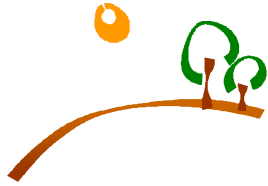
- People feel more confident that they understand more about HIV and AIDS than they did before we started working with them.
- Participants are now eager to challenge us and are starting to be able to link what is happening in their communities with HIV (e.g. why are young girls and women more affected by HIV than men?).
- There is also a general air of acceptance of people living with HIV and of people we see different from ourselves - the usually marginalised groups (sex workers, homosexuals, etc.)

Some participants have had family or friends disclose their HIV status to them and they feel that the people were able to disclose because of the way that they now are able to engage with issues around HIV and because of how their own attitudes have changed that they are able to help.



Lessons learned

- The Circles network has continued to provide new Project Empower and has reinforced the value of using an experiential, learner centred methodology. During our evaluation a participants commented that **"...my coming here helped me understand a whole lot about HIV and in a manner that I didn't feel I was forced to face HIV again"** and **"for the first time I felt my life experiences meant something important"**. The method allows participants being able to change their perceptions of HIV through thorough interrogation of our expectations of the world. **"...We are more able now to accommodate each other even with our different social views"**, **"I'm able to make decisions that make sense for me and be willing to live with the consequences of those decisions"**.
- There is an acceptance that people have good understanding of the HIV and AIDS issues. This is not always true and it is important that we understand where people are before we begin our programmes.
- Participants feel that they own the process and they have committed themselves to it. **"...We got facilitators who were open and allowed us to grow and gave me confidence to work with people"**
- Language and ease of communication are critical to the learning process, as is creating a relaxed, informal learning environment. Giving people the respect they richly deserve makes learning **easier** **"...How you treated us, you respected us and allowed us to make mistakes, you laughed with us..."** and **"...you laughed with us and made our learning so easy and so much fun"**.



CBO Support

This relatively new area of work has been defined in response to a growing awareness that very little support is available for organised groups of people working in their own communities. These groups of mainly women are increasingly being made responsible for the delivery of care (through home based care initiatives) and psycho social support (through support group activities) in poor communities all over the country. In addition very few active, long term support programmes are delivered to out of school, unemployed and at risk youth.

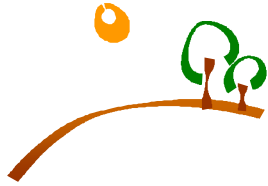
The programme is aimed at supporting people volunteering for or employed by community-based organisations (church organisations, community advice and resource centres, home-based care groups, support groups, etc.) that are responding in some way to HIV. In particular it is designed for people who are working with people infected and affected by HIV and who have received little or no HIV related training on the past.

The original objectives of the programme were to at increase participants':

- o Understanding of the causes and consequences of HIV
- o Ability to respond to HIV.

Experience during the delivery of the programme made Project Empower aware that in addition (and maybe far more necessary) to the information and skill participants needed some personal development and support.

Variations on the original course have been run for three groups and a broad curriculum and method is emerging. Project Empower will continue to deliver this programme in a variety of community settings and work towards finalizing the programme content, method and curriculum during the 2006/2007 cycle.



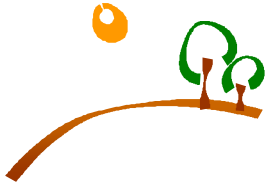
Lessons learned

- Burden of care on community based orgs without much concern for carers
- High risks of exposure (HBC) without proper training or necessary equipment
- Support groups not knowing what to do after they get together – high emphasis on income generation, but no real support
- Low levels of confidence – know what problems are but unable to engage with the systems
- Need for ongoing, sustained work to improve skills, provide information, support action

Building HIV positive Organisations

The impact of HIV and AIDS on civil society organisations is a relatively new area of development work. It is often referred to as internal mainstreaming of HIV and AIDS and has enjoyed very little attention from the development community. While much research is available for private sector institutions and many HIV workplace policies programmes have been developed for them almost no work has been done to understand or respond to the impact of HIV and AIDS on civil society organisations.

The programme is aimed at 'work[ing] with organisational leaders in four regions in KZN to understand and develop appropriate responses to the impact of HIV on civil society organisations', and is being delivered in to clusters of organisations Kwazulu Natal and the Eastern Cape. The programme is in its second phase of delivery – designed out of our direct



experience of working with a small group of organisations between 2002 and 2004.

