RECOGNISING THE POWER OF PEOPLE IN HIV AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS RESPONSES
“IF IT DOESN’T HAPPEN IN THE COMMUNITY IT JUST DOESN’T HAPPEN!
WHEN IT HAPPENS IN OUR COMMUNITIES THEN IT HAPPENS IN THE NATION!”

—DR MIRIAM WERE
Southern Africa is a place of resilience. Of strong people and vibrant communities. It’s a place where multi-party democracy, though not yet deep rooted, allows increasing numbers of people to elect their leaders and to begin to hold them accountable. The region has recently experienced reasonable economic growth and its youth increasingly joins the global connectivity and peer-to-peer information and communication exchanges.

Sadly, it also remains a region where ill health or the absence of wellness characterizes many of our communities and undermines development. We remain with the highest HIV prevalence in the world, with 68% of all people living with HIV globally and 70% of new global infections. Youth access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive knowledge, health and rights remains extremely limited. There is also a shameful lack of attention to and investment in women’s health in general as evidenced, among other factors, by an estimated 35 million women in sub-Saharan Africa having their need for family planning unmet, and over a quarter of a million maternal deaths every year.

The frameworks for addressing these issues through community health have been well defined globally over the last few decades and continentally more recently. Alma Ata in 1978 called for actions in economic, social and health rights; the 1986 Ottawa Charter speaks to community needs and actions and the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health in 2012 speaks to health goals at local, national, regional and international levels. The latter also reminds political leaders that the promotion of health equity is essential to sustainable development and to a better quality of life and well being for all.

Continently, the African Youth Charter of the African Union declares the right of every young person to enjoy the best attainable state of physical, mental and spiritual health, including design and access to youth-friendly reproductive health services, including contraceptives. The African Common Position on the post-2015 development agenda lays out common goals for universal and equitable access to quality healthcare and gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Despite these many commitments and declarations, the specifics of health at community level are more contested now than ever before. Key issues in contest include sexual health and rights; structural and cultural drivers of HIV; the status of women and their access to their own health and rights; sexuality and diversity and truly universal access without discrimination on any grounds; harm reduction; the right of positive youth to healthy sexual lives and the right of positive women to have children.

Yet communities hold the potential to build and strengthen their own systems of health. Community activism in southern Africa has a long tradition of positive impact. With inspired leadership, including that of women, youth, people living with HIV, and LGBTI community members, it will continue to play a major role in strengthening national and regional post-2015 systems of health; strengthening them into rights-driven, transparent, accountable, results-oriented, sustainable partnerships between people and services.

More and more people and institutions – from the very powerful to the often silent – are coming to believe in the power of communities to understand and act on their own health needs. Strengthened community systems for sexual and reproductive health and rights, including HIV, are strengthening communities themselves across southern Africa and across the globe.

Professor Miriam Were, an inspiration to many people in the region, often says, “If it doesn’t happen in the community, it just doesn’t happen.” We looked across the world for those who might support this sentiment. These pages give expression to particular viewpoints and thoughts that we hope will support and energize communities and those who support communities. We bring these to you to further the dialogue on the centrality of communities to the post-2015 world of development.

We hope to persuade you that community matters.

Yours Sincerely

Jonathan Gunthorp

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Southern African AIDS Trust (SAT)
December 2012
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For me, the most interesting thing happening right now in the world is that hope is coming back. For scientists, hope is not measurable, therefore they tend to ignore it, but it is my experience after more than 40 years in this field that when people have hope, they generate interest and go on to measurable achievements.

In applying the politics of hope to health promotion, I make the point that this is not such firebrand information – it’s actually implied in the UN Charter, which was written after the Second World War and yet encourages us to work together in the spirit of brotherhood towards the advancement of all people.

Further, the WHO definition of health is wonderfully broad. I have tried to show that we had the right aspirations, the right goals, all the way 60 years back. But what we don’t have is the commitment to move them on and we are more discouraged by our problems than encouraged by our potential. We actually have the potential to get there, especially if we work with communities. For if it doesn’t happen in the community it just doesn’t happen! When it happens in our communities then it happens in the nation!

Now that we have so many wonderful case studies, what we need to do is to do big things – big things, with large populations – so that we can get critical mass and there we can bring about visible change. If we in health promotion can do that, I think it would help everyone to get mobilised, because they will see that this is possible. Get involved.

So, my challenge is big change: Big things. Big populations. Visible change that can invite; that can accelerate, and excite all of us! I mean I’m over 70 now and I’m still excited when I think of these things.

“IF IT DOESN’T HAPPEN IN THE COMMUNITY IT JUST DOESN’T HAPPEN! WHEN IT HAPPENS IN OUR COMMUNITIES THEN IT HAPPENS IN THE NATION!”

Miriam Were is a Kenyan medical doctor and co-founder of the Uzima Foundation. Dr Were is former World Health Organisation Representative and recipient of the First Hideyo Noguchi Africa Prize and The Queen Elizabeth II Gold Medal for Public Health.
I believe that every institution and every leader, everywhere, must ask that same question: Are we listening? Are we doing enough, fast enough?

I am convinced that we must act now. We face a once-in-a-generation opportunity to empower people in our changing world. Today, I want to focus on providing women and young people with a greater say in their own destiny and a greater stake in their own dignity. This is fundamental to our entire agenda – crucial to everything we do.

All of us – women and men, the young and what I might call the ‘formerly young’ – have a profound interest in getting this right. Half the world is women – and half the world is under 25 years of age. One out of five people is between the ages of 15 and 24. Nearly 90 percent of them – youth – live in developing countries. Nearly one billion live in Asia and Africa.

Some demographers call this a ‘youth bulge’. I am not a big fan of that term. I do not see the largest-ever generation of young people as a ‘bulge’. It is a dividend. It is not a threat; it is an opportunity. To seize it, we must face a new generation of empowerment challenges.

We should focus more, as we have been doing on women, on youth, young people. Window dressing will not do it. Neither will politically expedient band-aids. Let me tell you what I mean.

Not long ago, a head of state called on the United Nations to establish an International Year of Youth. He claimed he wanted young people to make their voices heard. The bad news is that the leader was President Ben Ali of Tunisia. The good news is, it worked!

A few months into the International Year of Youth, he heard the voice of his country’s young people – started by Mohamed Bouazizi, a jobless, frustrated and troubled young person, who started the outpouring of these burning aspirations of young people. What happened to President Ben Ali? He was forced to leave office because he listened too late.

But, once again, we are reminded that we all have an obligation to listen. That is what I do: I try to meet with young people wherever I go. Those exchanges are some of the toughest, most candid, spirited discussions that I have. Young people everywhere talk jobs. They want the dignity that comes from decent work. Economic hard times and austerity measures are making it more difficult. Young people also tell me that they not only want jobs – but the opportunity to create jobs. So we must do more on entrepreneurship. Without urgent measures to stem the rising tide of youth unemployment, we risk creating a ‘lost generation’ of wasted opportunities and squandered potential.

Economic empowerment and political empowerment go hand in hand. Technology, education and awareness are combining to give young people a voice like never before. And they are using it. They are standing up for rights and against discrimination based on gender, race and sexual orientation. They are leading the way for sustainable solutions and green development. They are putting inequality on the global agenda.

Our job is to help them build the future they want. Above all, young people have told
me they want a seat at the table. They want a real voice in shaping the policies that shape their future. The priorities of young people should be just as prominent in our halls as they are on the streets and squares. They should be just as present in our meeting space as they are in cyberspace.

Too often our work has been piecemeal, scattered. The whole is not greater than the sum of the parts. There is a coordination gap. It must be bridged.

We need a top-to-bottom review so our programmes and policies are working with and for young people.

We have a choice. Young people can be embraced as partners in shaping their societies, or they can be excluded and left to simmer in frustration and despair. Let us recognise that addressing the needs and hopes of the world’s women and young people is not simply an act of solidarity, it is an act of necessity.

We don’t have a moment to lose. We have the world to gain.

“ABOVE ALL, YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TOLD ME THEY WANT A SEAT AT THE TABLE. THEY WANT A REAL VOICE IN SHAPING THE POLICIES THAT SHAPE THEIR FUTURE. THE PRIORITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE JUST AS PROMINENT IN OUR HALLS AS THEY ARE ON THE STREETS AND SQUARES. THEY SHOULD BE JUST AS PRESENT IN OUR MEETING SPACE AS THEY ARE IN CYBERSPACE.”
Sometimes along the road to a better life, when we are faced with difficulties, when we stumble and fall, it is all too easy to despair and give up.

But when one hears of how our communities are joining hands to create a better life for themselves and those around them, then we regain the strength to meet whatever difficulties there may be.

Fundamental to the success of all our efforts at reconstruction and development are community action and participation. As we face the challenge of meeting our people’s basic needs with limited resources, those who roll up their sleeves and take the initiative to uplift their conditions in the spirit of Masakhane, and in partnership with others, set an example for all of us to follow.

That was why the government decided to set up the President’s Award for Community Initiative. It allows us, as a nation, to honour communities that act in this way and together celebrate what they have done.

The enthusiasm and determination with which South Africans are rebuilding their country are there for all to see in the number and the quality of projects nominated for these awards. All around this country, out of the headlines, people are joining hands in partnerships which spur development.

