

INNOVATION LAB

Enhancing Collaborative Leadership to Improve Care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children

November 7-9, 2007, Spier

Workshop report

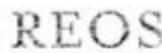


Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
COMING TOGETHER	6
CHECK-IN	6
FRAMING	6
SEEING TOGETHER	7
CONNECTING WITH THE REALITY OF OUR WORK	7
POWER DYNAMICS	8
DIALOGUE INTERVIEWS	9
SECTOR CONVERSATIONS – OUR “PROUDS” AND “SORRIES”	9
BURNING QUESTIONS	12
DEEPER CAUSES - 5 WHY’S	13
NATURE RETREAT	15
CREATING TOGETHER	16
SPEED DATING	16
INNOVATION IN COMPLEX SYSTEMS	17
THE INNOVATION INITIATIVES	17
COMMITMENTS AND PRESENTATION ON LEADERSHIP NETWORK	20
LESSONS AND OUTCOMES	21
INITIATIVES	21
NETWORKING & RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING	21
COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP	22
SUPPORT FOR THE LEADERSHIP AND INNOVATION NETWORK	22
ADDITIONAL LESSONS	22
WAY FORWARD	24
ANNEXURE	25
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	25

Acknowledgments and Thank You's

The quality of the OVC Innovation Lab was achieved by a large number of people who have contributed in various ways over the past two years. It was a long journey, but a worthwhile effort. Thank you:

Convene – To Cassie Janisch who was in the trenches throughout, and whose energy, effort, and attention to detail is what made the event a reality. To Nana Moiloa whose positive energy is an asset to any team, and to Roger Dickinson for stepping in and getting his hands dirty on the last days.

Reos Social Innovation – To Mille Bojer for partnership, skill, commitment and support. To Marianne Knuth and Gavin Andersson for stepping in, being flexible and for skillful and caring facilitation. To Vanessa Sayers for insightful input and for documentation support.

African Leadership Initiative – To all the fellows of the Kilimanjaro Class, especially Gavin Yeats, Karl Flowers, Adrian Enthoven, and of course Isaac Shongwe (who is in all classes) for funding this project. To Mothomang Diaho for helping with government advocacy work. To Heather Sonn, Logan Wort, Anthea Houston, and Futhi Mtoba for supporting the event, and to all the other ALL fellows who provided invaluable assistance. To Neo Muyanga for changing the “tune” of the event. To Bongzi Kunene without whose support and sisterhood the whole event would not have happened.

Synergos – To Barry Smith for all the moral support, practical advice and work along the way. To Adele Wildschut for facilitating, and to Hilda Gertze for all the hard work organising what we needed and for recording the event.

DoSD - To Connie Kganaka for believing in this project from the first meeting, to Olivia Machusi for all the coordination, and to Johanna DeBeer for all her support and help.

Spier – To the staff at Spier who created such a special experience for the participants, and who were so flexible with changing meal times and changing arrangements due to weather. To Andrew Dietrich and Cindy Wilson for all their effort on our behalf.

Hollard Foundation – To Gill Stern for believing in what was always going to be a high-risk process, and for her integrity, selflessness, and late night printing. To the Hollard Foundation trustees, especially Ntjantja Ned for making the effort to attend and Van Zyl Slabbert for his support with business attendees and his belief in our work.

Adrian Enthoven – To Adi, who bridges all the categories of groups we need to thank. None of this could have happened without his multifaceted support. Not all those who have resources make them as selflessly available to facilitate projects to support children and others in need. Thank you Adi to you and your family. Thank you also for your understanding of what we are trying to do.

Lydia Mason – Thanks to Lydia for stepping in and managing to pull all the logistics together without resources, and for holding it together at the event and making everything appear as plain sailing despite the enormous amount of behind the scenes coordination.

News Travel – Thanks to Nicola Gray, our amazing travel agent, who went way beyond the call of duty.

Traffic – To Jason Cowan for agreeing to film the event and edit pro bono, and for bringing together a team that could film as unobtrusively as possible.