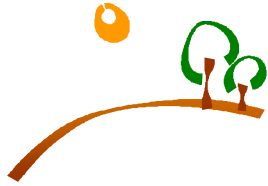
Work on this programme is ongoing but, several lessons have emerged:

- There is a need to work with whole organisations, not just leaders.
- We have to make a distinction between the types of organisations we work with and adjust our method accordingly – CBOs vs NGOs
- Practical responses with PE driving and supporting implementation
- Support needs vary widely – better to deliver in org than in workshops, unless common themes
- Policy is central, but not the only solution – has to be integrated into programme
- Issues for discussion
 - Role of policy
 - Reasonable accommodation
 - Leadership – style and practice
- Opportunity to share/practice

The programme work is ongoing and will complete in September 2006

Sustained Dialogue

This is not so much a programme as a method, Project Empower is beginning to explore to foster intersectoral cooperation in the delivery of HIV and AIDS related services to communities. The work is intended to bridge the gaps between Government, the private sector and civil society through long term committed engagements and discussion to resolve particular relationship problems that are impairing service delivery.



A particular area of concern is the often antagonistic and confrontational relations that exist at all levels of engagement from national policy to local relationships at facilities. HIV and AIDS are highly politicised issues and representatives often approach each other with mistrust.

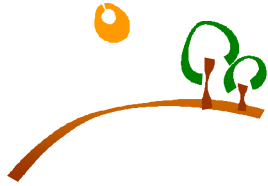
The intention of the dialogue is to provide informal, safe discussion spaces within which influential individuals can work together to build stronger relationships to effect improved service delivery to communities.

The following issues were discussed as being central to the problems the sector is dealing with :

Resourcing – Both the state and civil society is acting under immense resource constraints and the existing health system is inadequate in the face of normal primary health care needs and is straining under the load of HIV and AIDS. The civil society position is that poorly resourced civil society organisations are being coerced into supporting Government initiatives through promises of resources. Government on the other hand views formal NGOs as misusing resources directed at communities who are away from community based, grassroots organisations

Politicisation of HIV and AIDS - Individuals in the sectors are willing to cooperate and there is a need to move beyond political rhetoric – people who have an interest in change should be cooperating to prove that positive relationships are possible and yield significant benefit

Consistency in delivery - The response of DOH positions varies from facility to facility and even varies at an individual level within particular facilities. We have heard both positive and negative examples of cooperation between



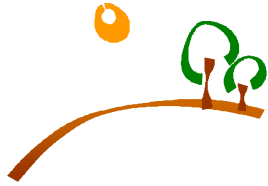
civil society organisations and the DoH. There does not seem to be a clear policy and that is creating negative perceptions and damaging the overall relationship.

Accountability and control - There is a strong need for mutual accountability and sharing between cooperating organisations. There is a strong concern that Government is co-opting civil society and the corporate sector to do their work for them. Government is seen as the primary provider of social services and should not shirk that responsibility. Civil society organisations respond to the call with some scepticism – adopting a wait and see attitude. It almost seem that they believe that even though the DoH officials express this view they are not being truthful and will revert to past behaviour. There are strong perceptions on the side of the DoH that many CSOs see HIV and AIDS as cash cows and that civil society does not show sufficient accountability

Learning

The need for a forum of this nature has been reinforced. There are however several significant changes that will need to be made in order to ensure that value can be gained. These include:

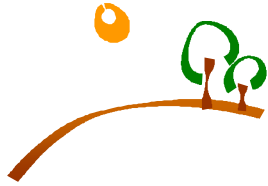
- Participating organisation have to commit, in advance, to allowing participation from their members. Extra effort has to be taken to ensure that their participation is consistent.
- There is a need to build a forum for civil society organisation to develop positions and discuss and share information of common concern
- The Department of Health is a bureaucracy and it is important that participants be drawn from as high up in the bureaucratic chain as possible.



- Extra effort has to be taken to ensure that information from the discussions is taken back into the organisations.
- Information dissemination should not be a mandate of participating organisations only.
- A core group of participants needs to be involved in all discussions – other interested parties can be invited in as they are needed
- The dialogue possibly has its most practical application at a community level
- The dialogue needs to be directed towards action and producing tangible results
- The Dialogue is a time consuming and labour intensive. It requires a dedicated person to manage and facilitate relationships. A full time project coordinator would be required if the partnership project is agreed to.
- The Dialogue is ideally suited to building local (community level) cooperation. Community based moderators should be trained to facilitate ongoing processes.
- Information does not filter back through to civil society organisations generally. Effort has to be expended in building a unified civil society position or, at the least, an forums have to be established to which information can be brought and in which issues can be debated and discussed.