If they are to succeed they must – as those represented here have done – achieve much from few resources, find the path to sustainable creation of jobs and self-sufficiency, develop new skills and involve their communities. None of our plans can succeed without such efforts. Government on its own cannot provide what is needed, nor should it try to do so.

The function of government and parliament is to serve the people, by ensuring the conditions under which communities and every sector of society can work together with government to achieve the goals we have set ourselves as a nation …

Together we have made a good start. Let us work together to build the country of our dreams!

Excerpt from Nelson Mandela’s speech at the awards ceremony for the President’s Award for Community Initiative on 5 February 1998.

Equally important is the emphasis … on participation by communities in their own upliftment; and on building the capacity of our local authorities to work with national and provincial government to meet the needs of communities … It touches my heart to see how ordinary men and women have seized the chance that democracy brings to participate actively in shaping and building these projects. In doing so you are not only building assets for your communities and for your children. You are also building our nation and making a living reality of democracy by bringing government closer to the people it serves. This programme has already clearly strengthened this spirit of partnership on which the future of our country must be built.

Excerpt from Nelson Mandela’s speech on the Rural Anti-Poverty Programme on 13 October 1998.
However good the policies of the government are, national or provincial, nothing will come of them without the active participation of each and every one of us. Our democracy will become a living reality and a force for transformation only when communities become involved, calling their elected representatives to account, voicing their needs and their ideas for improving things, and paying for services.

Our shared vision of a non-racial society will be realised through bold and conscious action by communities and councils to deraicalise our towns and cities so that they reflect the character of the rainbow nation we are building.

The response to the renewed Masakhane Campaign encourages us to believe that communities and councils are indeed joining hands in order to repair the tattered fabric of our society.

Friends, as our new nation matures the challenges we face are shifting to the provinces and the localities in which we live. The call now on each and every one of us as we enter our fourth freedom year is to roll up our sleeves.

Let us build on what has been achieved, for the sake of unity, peace and prosperity...

The foundation for a better life has been laid – forward ever!

Excerpt from Nelson Mandela’s address at the South African Freedom Day Celebrations on 27 April 1997.

“FUNDAMENTAL TO THE SUCCESS OF ALL OUR EFFORTS AT RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT IS COMMUNITY ACTION AND PARTICIPATION”
The African proverb 'It takes a village to raise a child' summed up for me the commonplace conclusion that, like it or not, we are living in an interdependent world where what our children hear, see, feel, and learn will affect how they grow up and who they turn out to be. There is probably no more important task parents – and the rest of the village – face than raising children not only to tolerate but to respect the differences among people, and to recognise the rewards that come from serving others. I call this affirmative living: the positive energy we derive from taking pride in who we are and from having the confidence and moral grounding to reach out to those who are different.
Michel Sidibé
ON WHY UNAIDS AND COMMUNITIES NEED EACH OTHER

Michel Sidibé is Executive Director of UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and Under-Secretary-General of the UN.

My commitment to transform UNAIDS into a results-oriented organisation and to support countries to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals, is driven by our drive to empower human communities all over the world.

Every day I am seeing real change and the perseverance of the human spirit in difficult times.

This has renewed my commitment to push myself, the organisation and the world for even more results.

“Every day I am seeing real change and the perseverance of the human spirit in difficult times”
We are made for goodness. We are made for love. We are made for friendliness. We are made for togetherness. We are made for all of the beautiful things that you and I know. We are made to tell the world that there are no outsiders. All are welcome: black, white, red, yellow, rich, poor, educated, not educated, male, female, gay, straight, all, all, all. We all belong to this family, this human family, God’s family.

One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu – the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can’t exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can’t be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality – Ubuntu – you are known for your generosity.

We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity.

A person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings.

We need other human beings in order to be human. I am because other people are. A person is entitled to a stable community life, and the first of these communities is the family. Differences are not intended to separate, to alienate. We are different precisely in order to realise our need of one another.

Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones is not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing.

We were made to enjoy music, to enjoy beautiful sunsets, to enjoy looking at the billows of the sea and to be thrilled with a rose that is bedecked with dew... Human beings are actually created for the transcendent, for the sublime, for the beautiful, for the truthful... and all of us are given the task of trying to make this world a little more hospitable to these beautiful things.

We call on the international community, which was so tremendous in its fight against another epidemic, apartheid, to show the same commitment to deal with TB and HIV/AIDS. We have frequently gone into denial when faced with unpleasant, unpalatable facts (like AIDS) and now we are hearing from governments in Africa that they are not going into denial but that they are facing up to a horrendous situation forthwith.
Successful prevention needs strong leadership at all levels to bring HIV out of the shadows, to encourage people to make responsible choices, and to drive interventions which will meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

Presidents, prime ministers, ministers and parliamentarians; community and faith leaders; village elders; businesses; women’s, civil society and youth organisations – all have roles to play. So too do sexual partners to make sure that they practise safe sex, and fathers, husbands and sons who support and affirm the rights of women and girls in families and communities.

People with HIV are our most important partners in prevention, especially those in couples where only one person is infected. Tackling the epidemic requires having frank and honest discussions about topics which may make some people uncomfortable. It requires getting rid of the stigma and discrimination which fuel the epidemic, and partnering with those groups living with HIV or vulnerable to infection, so that we can focus resources where they are needed and on measures that have been proven to work.

Sustainable development does not occur in the abstract in global fora; it must be built, brick by brick, in countries and communities.
After reviewing the progress of 83 countries covered by the OECD Paris Agenda Monitoring Survey, I was asked to identify the three main things aid organisations can do today to deliver assistance more effectively.

Most important is to recognise that the so-called ‘aid effectiveness’ agenda is not necessarily related to change on the ground for poor people. Which is not to say that it isn’t important. But we have to get politics back into a predominantly technical agenda if we are going to ensure equitable and sustainable change.

Second, accountability is the be-all and end-all. Not only between governments, but from government to citizen. We have seen too many examples of apparent progress, particularly when measured in purely economic terms, which is anything but for the people who pay the cost for a one-sided view of ‘development’.

And third, recognise that aid is only a small part of what the international community needs to do to defend the rights of the marginalised. It is great that so many groups are now looking ‘beyond aid’ – the future of development will be about correctly discerning new threats and responding imaginatively and powerfully. Aid agencies need to become solidarity agencies.

Christian Aid already had a great programme in Colombia, with intelligent staff and partners who were close to marginalised communities. As Country Manager, I just had to make sure that amid the clamour for results and evaluations (which I totally support if done sensibly) we didn’t lose sight of the political nature of our work. It is not just about numbers of beneficiaries, it is about empowerment of communities, so that they can respond to an unknown future.

Our partners said to us, “Of course your money is useful, but more important is your solidarity, your international network, and your experience.” Foreigners have a huge role to play in supporting the development of poor communities, but only when we enter the equation humbly, willing to learn as well as confident of what we have to share. I visited Colombia again recently and the programme is still going strong, defending poor communities against attempts to grab their land.

“IT IS NOT JUST ABOUT NUMBERS OF BENEFICIARIES, IT IS ABOUT EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITIES, SO THAT THEY CAN RESPOND TO AN UNKNOWN FUTURE”
STEPHEN LEWIS
GRANDMOTHERS FORM THE CORE OF COMMUNITY-BASED CARE
Let me start with a small piece of history. In 2006, Ilana Landsberg-Lewis first raised with me the question of the grandmothers of Africa. She and her Foundation colleagues argued that more and more often, orphan children were being looked after by their African grandmothers, and yet next to nothing was being done for the grandmothers themselves. From that innocent beginning there emerged, first, the astonishingly moving and successful grandmothers’ gathering at the outset of the International AIDS Conference in Toronto in 2006, followed by an explosion of solidarity between African and Canadian grandmothers, now growing irresistibly into a mass international social movement.

In the interim, we’ve learned a lot; the entire HIV/AIDS movement has learned a lot.

We’ve learned that African grandmothers are the backbone of the continent. We’ve learned that African grandmothers form the core of community-based care. We’ve learned that African grandmothers will sacrifice their very lives to protect and nurture their orphan grandchildren. We’ve learned that African grandmothers are generous beyond belief. We’ve learned that African grandmothers, in several countries, care for between 40% and 60% of all orphan children, amounting to several million in total. We’ve learned that Africa could not survive without its grandmothers.

AIDS has cut a terrible swathe through Africa. For some inexplicable reason, Africa was not prepared for the monumental numbers of orphans left behind. It is as though the death of parents somehow occurred in a vacuum, as though the children would somehow survive on their own.

But of course they couldn’t. And the community structures and the family structures were so devastated by the pandemic that children faced separation, isolation, child-headed households: it felt like abandonment.

But there then emerged – suddenly, almost miraculously, magnificently – one solid wall of protection, a wall so strong that it withstood all the misfortune heaped on the orphans of Africa. It was the wall of grandmothers. You couldn’t penetrate it. You couldn’t destroy it. It stands today as the protective embrace for the orphan children of the continent.