Finally thank you to *Lynette Mudekumye* (SCUK), *Heidi Loening* (UNICEF), and *Linda Richter* (HSRC) for guidance and wisdom at the right times. To *Lauren Segal* for helping with the pro bono design and advice on the exhibition. And to *Kim Feinberg* for the beautiful books that inspired the exhibit.

- From Ann Lamont

Introduction

“As a nation, we have to be mothers to all children, those from our loins and those from our soil. The next generation is our responsibility and we must let them know how seriously we take that duty.”

- Albertina Sisulu

On November 7, 2007, over 50 senior civil servants, businesspeople, academics, donors, and leaders of non-governmental, community-based, and faith-based organisations from across South Africa gathered at Spier Estate in Stellenbosch. What they had in common was their leadership focused on improving the situation of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) in South Africa. They came to Spier to participate in a 3-day “Innovation Lab” on the topic of “*Enhancing Collaborative Leadership to Improve Care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children*”.

The Innovation Lab was not a stand-alone event. It was the launch event for an ongoing programme to establish a leadership and innovation network for stakeholders in the OVC field. It was also the culmination of 1,5 years of preparation comprising stakeholder interviews, advocacy, research, report-writing, fundraising, meetings, recruitment, and planning work. (Separate documentation is available on the leadership network, and outcomes of the initial research.)



The theme of “Collaborative Leadership” was carefully chosen in consultation with the Department of Social Development and other key stakeholders. In the interviewing process leading up to the Lab, stakeholders had identified four key leverage points: areas that, if improved, could have a large spin-off effect on children’s situation in South Africa. These were: *Leadership, Innovation, Systems Thinking, and Collaboration*. These leverage points were combined in designing an event aimed at using systems thinking and innovation in order to improve collaborative leadership in the OVC sector.

Innovation Lab Objectives

- To build collaborative leadership in the OVC sector
 - To build excitement, innovative ideas, and commitment to collaborations
 - To build capacity and skills for collaboration and innovation
- To reconnect around the challenges of children
- To launch the OVC leadership network

The process of the Lab was also consciously and attentively designed, and based on a set of assumptions, or a “theory of change”: that the OVC situation in South Africa is complex and unprecedented; that unprecedented challenges require unprecedented levels of commitment, creativity, and collaboration; that a small group of influential, connected, and committed leaders can make a big difference if given opportunities to “level the playing field” and truly see and create together; and that we need to work on re-perceiving and re-creating at multiple levels – individual, organisational, sectoral, and system-wide.

The results of the Lab include nine ideas for initiatives, which are described in this report. However, equally important to the initiatives that came out were the building of strong relationships, the sense of renewal for people working in a very stressful field, the shift in power dynamics, and the strengthened commitment. In addition, important lessons were learnt, from what the Innovation Lab both did and didn't achieve, that will inform the way forward for the leadership network.

“At the end of the year I often look ahead with a sense of deep fatigue and find it difficult to even envisage the year ahead. But I must say that this workshop gave us opportunities to reflect without pressure and to plan ahead in a creative and fun way.”

While it is impossible to capture the full experience of the Innovation Lab in a written document, this report seeks to illustrate the story of the lab and the lessons learned with description, photos, and (anonymous) quotes from participants.

The three “Acts” of this story are: 1. Coming Together, 2. Seeing Together, and 3. Creating Together.

Coming Together

At the scheduled starting time of 11:00 am on November 7, the wine cellar meeting room at Spier was ready to receive, but yet void of participants. Individually and in small groups, they started arriving, meeting, coming together. Within 20 minutes the room was full of leaders from various sectors, organisations, and communities, many of whom were delighted to encounter each other there. Ann Lamont opened the meeting, speaking of the journey that lay behind us and ahead of us, and then handed over to the facilitation team from Reos and Synergos.