Other projects

In addition to the scheduled programme work we were also involved in additional short term project work. This included:



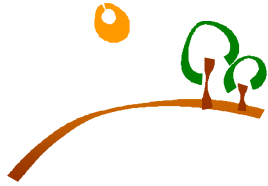
Needs assessment for Diakonia Sweden partners – Project Empower conducted a needs assessment and made recommendations for a programme for Diakonia Sweden partners organisations to respond to HIV in the workplace (internal mainstreaming). We are in the process of negotiating a contract to deliver the programme. This work provided Project Empower with the opportunity to further refine the programme “Building HIV positive organisations”. The process has been documented and will be published later in 2006.

CinDI youth workshop – A group of young people were guided through a reflection on HIV in their lives in preparation for them to present at a conference to be held in June 2006.

AMAG Workshop – The African Microbicides Advocacy Group (AMAG) held their strategic planning workshop in Durban and Project Empower was contracted to facilitate the process.

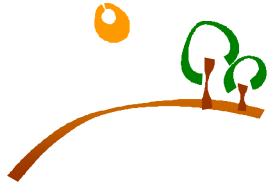
Sexual Health Exchange – Project Empower was invited by the Dutch organisation, Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), to guest edit their publication Sexual Health Exchange. The quarterly magazine with the theme ‘Internal mainstreaming’ was published in December 2005.

NCA Workshop – In October 2005 Project Empower facilitated a three day process for Norwegian church Aids’s partners from the national church councils in the Southern Africa region. The aim of the workshop was to “... *understand how the National Church Councils’ (NCC) HIV/AIDS programmes have been implemented, what impacts are being seen and to see how these can be adapted to ensure that individual congregation benefit from the NCC programmes*”



Annual Report – 2005/2006

NDA Capacity building – Project Empower in partnership with OLIVE ODT and the Centre for Public Participation (CPP) are involved in ongoing discussions with the National Development Agency in Kwazulu Natal to define a capacity building programme for community based organisations in the province.



Organisational development

Strategic planning

Our strategic planning process was facilitated by Ronnie Pieterse in February 2006. The documents from the strategic planning are being reviewed and finalized.

Staff training

- OLIVE ODT Facilitator Development Programme

Conference/Workshop Participation

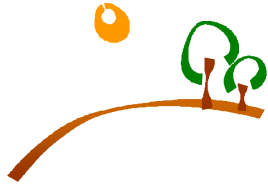
- All staff attended the National AIDS Conference in Durban in June 2005
- Mpumali participated Africa Youth Network strategic planning workshop in Johannesburg in January 2006

Board

A number of Board members have been replaced after resignations and the Board's term expiring. The new Board members are:

- Jerome van Schalkwyk
- Nyami Mbhele
- Tracey Semple
- Steffen Wiese

We would like to welcome them to Project Empower and thank them for the meaningful contribution they have already made to our organisation.



Annual Report – 2005/2006

The last year has seen Project Empower consolidate some of its programmes and also beginning to explore variations on the work we have gained significant experience and insight into. We find ourselves at an important point in our journey: at the point where we must consider the long term future of an organisation that is under tremendous pressure scale up and expand our work. It is a point that presents us with many exciting opportunities, but also brings with it several challenges that we must consider very carefully.

With rapid growth comes the risk of losing our agility and responsiveness. We run the risk of losing our connection to communities and the issues as they are emerging there - our 'relevance' could be affected as we become more bound by delivery pressures and less concerned with the needs of the people we work with.

Expanding our work would mean increasing the number of staff which will have consequences for our organisational systems, culture, budgets, etc. This will impact on programme delivery as significantly more management resources will be required.

Project Empower has chosen to take the cautious approach. We will over the next few months allow our programmes to dictate the pace and the direction of the organisations expansion. New staff, new programme areas, the adoption of new policy – all of these will be assessed and responded to through processes and at a pace that project Empower is comfortable with.

We should not expand because we can, we should expand because there is a need to.