We’ve entered a tough time in the annals of AIDS. Donor governments are cutting back, both the Global Fund and PEPFAR are short on money, second-line drugs are often too expensive for governments to afford… uneasy days lie ahead. Given all of that, the best strategy would seem to be to focus determinedly on community-based, grassroots work. And that brings us back to the grandmothers: they are the community.
I have done a lot of practical epidemiology and anthropology, living in remote villages with people and realising how difficult it is to get out of poverty. When in poverty, people use their skills to avoid hunger. They can’t use them for progress. To get away from poverty, you need several things at the same time: schooling, health and infrastructure – those are the public investments. And on the other side, you need market opportunities, information, employment and human rights.

Data allow your political judgements to be based on fact, to the extent that numbers describe realities. The improvement of the world must be highly contextualised, and it’s not relevant to have it on regional level. We must be much more detailed. We need data at a sub-national level in order to make informed decisions. The goals are paradise, freedom, equality, wealth and happiness. Get the means in order, and the goals will follow.

We know kids should go to school – make it possible. I asked a minister of health in a poor country how their children could be so relatively healthy in spite of the low economic level? She replied, “Grandmothers can read.” Getting girls into school – we think that makes a girl healthier five years later. But the impact continues throughout life and school makes her a better grandmother 45 years later.

“THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE WORLD MUST BE HIGHLY CONTEXTUALISED, AND IT’S NOT RELEVANT TO HAVE IT ON REGIONAL LEVEL”
Sheila Tlou is director of the UNAIDS Regional Support Team for East and Southern Africa. Dr Tlou is former minister of health of the Republic of Botswana, where she spearheaded the country’s highly effective AIDS programme.

Having done research and taught courses to a variety of medical and community groups on ageing, gender issues in HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health and rights, I remain convinced that educating key people in communities empowers them to increase community awareness of health issues in general, and the gender dimension of the AIDS response in particular. For sustained development, we need to change our mindsets; change needs total community participation. Let us all contribute to empowering and to celebrating community groups that actively seek to be informed and to be active participants in development.

“Celebrating community groups that actively seek to be informed and to be active participants in development”
“IF YOU GIVE PEOPLE TOOLS AND THEY USE THEIR NATURAL ABILITY AND THEIR Curiosity, THEY WILL DE velop THINGS IN WAYS THAT WILL SURPRISE YOU”
In the past 50 years, the world has made amazing progress on a host of quality of life indicators. Fewer children are dying. More are getting educated. The number of poor people is shrinking. The number of people with access to proper nutrition is growing. In short, the investments the world has been making in development are having a big impact, and there is potential for more – as long as we continue our investments.

The key to fulfilling that potential for greater impact is innovation. We can be innovative about how we finance development, so that we generate new money from sources we haven’t tapped before. We can also be innovative about creating new interventions that will multiply our impact. By inventing new higher-yielding seeds and vaccines for more diseases, or new ways of reaching the poorest, we can stretch each dollar spent on development so that it makes a bigger difference in people’s lives. We are especially enthusiastic about the role that countries like Brazil, China and India can play, because they are innovating rapidly in their own countries and can apply that expertise to the challenges poorer countries face.

If you give people tools and they use their natural ability and their curiosity, they will develop things in ways that will surprise you very much beyond what you might have expected.

Over the last few years, we’ve worked to spread the word about the successes of foreign aid. Too often people think it’s ineffective or wasted money, when the data suggests just the opposite. It works, and has improved the well-being of the world’s poor in many concrete ways.

The world has achieved a lot in poverty reduction, death reduction, literacy increase, dealing with disease and we are getting smarter about these things…
James Martin
On the Need to Shift from Centralised Decision-Making

Central planners do not, and cannot, use all the dispersed information embodied in millions of individuals. Instead, they try to compress individuals into formulas and use far less information than that which animates the actual economy. Friedrich Hayek, the Nobel laureate economist, demonstrated that central planners inevitably have to disregard knowledge that is vitally significant to the real world. The solution to this is to design a system that lets the public decide what it wants and support this with appropriate mechanisms. It has been difficult to explain to power hungry bureaucrats that the best government may be a shift from centralised decision-making to marketplace decision-making.

A powerful form of decentralised control is to allow participants to use not only their knowledge but their creative initiative. If you were in a rubber raft rushing into intense white-water turbulence, you wouldn’t want a slow centralised bureaucracy controlling the raft. You’d want excellent training so that you could control it yourself; that’s the only sure way to survive.

The change from central control to local control means that large numbers of participants become trained in how to control the raft. Humankind is heading into a time with two momentum trends: growing complexity and increasing rates of change. In a world with these two characteristics, central control becomes increasingly unworkable. The environment will have to be designed so that localised units with skill and initiative call the shots.

“THE SOLUTION TO THIS IS TO DESIGN A SYSTEM THAT LETS THE PUBLIC DECIDE WHAT IT WANTS AND SUPPORT THIS WITH APPROPRIATE MECHANISMS”
Babatunde Osotimehin
PUT THE PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE

The issue of population is critical for humanity and for the Earth. But population is not just about numbers; it’s about people; it’s about equity, opportunity and social justice. In any country you go to, from the developed to the developing, the questions of equitable access to resources and opportunities always confront us. From the Arab Spring to the sit-ins on Wall Street, the people are demanding change. Many of them are young, part of the largest youth generation our world has ever known, and they are determined to transform politics, culture and the economy in their own societies and to create a better world.

Forging closer partnerships between the sexual and reproductive health and HIV communities, including with networks of people living with HIV, is essential to reap greater sustainable benefits. We at UNFPA continue to emphasise that people and the principle of equity must be kept at the centre of sustainable development. It means recognising the need to invest in women and young people – part of their nations’ human capital – and promoting human rights. It means increasing equity to build a world of opportunity for all.

“FORGING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND HIV COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING WITH NETWORKS OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV, IS ESSENTIAL TO REAP GREATER SUSTAINABLE BENEFITS”
KOFI ANNAN
ON A CONTINENT OF COMMUNITIES: HOW LARGE POLITICS SHOULD THINK SMALL

In an age where community involvement and partnerships with civil society are increasingly being recognised as indispensable, there is clearly a growing potential for cooperative development and renewal worldwide.

Tolerance, intercultural dialogue and respect for diversity are more essential than ever in a world where people are becoming more and more closely interconnected.

People of different religions and cultures live side by side in almost every part of the world, and most of us have overlapping identities that unite us with very different groups. We can love what we are without hating what – and who – we are not. We can thrive stable and no one’s prosperity truly secure. That applies to national societies – as all the great industrial democracies learned in the 20th century – but it also applies to the increasingly integrated global market economy we live in today.

It is not realistic to think that some people can go on deriving great benefits from globalisation while billions of their fellow human beings are left in abject poverty or even thrown into it. We have to give our fellow citizens, not only within each nation but in the global community, at least a chance to share in our prosperity.

The fact is that states can no longer – if they ever could – confront global challenges alone. Increasingly, we need to enlist the help of these other actors, both in working out global strategies and in putting those strategies into action once agreed.

Today, no walls can separate humanitarian or human rights crises in one part of the world from national security crises in another. What begins with the failure to uphold the dignity of one life all too often ends with a calamity for entire nations.

“We must put people at the centre of everything we do”

In our own tradition, even as we learn from others and come to respect their teachings.

No shift in the way we think or act is more critical than this: we must put people at the centre of everything we do. That is the essence of human security.

Global solidarity is both necessary and possible. It is necessary because without a measure of solidarity, no society can be truly

One of the most used concepts in policy discussions and social science over the last several decades is ‘social capital’. Social capital refers to the value of social networks and to the trustworthiness and reciprocity that arise from these networks that encourage us to do things for each other. When neighbours informally keep an eye on one another’s homes, when a community of Hassidic Jews trade diamonds without having to test each gem for purity, when friends help one another find jobs, or when e-mail exchanges raise the morale of members of an online cancer group, we can see social capital in action.

Furthermore, social capital (joining a club or spending time with friends, for example) has clear, positive health benefits. For example, participating in a single civic group cuts your odds of dying over the next year in half. Joining two groups cuts it by three quarters. Social isolation is as big a risk factor for premature death as smoking.

Social capital is also important to community health, including educational outcomes and crime prevention. In the United States, places with high social capital (compared to matched places with low social capital) have lower rates of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Connecting with friends, neighbours, and our fellow citizens is good for us, good for them, and good for the entire community.
Noam Chomsky
Can communities create their own narratives over the global noise?

Communities not only can ‘create their own narrative over the global noise’, but have often done so. There are many examples, including worker-owned (and sometime worker-managed) enterprises that function with community involvement and support; peace communities in Colombia that have sought to extricate themselves from the brutal military–paramilitary regime and guerrilla forces – a prerequisite for independent development; communities that have recognised the severe threat of environmental catastrophe and have taken significant steps to confront it locally; and many others.

Such cases, which abound, reveal how it is possible to construct some elements of a future, more decent society within the existing one – even under conditions of severe repression – much more easily when some fundamental freedoms have been established by popular struggle.

If such initiatives reach sufficient scale, and can find ways to integrate, cooperate and provide mutual support, they can reach a stage where large-scale social revolution becomes a feasible prospect – optimally non-violent – though questions arise about self-defence if existing power systems resort to violent repression. These are opportunities that lie within reach, and should be pursued in many ways.
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is the 24th president of Liberia and the first elected female head of state in Africa. She is a joint winner of a Nobel Peace Prize.