Check-in

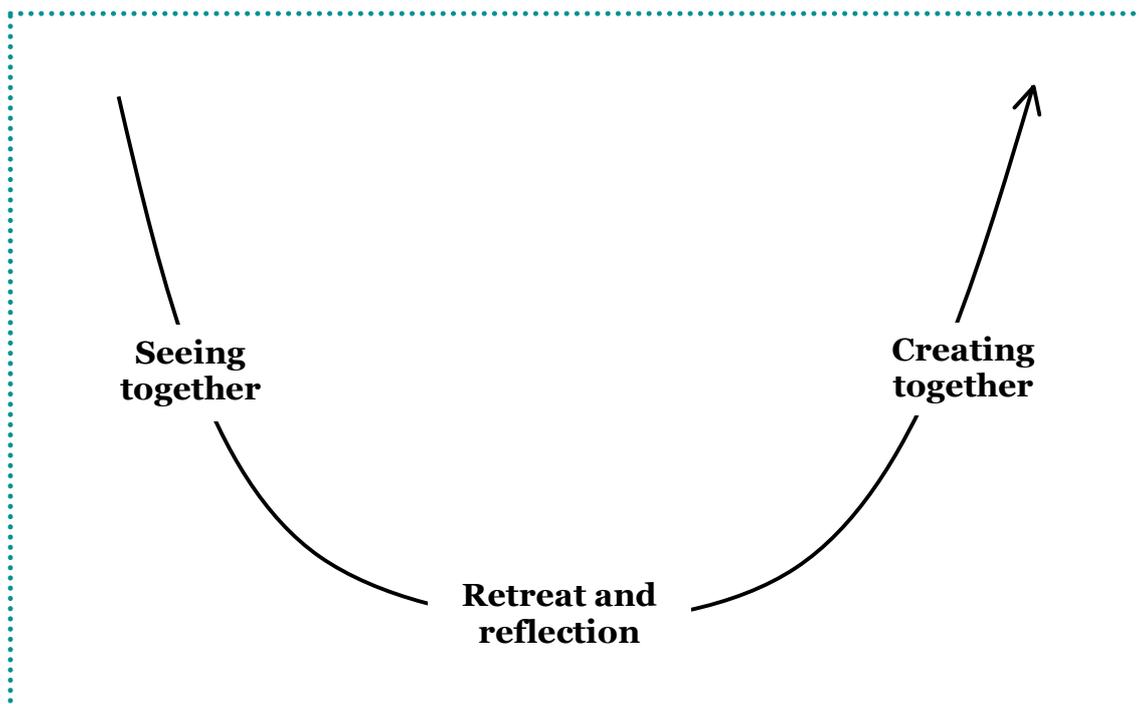
Participants were encouraged to move to tables where they were not familiar with each other, and then to “check-in” with each other at their tables. They introduced themselves to each other and talked about “what excites you about being here?” and “what do you hope and believe we can accomplish together?” They expressed excitement about meeting other participants both from within the same sectors and across sectors, and they explored the intentions of the Lab around collaboration and why it is needed and important.

“Our biggest excitement is about meeting each other.”

“We would like to see government, civil society, and corporates moving in the same direction to realise the rights of children.”

Framing

After the check-in the facilitators presented some thoughts on the theme of collaborative leadership and introduced the process and agenda of the workshop. It was explained that the process would begin with work around seeing the current situation together from multiple perspectives, followed by retreat time, and then creating together.



Seeing Together

Part of the intention with the Innovation Lab was to support stakeholders in seeing the current reality with fresh eyes, in order to then act innovatively together based on a fresh and shared understanding. This involved trying to see from different perspectives, listening to the experience of other sectors and individuals, but also trying to see more *deeply*: inquiring into the underlying dynamics and causes of the reality, and looking inside oneself.

Connecting with the reality of our work

On the walls at the back of the meeting room was an exhibit of work from Kim Feinberg's two books: "Tomorrow" which is about children affected by AIDS and "A Mother's Legacy" about affected mothers. As the first step in "seeing together", the participants were invited to walk through the exhibit and look and read in silence, while reflecting on the questions: "What is our work? What is important to me in this work?" They were asked to write answers to these questions up on a large piece of paper on the wall.



What is our work?

To reach our deepest humanity • To make a difference in the lives of OVC • To make this happen • To create a society where children can have "2 dogs and freedom" • To give ourselves and gain from others • To give children flowers before they become adults too soon • To make things whole • To share with them the knowledge and skills to face daily challenges • To nurture, protect, and inspire children • To prevent AIDS from robbing children of loving families • To make South Africa a better world for children • To offer genuine hope and invest in the potential of children • To create an environment that makes the well-being and rights of a child wholly achievable • To encourage responsibility, respect, adoration • To create a world for all children irrespective of their situation • To work together as humanity • To put all our capacity and resources together to make this happen and give them an opportunity to develop and grow to their full potential • To provide for, and protect our children • To be a good mother to all children, of my loins and of the soil • To succeed for our children

Power dynamics

After lunch, participants were introduced to a small power dynamics game in the courtyard. Each participant was given a playing card to stick on their forehead without looking at the card. The 2's to 5's were told they were unimportant people, the 10's to Aces were very important people, and the 6's to 9's were the people in the middle. They were told to interact with this reality in mind, and to guess what their card was. Within a few minutes, the "lowers" had found each other and started toyi-toying on the side, while the "middles" and the "uppers" were still disorganised. The facilitator asked them to group themselves in the three groups, and when she told the middles their place was where the lowers had been toyi-toying, they stood firm and said "this place is occupied."



The group went inside for a debrief on what happened and what lessons can be drawn from this game. The lowers had experienced rejection, but also unity. The middles were often confused about their identity, direction, and belonging. The uppers had been shown respect and attention, people had come to them, but some of them had also been rejected in trying to join the wrong group. It took the uppers a long time to group together.

In making the link to "real life", some rich reflections came out: We often take for granted the positions assigned to us. The powerless lack access to the powerful. The powerless create unity but push others away. Money creates power and power often corrupts. Labeling children "OVC" can have deep repercussions, in the sense that they then see themselves as that and act from that place. Most importantly, there was a realisation that the rules of the game were only rules of the game – the participants could have come together to change these rules if they had wanted to. We have the opportunity to determine new rules in this game of life.

"If those in powerful positions were to gather together how much impact would that make? Why does that not happen, why do they not work together to affect the common good? Do the competitive elements get in the way? What allows us to engage with each other as people with presence and integrity?"

The power dynamics game thus served as encouragement for participants to start now in shifting the rules of the game, starting with the three days of the Innovation Lab itself, by noticing power dynamics in the room and trying to level the "playing field" in order to improve collaboration.

Dialogue interviews

Participants now joined in pairs for a “dialogue interviewing” exercise. They were given a set of guideline questions to help them inquire into each other’s stories, work, dreams, thoughts, and experiences of collaboration. They were asked to focus on listening, to practice suspending their judgment, and to seek to really understand the other person.

After the interviews, the facilitators asked participants to write a key insight about collaboration on a card to hang on the wall, and to share some of these insights in plenary. The comments ranged from very personal connections - realising they had something in common they weren’t aware of before - to important insights about collaboration and about how to rethink and restructure care for children. Many felt that the dialogue interviews enabled important relationship-building and getting to know each other.



Insights about collaboration

Collaboration is an attitude – it comes from the heart • Collaboration must not be forced, but should grow organically out of individuals and groups, it must be incremental. • We need to emphasise role clarification. Without mandates, we become unproductive. • Collaboration goes with commitment, without commitment we can go nowhere. • Huge effort is required to sustain collaboration • Open dialogue and sharing of information facilitates collaboration • Importance of listening, understanding, agreeing to act and revisiting action • Leadership of a collaborative initiative is essential • There must be a clear definition for the basis of collaboration and no hidden agendas • Collaborative leadership involves humility and power-sharing – it’s not about the limelight • Collaboration won’t happen unless the partners share a vision • “Out of the heart comes issues of life” (Proverbs) • Collaboration hinges on relationships • Collaboration requires dedicated resources • The “right people at the right place at the right time” can make a big difference • Keep the win-win aspect of collaboration and don’t be demoralised by the challenges • Collaboration requires courage