Many times people talk about my own election as the first female president in Liberia and Africa. But we were able to do this because of women.

During the 2005 presidential elections and the run-off, women took this as a challenge and as a goal. The women spearheaded a door-to-door campaign, and a sensitisation programme among market women. They took the responsibility to talk to their children, our nation being so young. Our victory was really due to women’s self-empowerment.

Because the women are so anxious to get ahead, because they’re willing to be a part of society, and because they want me as a woman to succeed, they go beyond the extra mile. So you see these women breaking rocks – you know, huge rocks that they use to be able to ensure that the roads have gravel – and some of them have begun to so excel that they’ve become the supervisors.

And the good part is that they are proud of doing that, because when you talk to them they feel that, now, they’re a true stakeholder in their society. Now, they can take the position.

“The women spearheaded a door-to-door campaign, and a sensitisation programme among market women. They took the responsibility to talk to their children, our nation being so young”
To reach the ambitious targets of eliminating new HIV infections among children by 2015, and keeping mothers, children and families living with HIV alive and well, we will need to innovate at all levels. A core element of innovation should be a radical expansion of the engagement of communities in service delivery and demand creation.

Since the beginning of the epidemic, the strength and participation of communities is what has set the response to HIV apart from others. When this all began, 30 years ago, communities were quick to get involved to protect and care for one another. It is time to ‘systematically’ link health and community systems to improve the health and well-being of mothers and their children, and the communities they live in. An AIDS-free generation is within sight.

“IT IS TIME TO ‘SYSTEMATICALLY’ LINK HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SYSTEMS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN, AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY LIVE IN”
Navanethem Pillay
On Human Rights and Freedom in a Global Community
The first time that I entered a judge’s chambers was when I entered my own, in my home country South Africa, having been denied the right to do so before the end of apartheid. My nomination by former President Nelson Mandela as the first non-white woman to serve on the High Court of South Africa opened doors for many others like me, people who were groomed by their communities to contribute to awareness about human rights.

Having grown up in a poor neighbourhood of Durban, South Africa, I learned to appreciate the role of communities in bringing-up their young ones and developing them into responsible citizens. This experience served me well, as it prepared me to appreciate working with people from different backgrounds. In a world where travel, information sharing and communication have been made much easier and instant through modern technology, we are all increasingly linked to one another as one big global community and multinational chains of solidarity around common issues get created and acted upon within short periods of time.

Increasingly, communities have become both vigilant and active in carrying their own torch for safeguarding human rights. Since the early days of the HIV epidemic, people living with and affected by HIV have demanded that their human rights be respected and protected and in so doing have made significant gains in increasing access to HIV services. People from all walks of life with aspirations for a life of dignity, tolerance and respect have held their governments to account and have fought to achieve legal claims for those amongst us who are most marginalised and vulnerable to the epidemic.

Such an approach is consistent with the principles of equality and non-discrimination as well as the right to health and to an adequate standard of living as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments. The right to health is not about charity. The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health has become widely accepted as a fundamental human right, giving rise to obligations of the State as duty-bearer as well as entitlements for individuals and groups as rights-holders.

We must therefore recognise that human rights are central to any efforts to improve health, including for people living with HIV, and ensure that the most vulnerable and marginalised are engaged as active participants of change in decision-making processes that affect them. Without the guarantee of all human rights for all, no community and society can claim to be truly free. I pay tribute to all the courageous and formidable human rights defenders who have fought against discrimination and have sought to hold their governments to account to meet their right to health obligations. Their resilience and voice will be critical in sustaining positive gains and in realising the human right to health for all.
Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee and Esther Duflo

On Why Community Evidence is Not Always So Evident
The urge to reduce the poor to a set of clichés has been with us for as long as there has been poverty: the poor appear, in social theory as much as in literature, by turns lazy or enterprising, noble or thievish, angry or passive, helpless or self-sufficient. It is no surprise that the policy stances that correspond to these views of the poor also tend to be captured in simple formulas: ‘Free markets for the poor’, ‘Make human rights substantial’, ‘Deal with conflict first’, ‘Give more money to the poorest’, ‘Foreign aid kills development’, and the like.

These big ideas all have important elements of truth, but they rarely have much space for average poor women or men, with their hopes and doubts, limitations and aspirations, beliefs and confusion.

Community philanthropy should be a central feature in developing civil society and enhancing the effectiveness of development aid. Having local people involved as donors is a game-changer in efforts to build civil society and enhances the prospects of sustainability of external funding when the program ceases. If successful, community philanthropy also leads to more lasting, entrenched outcomes by increasing local ownership and local accountability.

A distinctive comparative advantage of community philanthropy is its ability to connect with hard-to-reach and marginalised populations within certain communities that other agencies cannot reach. There is some evidence that one of the reasons why aid is less effective than it might be is that it fails to get through to the grassroots where resources can drive local peoples’ images and enthusiasms for progressive social change. At the same time, one of the reasons why bottom-up efforts to develop progressive social change fail to gain traction is that activists do not connect with the mainstream agendas of development agencies and governments. This leads to a gap, so that development and government professionals and other people live in different worlds and fail to join together to develop effective programs.

There is an important agenda to begin to develop ways of bridging the gaps between top-down and bottom-up initiatives.
The discontent within communities has been a wake-up call for all of us in positions of leadership and decision-making. This groundswell of voices symbolising the prophetic ‘dream deferred’ has festered like an open sore for decades, and is now exploding across Africa. In the meantime, we became unwitting witnesses to the extraordinary tide of political events leading to revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and stirrings of discontent in other countries.

The pressures that have been building below the surface resulted from a volatile mixture of economic and social exclusion, youth unemployment, dissatisfaction with governance failures, and lack of democracy.

The economic growth Africa has experienced over the past decade has been insufficient, and too many individuals and communities have been excluded from it.

Growth is inclusive when it ensures opportunities and equal access to these opportunities. Growth in Africa, however, has been concentrated in a few sectors and geographical areas. Inequality has become more pronounced. Unless we find a way to promote inclusive growth, growth itself may become a source of instability.

The events in North Africa have made Donald Kaberuka, a Rwandan economist, is the president of the African Development Bank. He held the position of Rwanda’s minister of finance and economic planning for eight years, and is given credit for helping to salvage the country’s economy following the 1994 genocide.
visible the plight of Africa’s youth. Scores of young Africans are excluded from the labour market and formal economies. While access to education has expanded, those in possession of degrees often have even less prospect of finding gainful employment than those with no education.

In Tunisia, unemployment among young people between the ages of 23 and 29 years reached 47% in 2007. These are people with master’s in law, economics and management, who by rights should have expected a brighter future. In a world that has [been] shrunk by mass communications, Africa’s young people are very aware of how their counterparts in China, India and Brazil are surging ahead faster.

As Africa’s youth bulge will reach its height in the coming decades, these pressures will only intensify. Currently, young Africans are estimated to represent 60% of all the unemployed on the continent.

Promoting inclusive growth is a long-term development and an immediate political challenge that cannot be ignored. What we have seen in North Africa is the result of political systems that entrenched narrow elites in power, allowing them to pursue their own interests at the expense of the public. With no legitimate avenue for holding their representatives accountable, people have taken their grievances into the streets.

The conditions that ignited the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya can be found across Africa. The combination of the youth bulge and an inequitable growth path will intensify these pressures. Unless we craft a development agenda that addresses these grievances head-on, we face a social and political time bomb.

At the African Development Bank we know that inequality is first and foremost the result of unequal opportunities. Poverty is not only material and physical, but it is also about lack of voice, inability to influence governance, lack of empowerment and inability to hold our rulers accountable.

One image of African communities is of many households living close to or below the poverty line. A single misfortune, such as illness in the family, can push them further into poverty. Because they spend a high proportion of their income on basic needs, poor households are acutely vulnerable to shocks such as rising food prices. Climate change is adding to their vulnerability.

The African development process must not be owned by a handful of experts in government and elites in society. This disempowers those people it is intended to benefit. To create a positive political dynamic, we must ensure that African communities are able to hold their governments to account for development results. At the same time governments need to get closer to their communities, and minimise excessive centralisation.

African institutions too have a responsibility to support communities in their efforts to engender greater accountability of their leaders. I firmly believe that the time has come for all of us in positions of leadership to build on the momentum ignited by our youth of inclusion of all our voices in all decisions that affect us.
I have a wish, a big wish, that this way of working, this way of thinking, is going to be implemented in other countries.

There are plenty of countries at war like Afghanistan. It is possible and it is not difficult. All we have to do is to listen to the people that we are supposed to assist, to make them part of the decision-making process and then, of course, to adapt.

This is my big wish.

“ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS TO LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE THAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO ASSIST, TO MAKE THEM PART OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS”
The power of civil society organisations rests in their ability to connect local experience to national and international policy processes. I see them as creating ‘windows’ onto the sites of community initiative and service delivery that can be used to advocate for change and to show whether change is happening. I think that many NGOs fail to capitalise on this position: local organisations remain unconnected and quite disempowered, and national and international bodies often become disconnected from local realities.