Sector conversations – Our “prouds” and “sorries”

Having looked at the personal experiences of collaboration through the dialogue interviews, the group shifted to gaining a sectoral perspective. Each sector is playing a certain role and making a certain contribution to collaboration around serving children. The intention with this step in the Innovation Lab was to become more aware, within and across sectors, of what these contributions are, both the ones that contribute positively and those that slow us down.

The participants were therefore divided into the following sector groupings: Government, Business, NGOs, CBOs, Academic/Medical, and Donors/International Development Agencies. The groups were asked to reflect on what they were *proud* about in terms of their sector’s contribution to collaboration in the OVC field, and what they were *sorry* about. After their sector group dialogues, they presented back in plenary.

The **Government sector** made the first presentation, and set a tone of thorough and honest self-reflection, tempered with a sense of humour. They said they felt that they could be *proud* of the constitution, and of good child-friendly legislation and policies, particularly around free healthcare for children, no-fee schools, and the integrated food security strategy. They were also proud of their achievements with the housing programmes for vulnerable people, the school feeding schemes, NACCA and the Home-Based Care system, and of the fact that they have structures for implementation and money to spend.

The Government participants were *sorry* for how government has perfected the art of working in “silos”, and for their inadequate collaboration and integration in planning, implementation and information systems. They felt there is a gulf between national and local government with no effective structure to help people at national, provincial and local or community level to operate collaboratively. They were also sorry for the limited access to service delivery and chronic underspending, for the way the procurement systems work, for the time it takes to approve a policy or act, for the lack of effective communication and media strategy, and for their poor tracking, monitoring and evaluation.

The **Business sector** participants were next. They felt they could be *proud* because business has achieved a lot of creative work on individual projects. They thought business has shifted in recent years to a more holistic focus on community development, and a more sustainable approach, away from ‘chequebook charity’. The triple bottom line now applies, even on the stock exchange, so that the importance of profits is balanced by sustainability indicators and community impact. Some South African business initiatives are world-class, and potentially best practices that could be shared internationally. Further, there is a comparatively large amount of money going to social projects from business in South Africa, a lot of information data is available on spend and focus areas, and business is efficient at sourcing information to drive its strategies. Finally, business has contributed to the national planning and framework for OVC.

The business participants felt *sorry* that business does not sufficiently use its power and leadership to advocate and influence the common good, and that corporates often don’t want to share the limelight. There is a high turnover of leadership which leads to a loss of momentum and a tendency for short-term issues to win out over long-term concerns. Business also often takes an approach that is too mechanistic and they get impatient and tired of giving when short-term results don’t materialize. There is a tick-the-box tendency, trying to do quick, small things, that then don’t work in the long run, and business can be



too prescriptive or driven by pet projects that don’t necessarily meet community needs. Finally, they acknowledged that business is sometimes arrogant and that the business environment breeds a certain manner which pays off in business but is not necessarily helpful in other contexts.

The **NGO sector** were *proud* of recent attempts to collaborate, of their involvement in the NACCA process, and of their extensive experience at

grassroots level of real community processes. They were *sorry* about their level of ability to share good practice models and coordinate their work, and for how they often get bogged down in structures and politics, and compete for turf. They also experienced competition between NGOs and government and between the children's and women's sectors.

The **Research/knowledge/academic sector** were *proud* of their sustained support for legislation and policy development and the massive expansion of research capacity. Dissemination of research results in fact sheets and publications that are accessible to the general public, and the evidence that is developed through research and communication has formed the basis for a variety of programs. They were proud that they have developed knowledge as a response to *real* issues, that they are multi-disciplinary in approach, and that they have now recognized different forms of knowledge generation, including people's stories and experience and that it can come from everywhere. They have been involved in developing new and more helpful attitudes and approaches to evaluation, and they have been driving the introduction of formal qualifications for the sector. They were half proud, and half sorry about their collaboration, feeling that they are strongly networked and represented regionally, across the continent and internationally.