Civil society organisations should be the ultimate ‘information entrepreneurs’. We’ve got to move beyond the static notions of evidence-based implementation research being fed into linear policy processes. The ‘brain circuitry’ of any civil society organisation should swing by local communities every time it thinks about policy and systems change!

I think that communities have the power to change their worlds and can have major influence beyond their communities if they become organised enough. Change requires both structural and cultural change — and the two reinforce each other.

Where communities are socially and economically marginalised, the day-to-day focus is subsistence survival, punctuated by expressions of helplessness and outrage in the form of service delivery protests. Where communities have a sense of aspiration and social cohesion, they develop a culture of innovation and avoid destructive risk. The Duke economist Anirudh Krishna refers to this as ‘active social capital’. It implies that communities are able to initiate and sustain positive change. It also implies that the interface between state services and communities becomes more dynamic, as people feel empowered to expect better services and to hold government to account. So structure is shaped by norms, and vice versa.

Local communities can build the sense of aspiration and cohesion that can improve their lives. It requires leadership and my experience is that there are incredible leaders in communities across South Africa. If these innovators were linked together across communities, I believe they could be powerful agents for broader public change. This is the basis for a new initiative called Activate!, where we have linked close to 300 young leaders together, drawn from communities across South Africa, to begin to influence national discussions. We hope to repeat this over the next two years, to have a powerful network of at least 1 000 activators, mainly drawn from marginalised communities and united in their commitment to the public good.

Connection is the key word. It’s been co-opted by those involved in nepotism and corruption, and it’s time we reclaimed it!
was born in a township in the small Northern Cape town of Douglas and have always been part of a community in the sense that I came from a large family. In the very first place the community is a social moderator that sets parameters for your conduct. At some point you start questioning those parameters, but afterwards the friendships and relationships you built in your community become your social fabric and support network.

Where middle-class people have overdraft facilities and credit cards, poor people have savings groups, financial intermediation and support. Poor people constantly lend money to one another, but it’s not just about money; it’s about the social fabric being woven. When you borrow from someone to take care of a sick child or a child going to university, you don’t only receive money, but advice and support as well. This in a sense is the bloodline of the community. I hope we never arrive at a point where this is not necessary any more; where we’ve become such a wealthy society that this is no longer required.

My daily reward is seeing poor people taking control of their lives, the pride with which they improve their houses, and the difference it makes. Nothing changes the kick of that. Housing builds confidence

OLIVIA VAN ROOYEN, 2010 ERNST & YOUNG SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR, IS THE DIRECTOR OF THE KUYASA FUND, A SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION THAT PROVIDES MICRO-FINANCE SERVICES TO POOR PEOPLE, IMPROVING THEIR HOUSING CONDITIONS AND CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES.
and broadens people’s horizons. It gives families a foundation; a sense of ownership and empowerment. In the context of HIV/AIDS, housing provides stability.

In the past apartheid created, and nowadays poverty creates, internal refugees. People arrive from rural areas to find informal housing in different areas, constantly moving from one to the other. Imagine living a life without an address? We cannot even begin to imagine the value of home ownership. In other countries poor people build with brick because they don’t believe they will be moving, but in South Africa they build with corrugated iron to allow for mobility. We simply have to break this cycle of impermanence.

A massive shift in governance would be if government starts asking what it can do to transform people into self-sufficient controllers of their own destiny. Which would be the tools of empowerment as opposed to the tools of delivery? The day government ceases to merely want to deliver will be the day it says to communities: “Here is what is available to you, these are the constraints; make your decisions within these constraints, and take responsibility for the compromises.”

In micro-finance, the best clients are those communities that don’t have any expectations of government. They are also excellent citizens as they don’t passively wait in the queue to receive delivery, but instead they say: “Thank you, government, I have what I need; now I’m taking control of this process.”

If we can, through social entrepreneurship, ensure that a large section of our development needs are funded and supported commercially, we’ll be able to significantly start rolling back poverty.

If I were to stand in front of the United Nations tomorrow, I’d tell them this story: One morning, it must have been the 22nd or 23rd of the month, I was combing my daughter’s hair for school. She was most uncooperative and I was thinking of what I would still like to buy for the household, but then I remembered that I couldn’t, because I had to wait until I was paid. As I was becoming increasingly irritated with my stubborn daughter, she switched on the television and we saw Israel bombing Lebanon. Then it dawned upon me. There I was with my most mundane problems, and somewhere in Lebanon there was a parent who perhaps also had mundane problems a week ago. That was until some powerful, rich and inconsiderate people made decisions that changed her life story. Maybe her uncooperative child was lying dead now.

I think if powerful people just understood the consequences of their decisions, it would change the world. People want to worry about the mundane, like being on time for soccer or choir practice. Relative political stability gives communities the space to deal with their mundane. Strong communities are not built through powerful civic meetings, mass rallies or protests. They are built by the soccer club and the choir practice and the prayer meeting, because that is what really matters to people.
The first step to counter the ever-increasing social ills that ravage poor communities is to provide them with knowledge, because knowledge is power. Yet without social agencies to do this in a coherent and systematic way, knowledge is impotent.

Because poor communities are bereft of this capacity, outreach programmes by inspired institutions and people hold the key. I have in my lifetime come to have the highest regard for interventionist initiatives that make communities aware of their latent ability to help themselves while employing whatever resources are available, including knowledge.

Where this happens, communities discover their power and through this recognition more power is engendered, which largely explains why certain communities are buoyant, even flourishing, and others not. It is education that gives people the courage to rise above their circumstances. For sure it works.

“Communities discover their power and through this recognition more power is engendered.”
GBTI communities have been rendered invisible to the point of being virtual because of legal, moral, religious and societal barriers that prevent LGBTI persons from openly claiming not only their own identities, but also their own social spaces and associations. Adding to their invisibility is the very diverse nature of the LGBTI community, that makes it difficult to delimit and define, compounded by its own resistance to the prejudice of broader society.

Indeed there is widespread ignorance about LGBTI persons and the issues that affect them. Coupled with the dearth in their participation and involvement in decision-making bodies, whose processes and outcomes concern and affect their very lives, LGBTI persons are very vulnerable and exposed. For example men who have sex with men (MSM) as a cohort are at an exponentially higher risk of HIV infection than the general population due to, amongst other factors, their marginalisation in national health programs.

So why does this community matter? It is a fact that LGBTI individuals are highly integrated into their broader communities and surroundings. Their very status as belonging to an ‘invisible’ community attests to this. The LGBTI community is not an island, it is woven into the social fabric of every society and is a part of all social networks and facets of human interactions. Following my earlier example, MSM are often also active in heterosexual networks (80% of MSM in Senegal reported having had sexual intercourse with a woman within a previous one year period) demonstrating overlap rather than isolation. Failure to address this community’s needs ultimately negates all progress made in human development within broader society.

The LGBTI community needs urgent and immediate acknowledgment and active involvement. This will have wholesome benefit to human development and society which, at the moment, is like a chain in which LGBTI people are being made to be the weakest link. In time, the LGBTI community will cease to be invisible.

JOEL GUSTAVE NANA
THE VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES OF LGBTI PERSONS: WHY DO THEY MATTER?

JOEL GUSTAVE NANA IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AFRICAN MEN FOR SEXUAL HEALTH AND RIGHTS (AMSHER), A REGIONAL COALITION OF 15 ORGANISATIONS FROM AROUND AFRICA.

“THE LGBTI COMMUNITY IS NOT AN ISLAND; IT IS WOVEN INTO THE SOCIAL FABRIC OF EVERY SOCIETY AND IS A PART OF ALL SOCIAL NETWORKS AND FACETS OF HUMAN INTERACTIONS.”
As co-founder of the Kenya Network of Women With AIDS (Kenwa), my mission has been to ensure that as many people as possible don’t experience the same loneliness and helplessness, stigma and isolation I faced when I tested HIV-positive.

In my endeavours I preach compassion, dignity, courage, risk awareness, the need for unity among people infected with HIV, and the promise of hope. United we can achieve this.

In 1993, four women and myself, all living with HIV and AIDS, started a meeting group, now Kenwa. As a small community of women, we decided that the time was ripe for us to do something about our HIV status and that of the wider community – that our destiny was in our hands, and while we could not control how people reacted we had the choice to react or respond the way we wanted. We chose to offer hope beyond the situation, to leave the world a better place than we found it. Little did we realise that we were about to start a chain reaction reaching deep into communities and creating hope for other people living with the infection. Consequently, we gained recognition and respect that further boosted us to push for registration of our non-governmental organisation, Kenwa, in 1998.

Today Kenwa is proud of 10 000 members nationally and 230 support groups in Nairobi and central Kenya. Today, Kenwa extends a helping hand to over 400 000 women and their families. The president’s office, community and religious institutions, among others, came to our aid, and soon we were receiving relief food from government and free treatment for people living with AIDS in special programmes, while donors helped us to start a medical facility.

With the support of many volunteers Kenwa provides support and counselling, medical treatment and referrals to health centres, and food assistance. We also visit affected families, give home-based care for the bedridden and create opportunities to alleviate poverty. Kenwa involves people living with HIV and AIDS as resource people in its advocacy, education and community mobilisation, which includes sharing their experiences. Employment priority is given to those who have qualifications and are HIV-infected.