The participants from this sector were *sorry* that money continues to divide them, resulting in competition, and that duplication leads to a waste of resources and energy. They also thought they are not yet good enough about keeping government and civil society informed relating to children, and not sufficiently clear about messages (e.g. breast feeding), feeling that they don't always come out strongly enough on issues facing children, because they get distracted and sucked into narrow sensationalist issues. They felt they have not been strong enough to eliminate headline language that trivializes and stigmatizes children's issues: Language like "OVCs", "the orphans", and "helping children" can trivialize. They proposed that this language change for the duration of the workshop, preferring 'children living in difficult circumstances'.

The **Donors and international agencies sector** started by pointing out the diversity of the members in their group, which made it hard to have one story from this group. With that qualification, they felt *proud* of effective grantmaking that requires good collaboration and invests in potential. They were also proud of their success in raising awareness of children's rights, of the role they have played in distributing knowledge through conferences enabling sharing of best practices, and of the alliances they have built for the purposes of lobbying and advocacy and building partnerships in-country and internationally.



They felt *sorry* because they have not done well in mapping who is giving money to what, and sharing information about what they are funding and what they are learning. They thought their process for giving is not sufficiently grounded in a comprehensive understanding of what is happening. They also acknowledged that they often have high transaction costs, and

that internal bureaucracy and process can dominate and slow down money getting to where it is needed. They felt there is a tension of wanting to go through due process but at the same time not wanting to delay the resources getting areas of need.

The **CBO sector** focused more on challenges than on prouds and sorries. They felt their voices are often not heard and recognised, and that information is not readily available to them. They suffer from the lack of integration across government services and funders, and from short funding cycles, having to duplicate documents for funding and re-apply every year. They felt there is a need for greater collaboration to see what CBOs are doing to avoid duplication and for example cluster their efforts. They also suffer from high turnover because CBOs develop people from the ground who then move on to other positions in government or NGOs, where they can earn more income.

Though the presentations of “prouds” and “sorries” went overtime, participants remained engaged. Many found it refreshing to hear from each sector’s own voice what they are aware they need to improve on. It was an eye-opener to some to realise what people within each sector already see and are struggling with, and it was felt that the level of honesty displayed by each sector had potential to shift some of the culture of blame that exists between sectors.

As the first day closed on the Innovation Lab, participants were asked to ponder overnight one major question they have about collaboration to improve care for orphaned and vulnerable children. They were left with a quote from Albert Einstein:

“If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution. I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes.”

Burning questions

The morning of the second day, after a session of laughing yoga, participants were asked to share their burning questions first at small tables and then in plenary. These included:

“We always see half of the picture or just a part of it, there are always pieces missing. What would we need to do to all have access to real information?”

“What is our theory of change? How do we see a process of leadership development leading to real change in the lives of children living under difficult circumstances?”

“What is the cost of not doing something?”

“What is government’s role and what auxiliary services can we provide as corporates?”

“Do we really understand what children in distress need?”

“Why is it usual that we do not understand what others are doing? Why is our planning all inward looking?”

“What stops us from doing at what we are best suited at doing? What stops us from doing what we know needs to be done?”

“Have we adequately defined a common vision for what we want to achieve?”

“In an environment of scarcity how thinly do you spread the jam? Do you go to the many or service the lucky few with your one stop service? How do you weigh up those choices?”

“How do we collaborate towards the distribution of resources to meet the needs of vulnerable children?”

“Are services reaching the children who need it, do we have an overlay of services that cover what was identified as poverty pockets?”

“Who am I not talking to that I should be talking to in this forum and how will this network facilitate that?”

“How might we collaborate while bringing our unique process and products together?”

“Are we ready to collaborate?”

“Are we not cooperating because our existence as an industry is more important than dealing with the problem of children in distress?”

“How do we bring different thinking together about the problem?”

“How do we prevent children becoming orphans? How do we sustain the lives of parents?”

Deeper causes - 5 Why's

By now, participants had shared their perceptions of the current reality from both individual and sectoral perspectives, and started asking questions about why things are as they are, and how to move forward.

The next step was to try and take a more *systemic* perspective on the issues that have come up so far. It was pointed out that sometimes when we talk of a systemic perspective, we think about looking at the “big picture” in the sense of all the different elements of a reality. However, a systemic perspective can also be about *looking in* – to see the deeper, underlying causes that feed these many different elements of reality. Where do these multiple elements share some common causes? This can help us to identify patterns that characterise the system as a whole, and which, if shifted, can have a big impact.

Participants divided into small groups, and were given three A3 sheets each with different quotes from stakeholders about collaboration, for example:

“In South Africa, the government tends to think they can do it. Real engagement with civil society and NGOs has been lukewarm.”

“NGOs and academics – information doesn't reach across the boundary.”

“At least 6 different manuals had been developed by 6 different NGOs. That's a waste of resources. This is one of the areas we need to look at as Civil Society. It's stupid.”

Each group was asked to try and get to the bottom of these quotes by first naming what the quote was describing and then asking “why is this happening?” To the answer to that first question, they should again ask “why is this happening?” and so on, asking why five times, eventually getting to some deeper underlying dynamics.

After the groupwork, participants were asked to write their key underlying factors on cards, which were grouped on the wall.

Underlying causes

No value attached to collaboration • Territoriality, competition, and power struggles • Lack of capacity • Different agendas • Ego-orientation • Lack of trust • Race and gender issues • Lack of accountability • Primacy of self-preservation and self-protection • Powerlessness • Poor communication • Lack of coordination • Short-term thinking • Lack of belonging • Lack of creativity • Priority given to economic needs • Lack of holistic care system • Arrogance • Inward focus • Not putting children in the center

In the plenary conversation that ensued, a number of crucial points were made. The card that said “Not putting children at the center” was moved to the center of the picture, highlighting that a lot of these problems arise when stakeholders lose sight of focusing on the children. One participant said “We are talking about children. Let’s not forget that we were each once a child”, and another pointed out, “We all have a problem in not meeting the needs of the child. We need to step out of our comfort zone and support each other to do that.”



As participants discussed their perceptions of these underlying causes and obstacles, a key question was raised around the balance of accountability and punishment: “What are the consequences for us if we fail? Who gets punished? With government people can take their vote away but there is no consequence for business or civil society. What is the punishment for failure and do we share that punishment equally? Is there a common factor or mechanism that allows us to share the failure?”

Who gets punished if we fail?

Who really feels it if we fail?

Nature Retreat

Many words had now been spoken. The Innovation Lab had reached a turning point, where the group needed to now shift from seeing together to creating together informed by what they had seen. But first, it was time for some silence and introspection, to allow the many words to settle and for each person to decide the significance for them personally and for their commitment and role moving forward.

They walked across the river and spread out in the natural setting surrounding Spier to sit for a little while and see what would come up when there is some silence and empty space created. They were offered a question to sit with around what they each felt was being asked of them, what they were feeling called into at this time.

A Sleep of Prisoners

The human heart can go the lengths of
God
Cold and dark we may be
But this is no winter now.
The frozen misery of centuries cracks,
begins to thaw.
The thunder is the thunder of the flows,
the thaw, the flood, the upstart spring.
Thank God our time is now.
When wrong comes up to face us
everywhere, never to leave us.
The longest stride of soul folk ever
took.
Affairs are now soul sized, the
enterprise is exploration into God.
But what are you waiting for?
It takes so many thousand years to
wake.
But will you wake? For pity's sake.