We tell those we help, ‘If we have helped you to live one more day, you must help do the same for someone else.’ This works well, as HIV-positive women are anxious to help others when they have been empowered to live productive, hopeful lives. We are the greatest resource to ourselves.

In 1999, when we called on the government to intervene, AIDS was declared a national disaster. We have seen every sector involved in the fight against AIDS since then. This was another breakthrough.

I would like to say that some of our greatest achievements, which are also mine, are that we have given AIDS a human face and have earned the respect and acceptance of our families and of the entire community.
“HIV-POSITIVE WOMEN ARE ANXIOUS TO HELP OTHERS WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN EMPOWERED TO LIVE PRODUCTIVE, HOPEFUL LIVES. WE ARE THE GREATEST RESOURCE TO OURSELVES”
My highlight of the past year has to be the ‘Arab spring’. I come from that part of the world; I’m half Iranian and I’ve seen revolution, I’ve seen how it can go wrong.

We’ve all said, where are the young voices? Where are the voices of the moderates? Where are the people who are saying things that are not extremist, and that are not scary, and that are not sort of nihilistic? And here are these people, who spontaneously came out – not because they were urged by the United States or anybody, but because they believed it in the depths of their hearts and souls, and because suddenly they saw an opening and they took it.
I think it is remarkable, these young people – actually, people from all strata of society: men and women, kids, old people, poor, rich, everybody – wanting one thing, and that is what we all have: accountable governments, the ability to change your government every now and again, the ability to have the wherewithal to raise your family, and to have some dignity. That’s a word I hear all over the world: ‘dignity’. To see this sort of pure outpouring of people – people power – is the takeaway to that. And obviously social media, Twitter and Facebook and all the rest of it, didn’t cause the revolution but were the indispensable tools to organise in a situation where there was no ability to organise.

I get very moved by these amazing, historic, human moments, and when you see people who have been oppressed all their lives, and suddenly have a moment – even though they don’t know whether it’s going to turn out well or badly – in that moment they have this hope, they have this vision, this possibility that something is going to change and something can be better.

They’ve seen their dictator no longer be able to act with impunity, that now these people are being held accountable, and there’s something deeply moving about that. There’s something deeply moving about the triumph of the human spirit, and the fact that we’re all the same.


David Walls

David Walls on the dialectic between grassroots and HQ

Transnational movements for human rights – especially women’s rights – and environmental protection have received much attention from international NGOs as well as the United Nations and other agencies. The vital dialectic between grassroots and headquarters must be analysed and appreciated.

Headquarters’ offices of social movements at a regional or national level can offer valuable resources to support activists in local communities, including money, publicity, programme guidance, mentoring, legal defence, development of strategy and tactics, and training for organisers and emerging leaders. At the same time, without grassroots organisations, the headquarters’ offices would be reduced to mere advocates, without a political base.

Fostering powerful organisations at the grassroots requires skilled organisers who can develop new leaders and mobilise existing local groups into coalitions. This may present a greater challenge in Third World and rural communities with weak institutions of civil society. In addition, patriarchal traditions can inhibit the constructive role played by women as leaders skilled in bridging different constituencies.
MUHAMMAD YUNUS
ONE SAVING AT A TIME: EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH ACCESS TO CAPITAL
From a personal loan of small amounts of money to destitute basket weavers in Bangladesh in the mid-'70s, the Grameen Bank has advanced to the forefront of a burgeoning world movement toward eradicating poverty through micro-lending. It gives me much pleasure to note that replicas of the Grameen Bank model now operate in more than 100 countries worldwide!

Ironically, I believe that having grown up in an impoverished community in Bangladesh gave me somewhat of a good start to what was to follow in my life. In order to understand where others came from, I had to live through the poverty and the frustrations of a people that had the will to live but lacked the resources to do so decently. Opportunities that I subsequently had to go and study overseas also allowed me to see the other side of things and, in some way, to strengthen my resolve that all was possible.

My active membership of the International Advisory Group for the Fourth World Conference on Women from 1993 to 1995, appointed by the then United Nations secretary-general, as well as my service on the Global Commission of Women’s Health, the Advisory Council for Sustainable Economic Development and the United Nations Expert Group on Women and Finance, all contributed meaningfully to the work that I do.

Access to capital and credit is a fundamental human right. Without this communities, especially their most vulnerable members – women and children – are like little animals left exposed to roaming predators in the wild. Access to capital offers a measure of independence that allows people, especially women, the power to influence the course of their own lives and, by extension, of their children.

I am hugely encouraged by increasing numbers of communities in many parts of the world standing up and, in many cases for the first time, raising their voices to be heard and showing their faces to be seen. I believe that good families make good communities, good communities make good nations and good nations have the potential to make ours a better world for all. There are many other challenges facing communities all over the world. They range from access to clean and potable water, access to adequate medical facilities, education, the courts, as well as safe modes of shared transport and roads in order to reach markets for their products. Combined, these challenges impact on the extent to which communities can properly enjoy their human rights.

**“I AM HUGELY ENCOURAGED BY INCREASING NUMBERS OF COMMUNITIES IN MANY PARTS OF THE WORLD STANDING UP AND, IN MANY CASES FOR THE FIRST TIME, RAISING THEIR VOICES TO BE HEARD AND SHOWING THEIR FACES TO BE SEEN.”**
Joseph Stiglitz
ON THE ECONOMICS OF INFORMATION

We are becoming aware of the importance of people working together, voluntarily, to address societal needs. We have to work towards more effective democratic participation. There are political failures just as there are market failures, and in some sense the voices of certain groups don’t get heard adequately.

So I view myself as working not only to understand why markets don’t work, but also why political processes don’t work, and what we can do to make markets work better and to make political processes work better. And here, part of the sense of ‘working better’ is to be more representative of society.


“WE HAVE TO WORK TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION. THERE ARE POLITICAL FAILURES JUST AS THERE ARE MARKET FAILURES, AND IN SOME SENSE THE VOICES OF CERTAIN GROUPS DON’T GET HEARD ADEQUATELY”
Africans is my point of focus because there is still a lot of work to be done on this continent. This cannot be done if we do not start at the top, where governance and democracy issues tend to be determined and fiercely controlled.

Easy access to communication technology and modern media platforms has become increasingly crucial in people’s fight for human rights and political and economic emancipation. This access made the Arab Spring possible and heralded unprecedented political winds of change through the Middle East over the past year or so – all through the power of smartphones.

Modern communication technology doesn’t have to be expensive. Without it, bad governance, dictatorships and corruption can go undetected and unreported for decades.
We each have a responsibility for human rights. Some of you, particularly from government, have power and resources to better people’s lives. Some of you have little power, but come from communities whose rights are violated daily. But whether from government or civil society we must admit that we are failing many, many people. This is because in most parts of the world human-rights violations that increase the risk of HIV infection, and those that follow after HIV infection, are getting worse.

Hundreds of thousands of children still are being born with preventable HIV infections, hardly making them equal. People are dying of preventable illnesses. People are being confined in squalid prisons for drug-resistant TB, with no concern for their dignity, in the name of ‘public health’. Women and children are raped in frightening numbers. Rich people live with HIV and poor people die, usually after a period of added pain and indignity. Regrettably, in China, Zimbabwe and other countries, many who fight for rights – or expose their violations – find themselves the victims of their governments or their self-serving officials.

We have to ask: do our governments really believe in human rights? In the last 20 years nearly one third of United Nations members have adopted new constitutions, many of which explicitly protect human rights. But this legal commitment is meaningless unless these rights are given effect. This is a duty of governments, not a choice. And it is the duty of civil society to hold governments up to the standards they have accepted on paper.

Poor people cannot afford lip service to human rights from civil society either. When civil society is snared in endless conferences and flattered at ‘consultations’ we become part of the problem. When we gratefully accept the hand-me-downs of government, we leave the poor and vulnerable defenceless, and eventually very uncivil.

Unfortunately, human-rights violations are the global reality, especially when people lack the power and organisation to fight back. Therefore civil society must recognise that human rights have to be demanded, fought for, won, and then held onto. This can be done through systematic community organisation, demonstration, legal action, treatment-and-prevention literacy, human-rights education and demanding to be meaningfully involved at every level of policy-making.

“HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE TO BE DEMANDED, FOUGHT FOR, WON, AND THEN HELD ONTO. THIS CAN BE DONE THROUGH SYSTEMATIC COMMUNITY ORGANISATION”

Mark Heywood is one of the founders of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which fights for the rights of people with HIV/AIDS in South Africa. He is the deputy chairperson of the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC).
There is nothing more important than justice. Without justice there can be no democracy and the rule of law cannot prevail. Without justice, human rights lose their value and are at risk of vanishing completely. The words of 18th century Irish philosopher and statesman, Edmund Burke, that, ‘All that is required for evil to prevail is for good (persons) to do nothing,’ still ring true today. The pursuit of justice never ends; when justice is threatened we must respond decisively. Communities, through NGOs, can play a critical role in enhancing justice.

Global discourse is critical to the enhancement of justice in all nations. Despite all challenges, communities must be united in facing up to their problems. I am hopeful that this generation will meet any challenge and ensure that justice is protected in order to foster the spread and growth of democracy, the rule of the law and human rights.

We must all ask ourselves: ‘What is my vision of a just society?’ We should truly give effect to Nelson Mandela’s inaugural sentiments:

‘We place our vision of a new constitutional order for South Africa on the table not as conquerors, prescribing to the conquered. We speak as fellow citizens to heal the wounds of the past with the intent of constructing a new order based on justice for all.’

There must be justice for all!

George Bizos is a distinguished human rights advocate who campaigned against apartheid in South Africa, most notably during the Rivonia trial in the early 1960s when he represented former president Nelson Mandela and other struggle heroes. His voice continues to be heard whenever attempts are made on the rule of law.

“Communities, through NGOs can play a critical role in enhancing justice.”
Youssou N'Dour is one of Africa’s most celebrated musicians. The legendary Senegalese-born singer–songwriter has been a UNICEF goodwill ambassador for the last two decades. African nations, African figureheads and African communities, alongside other world leaders, need to prioritise lasting solutions.

That means strengthening governance so the right investments are made in basic services, championing peace so that people are no longer forced to flee their homes and livelihoods, protecting the natural environment so that people’s ways of life are sustainable, and empowering local communities from which the process of change will emerge. We have a responsibility to do all that we can.
If people are excluded from participation, feel that their voices are not included in public life, are not valued, as we’ve seen over history, that is one of the biggest stimuli for acts of violence, forms of activity that can be termed terrorism, or underground activity.

If there isn’t an opportunity for public dissatisfaction to emerge transparently in the public space, then dissent is pushed underground, and if it’s pushed underground, then the consequence is usually even more conflict and resistance. But on the positive side, by creating an enabling environment for citizens to participate in public life, government is actually saying: “We will draw on the reservoir of free policy intelligence that resides in the wisdom and in the suffering of people who are on the receiving end of a particular public challenge, whether it’s HIV/AIDS, whether it’s malaria, whether it’s homelessness, unemployment, whatever.”

Too often policy-makers are making policy from an experiential vacuum. They know about those policies from a textbook or university-based education without seeing whether they apply in reality, what the problems are with implementation. So when there is greater opportunity for citizens to organise themselves in community-based groups and NGOs, and when governments seek out participation and create spaces for this, it is like what big companies do before they launch a product – it’s called market research. They go out and talk to potential customers, they try to figure out what people want and then they design whatever they’re to deliver and sell what is really wanted. So sometimes a failure to create those consultative possibilities for citizens to give input ends up with people having a sense that, “We are not really part of the solution, we are just part of the problem.”

Participation helps people get beyond feeling like victims. We want people not to feel like victims, but to be survivors. To know that they are special people who have risen above horrific circumstances and have survived.

Just the fact that they have survived means, in my judgement, that they have exhibited a level of heroism and, having done that, being people who have survived against the odds surely means they have great capabilities that could come into play if there was an effort to recognise those capabilities.

We have to invest in the skills of people, because many of these folks have not had the opportunity of basic education. And that can be a deterrent to participation. ■

“BY CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR CITIZENS TO PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC LIFE, GOVERNMENT IS ACTUALLY SAYING ‘WE WILL DRAW ON THE RESERVOIR... THAT RESIDES IN THE WISDOM AND IN THE SUFFERING OF PEOPLE’”

KUMI NAIDOO IS A SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN-RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTALIST GROUP GREENPEACE. HE IS THE FIRST AFRICAN TO HEAD THE ORGANISATION.
The link between family size and social standing is a subject close to my heart and goes back to my own childhood in Karakore, a small town in Ethiopia, where I grew up the eldest of seven children. My grandmother had one child, my mother, and I vividly recall the shame that she was made to feel because she had given birth to ‘just one child’ – and a daughter at that.

My own mother lost a child, and I recall the deep emotional trauma that followed. So I encountered something of the suffering felt by far too many African women.

That’s why I believe women must be empowered to be able to make their own decisions, free from fear of coercion or pressure from partners, family and society. Their sense of self-worth should not depend on the number of children they have. They must have easy access to a range of safe, within the community: social standing as demographic change agent.

Tewodros Melesse

Within the Community: Social Standing as Demographic Change Agent

Tewodros Melesse is the Director-General of the International Planned Parenthood Federation.
effective, and affordable contraceptives and the information and counselling needed to use them. But contraceptive access needs to be backed by better health infrastructure – we have abundant evidence that when parents are confident that their children will survive, they will have fewer and invest more in each of them.

After years of neglect, there is a renewed interest in family planning as a driver for development. Experience has shown us that education for girls, legal reform and access to family planning have made a difference in many countries. While it’s true that economic and social development leads to women having smaller families, the converse is also true – that the gains that contraception has made possible in women’s health make family planning one of the most successful international development stories.

My mission as IPPF’s new director-general is to build on those gains, to work with communities to ensure that Africa’s women and girls have the services, supplies and information to exercise their reproductive rights and live lives with dignity, respect and meaning.

“I BELIEVE WOMEN MUST BE EMPOWERED TO BE ABLE TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS, FREE FROM FEAR OF COERCION OR PRESSURE FROM PARTNERS, FAMILY AND SOCIETY”

SETHGODIN

TRIBE: ANOTHER NAME FOR A COMMUNITY

’SIBS’ is a simple concept that goes back fifty thousand years. It’s about leading and connecting people and ideas. And it’s something that people have wanted forever. Lots of people are used to having a spiritual tribe, or a church tribe, having a work tribe, having a community tribe. But now, thanks to the Internet, to the explosion of mass media, tribes are everywhere. And it turns out that it’s tribes, not money, not factories, that can change our world, that can change our politics, that can align large numbers of people. Most movements, most leaderships, are about finding groups that are disconnected but already have a yearning… Not because you force them to do something against their will, but because they want to connect.
COPYCAT: DYNAMIC LEADERS BRING SOCIAL CHANGE
The Shuttleworth Foundation is inspired by two things: the idea that it is people who change the world for the better, and that if we are rigorously open about ideas and practices, more people will copy them and make the world a better place in a shorter period of time.

We provide funding for dynamic leaders who are at the forefront of social change. We identify amazing people, give them a fellowship grant, and multiply the money they put into their projects by a factor of ten or more. We are looking for social innovators who are helping to change the world for the better and are looking for some support through an innovative social investment model.

I believe that free software can become the de facto standard way the world builds and experiences all software… Right now, I’m focused on design, championing the idea of design-driven development and finding ways to bring design thinking into the open-source process. We don’t just want to design Ubuntu; we want to inspire the whole free software ecosystem to produce software that feels ‘brilliantly and beautifully designed’.

Whenever there is substantial change in an industry there are opportunities for new leaders to emerge. The global shift to open-source software is just such an opportunity. I’m really hopeful that South Africa will grab the chance to lead the world in the open-source revolution.

People ask if we can justify space flight when the world still faces basic problems feeding and educating and employing billions of its people, and when we’re busily destroying the homes of thousands of other species. That’s a tough question. The standard answer speaks to the way space exploration has changed our world for the better, in every field from materials engineering to food science and geography. But I think the more important answer lies in the fact that much of what’s holding the world back is willpower, not resources.

I’ve seen schools in South Africa that have nothing, yet manage to turn out first-class graduates every year while the school down the road, which is equally poorly funded, doesn’t get a single pass. It’s the willpower of those staff members that makes the difference. And a big part of willpower is having something to aspire to, something to live for.

Space, and man’s exploration of the solar system and the universe, are extraordinarily powerful motivators. I learned this first-hand before I flew, when an old man who had experienced the worst of apartheid through his life hugged me and begged me to take him to space with me, then told me his kids were working extra hard on maths and science so that they too might one day have this opportunity. I hope they do, too.

The thing is that there are very few things I do that you could only do if you were in my very lucky position. What I am saying is that you can live a perfectly satisfying life without the same kinds of success that I have had. It is a bit of a red herring to think that you need to get as lucky as I did in order to be something in life; I think that’s just nonsense. I meet people all the time that I admire, that live satisfying and thrilling lives. But they have very different kinds of adventures, and challenges, and successes.

“IF WE ARE RIGOROUSLY OPEN ABOUT IDEAS AND PRACTICES, MORE PEOPLE WILL COPY THEM AND MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE IN A SHORTER PERIOD OF TIME.”
In much of the world, government services do not necessarily meet citizens’ expectations. These countries lack a transparent mechanism for resource allocation and the voice of citizens and their demands are not reaching the right authorities, especially at the national level.

It is thus increasingly important to provide simple, but secure tools to amplify and visualise marginalised voices of citizens (in undemocratic situations, urban or rural poor) where privately owned media and large government bodies are biased or inattentive to citizens.

There is also a great need to aggregate information from multiple sources and channel accurately to the responsible parties for quick decision-making and action. This is important especially in crisis situations where there are multiple actors and where saving lives depends on better coordination for rapid response.

Collaborative problem-solving is the ultimate goal. Ushahidi wants people to truly be able to collaborate and change the status quo of where they are. Individuals should have the tools necessary to fully participate in democracy, and to have their voices heard. Citizens must be empowered to collect and contextualise information for themselves in order to address the issues they care about.

“Citizens must be empowered to collect and contextualise information for themselves in order to address the issues they care about.”
NGOs receive funding from a variety of donors: the public, governments, multilateral institutions, foundations and corporations. Of late, the focus has increasingly been on corporations as a source for development funds. USAID, for example, is increasingly emphasising private sector engagement in the programmes they fund; and the State Department has led a series of initiatives such as Partners for a New Beginning, which are entirely focused on private sector investment in developing countries, involving multinationals such as Coca Cola and Middle Eastern enterprises such as Souktel. Accenture recently released a report about ‘convergence’ which details the emerging relationship between NGOs and corporations. No longer is it enough, Accenture argues, for the traditional model of a corporation’s corporate social responsibility arm to fund programmes here and there. Corporations are looking to partner with NGOs who understand their business in a partnership that meets both community and commercial needs. CSR is becoming an integral part of corporate strategy.

Multinational corporations are beginning to see this model as the way forward because these once emerging markets are now their growth markets. Haitians, Brazilians, Indians – these are consumers and stakeholders, not just beneficiaries of charity relegated to the back of annual reports – and their countries are becoming core new markets that large corporations cannot ignore. Corporations have to be more and more focused on instituting higher labour standards; local employees working in what were once sweatshops are now becoming consumers of the products that their factories make.

From the point of view of our work and missions, these changes mean opportunities and challenges for NGOs. We should celebrate the emerging economies which are growing and beginning to outpace our own. This is, in many ways, what we have been working towards – a more equitable world. We should also be seeking the opportunity to work with corporations to ensure that their work does have a positive impact on local communities and that they are making social as well as financial investments. At the same time, we have to be careful that in this new world we, and other organisations like ours, do not suffer mission creep. Our missions of social progress, improving livelihoods and creating greater equity must remain our focus and we must not allow ourselves ever to become agents of exploitation. Each situation must be judged on its merits, according to the mission and values of the NGO and the work of the corporation. Commercial needs can only be met if they genuinely service the community and lead towards greater equity and economic empowerment. Where corporations truly recognise this, we see effective convergence.

Even if the geography of poverty is changing, our missions are not. NGOs, whether in the richest countries of the world or the poorest, have the role of working with the unheard voices, with those communities that are left behind. We have to be the enablers of progress, global citizens who operate with creativity, care and authenticity in the poorest of communities.
More of our time is spent awake outside our homes than inside them. Therefore it makes good sense that we invest as much love and creativity in our public spaces as we do in our homes.

It seems obvious that cities should be built for people, but over the last 80 years we’ve built them much more for cars’ mobility than for human well-being. It has become normal for us that our children grow up in fear of suffering a violent death. If we said to a three-year-old child in any city, “Be careful, there’s a car!” the child would jump up, frightened – and rightly so, as thousands of children are killed by cars every year.

Imagine building better cities, ones with very wide pavements, running at a continuous grade at intersections so that it is clear that it is cars crossing over pedestrians’ space and not the other way around. All our streets should have protected bicycle-ways, as mobility without the risk of getting killed cannot be the exclusive preserve of motorists. A protected bicycle-way symbolises the fact that a citizen on a $30 bicycle is just as important as one in a $30 000 car.

Cities should have hundreds of kilometres of greenways and pedestrian- and bicycle-only promenades, a sort of pedestrian highway, so that cyclists can cover long distances safely and pleasantly. All major streets should have lanes exclusively for buses, for if all citizens are equal before the law, a bus with 80 passengers has a right to 80 times more road space than a car with one.

Be careful of building urban highways; they never solve traffic jams and even less so mobility challenges. Be careful of subways, as they’re often more the product of upper-income citizens’ wishes to hide the travels of lower-income people, creating the illusion of less traffic for their cars.

Every detail in a city should reflect that all citizens are equally important, and that humans are sacred. A city should be designed prioritising the most vulnerable citizens: children, the elderly, the handicapped and the poor. They should be able to move freely and safely in our cities, having access to education, culture, nature and quality architecture.

What constitutes a successful democratic city is not highways, shopping malls and gated neighbourhoods. Rather, a successful city is one teeming with people of all incomes and ages meeting as equals in its public spaces, on public transport and at cultural events. In infrastructure terms, it’s a city with great sidewalks, pedestrian promenades, bus-ways, bicycle-ways, parks, schools and libraries.
“WITH THE SOUND OF THEIR DRUMS AND THE BEAUTY OF THEIR MELODIES AND SONGS, THEY CARRIED STRONG MESSAGES OF SOCIAL CONSCIENCE AND WISDOM INTO THE COMMUNITY.”
When I grew up in Benin, traditional singers were my first teachers and musicians. With the sound of their drums and the beauty of their melodies and songs, they carried strong messages of social conscience and wisdom into the community. The more serious their words were, the more uplifting and fun their music was.

That has been a lifelong lesson: you will not get your message through by preaching and making your audience feel guilty and sad. Give them the feeling of pride and joy, and they will listen to you!

Through all my visits with UNICEF to my beloved continent of Africa, my home, I have noticed that we humans share a common trait: our love for music. Music does not happen just during concerts and on stage, but plays a vital role during every stage of our life – from birth to marriage, from religious ceremonies to family parties. Music has the power to create a deep bond within and among communities.

So many ideologies are trying to divide us people, but I have experienced with my own eyes that when it comes to music we form one single humanity. Music is the world’s universal language that empowers and inspires us to change our way for the better.

Even though we all come from very different cultures – I must have performed in almost one hundred countries – and although not everyone understands the meaning of my Beninese lyrics, I always feel so much love when I am on stage. That is why I call my microphone my weapon of mass loving, and I mean it.

Angélique Kidjo is an iconic Beninese singer-songwriter and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador. She is a founder of the Botanga Foundation, which works to give girls in five African nations access to secondary and higher education.

“THAT HAS BEEN A LIFELONG LESSON:
YOU WILL NOT GET YOUR MESSAGE THROUGH BY PREACHING
AND MAKING YOUR AUDIENCE FEEL GUILTY AND SAD.
GIVE THEM THE FEELING OF PRIDE AND JOY,
AND THEY WILL LISTEN TO YOU!”
The Regional African AIDS NGOs Forum (RAANGO)

Strong, sustainable and indigenous CBOs and NGOs in the fields of sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV are an essential part of a vibrant civil society and democracy in southern and eastern Africa. RAANGO is an informal network of indigenous African NGOs working in SRHR and HIV in eastern and southern Africa. Formed in 2009, RAANGO supports civil society collaboration and liaison with United Nations agencies, regional economic community structures and donor agencies, and global initiatives and programmes. Its member organizations collectively constitute extensive reach into many countries, constituencies and communities across the region. The network consists of Executive Directors of member organizations. RAANGO's primary objectives are:

- **Dialogue:** strategic dialogue achieves widespread positive discourse and consensus on rights in health,
- **Engagement:** participative, accountable and structured engagement between civil society governments, regional economic communities, UN agencies and international cooperating partners
- **Collective impact:** increased civil society capacity to deliver impact on health
- **Sustainability:** structured and on-going support allows civil society organizations to continue to function and deliver as part of healthy democracies

Member organisations as listed below may be contacted through their respective websites or via the RAANGO regional coordinator at raango@satregional.org

- African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHerR): www.amsher.net
- Disability HIV and AIDS Trust (DHAT): www.dhatregional.org
- Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD), University of KwaZulu Natal: www.heard.org.za
- Institute of Health and Development Communication (Soul City regional programme): www.soulcity.org.za
- International Network of Religious Leaders Living with and Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS, Africa Region (INERELA+/Africa): www.inerela.org
- Regional AIDS Training Network (RATN): www.ratn.org
- Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI): www.repssi.org
- Southern Africa HIV and AIDS information Dissemination Service (SAFAIDS): www.safaids.net/
- VSO-RAISA: www.vsointernational.org/what-we-do/raisa
- World AIDS Campaign: www.worldaidscampaign.org
SAT’S APPROACH TO COMMUNITY SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING

SAT works with community-based organizations and leaders to strengthen their own systems for HIV and sexual and reproductive health & rights. SAT’s approach to supporting communities is based on four key enablers and six system components. SAT provides resources, tools, methodologies and mentoring and enters partnerships to strengthen capacity in each of these areas.

KEY ENABLERS ARE:
Rights; Dialogue, Participation and Good Governance

SYSTEM COMPONENTS ARE:
Know Your Community; Mobilize Resources; Invest for Results; Mobilize for Action; Engage and Increase Access to Services; Learn, monitor and evaluate

“PEOPLE ARE AT THE HEART OF THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST AIDS.”
– Ban Ki-Moon
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The Southern African AIDS Trust (SAT) is an NGO established in 1990, supporting community systems for sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV. SAT partners across southern Africa with over 80 communities, as well as national and regional programmers in HIV prevention with youth, women’s health, integrating SRHR & HIV, and strategic dialogue. For more information on SAT, go to www.satregional.org

"WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITIES TO CHANGE THE WORLD. WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER, THE RESILIENCE AND THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITIES ON SOCIETIES, AND GLOBALLY."