- Christopher Frye



As they returned from their nature retreat, they joined in four small circles to create playdough images of their key insights from the retreat and to share these with the other members of their circles. These insights were at quite a personal level related to each person's situation, vision, and commitment: how rarely we take time to just relax and reflect; how quickly we lose sight of the child when we are rushing in our daily work; how hard it is to feel like we are ever doing enough for the children; how to have healthier assumptions about the children; and, questions around what we are really working for, what role to play, and where to place ourselves in the system.

Creating Together

The third “Act” of the Innovation Lab story was focused on developing creative solutions to the collaboration challenges that had surfaced on the first day and a half. Here, participants were drawing on their ability to think on their feet, to work with their hands, and to develop ideas collaboratively and creatively.

Speed dating

After lunch, participants lined up for a “speed dating” session. The idea here was to use quick networking to create ideas for one-on-one collaboration among participants. Half the group lined up their chairs, while the others went up to someone in the line that they knew they wanted to discuss collaboration with, or someone random. They did 3 rounds of 10 minutes like this and then posted a variety of ideas that had come up on the wall.



Speed-dating ideas

- SoulCity and Starfish collaborate on fundraising
- DoAgriculture will facilitate partnership for capacity-building
- HSRC will give a research briefing to those interested every 6 months
- Explore ways to collaborate in Alexandra and share resources
- Joint corporate steering committee for OVC
- Collaboration to bring Soul Buddyz clubs to SACBC’s afterschool care programmes
- Unilever and DoSD Western Cape to build capacity of small community organisations
- NMCF and DoSD Gauteng to meet GPAC and PACCA to commit these structures
- Synergos and Tomorrow Trust to link networks
- Individual AIDS Forum explore cluster funding with DG Murray Trust
- Sharing monitoring and evaluation systems
- Savings accounts for children
- Networking funders with programmes they can identify with
- OVC donor network
- Link with DoHousing to assist in accessing housing for children in distress
- Unilever and Tomorrow Trust to collaborate on programmes incl workshops on hygiene
- Convene and DoSD to tell success stories of collaboration
- Support for peer education at schools
- NMCF and Oxfam to exchange knowledge, networks, and strategies
- FBO partnership to strengthen outreach to hospital/clinic points
- Exploring potential collaboration between business and government which is implementable
- Research collaboration between NGOs and CBOs
- SoulCity could use CRDC fieldworkers
- ORC and NMCF to meet to take collaboration forward
- Meeting on Bana Pele to identify areas of collaboration in Gauteng
- Mapping services in districts
- Information sharing on legal issues

Innovation in complex systems

Participants were given a power point presentation around social innovation, introducing them to the difference between social and technical innovation, examples of social innovation, and some useful processes of social innovation. One key message of this presentation was that social innovation can only be successful if it is done in constant interaction with stakeholders, and receiving constant feedback from the system in which the social innovation needs to apply. A successful social innovation cannot be conceptualised from a desk, but needs to be shaped in the real world.



The Innovation Lab participants were given an opportunity to form groups around ideas that would address the challenges that had come up through the workshop and would enhance collaborative leadership in order to improve care for children. The facilitators pointed out that these innovation ideas should ideally be things that strengthen the existing work, and possibly even reduce workloads by increasing efficiency, rather than being something that adds to the stress that is already there.

The participants formed nine innovation groups around nine different ideas. Over the course of the rest of the second day and the morning of the third day, they worked in these initiatives. First they built 3-dimensional models of their ideas with a variety of modeling materials. The modeling was intended to stimulate creativity, so that ideas could emerge and change through the collaborative work with the hands. After the modeling the groups received feedback from each other, refined the models and then presented them on the final day of the Innovation Lab.

On the third day, the group was joined by 12 esteemed guests (see list in appendix), who contributed to the feedback and participated in refining the initiatives. The initiatives that were presented on the final day are described below.

The Innovation initiatives

1. Organising the children's sector

(Host: Maria Mabetoa, Department of Social Development)

This group looked at coming up with a holistic approach to coordinating children's issues in the country, mainly looking at service delivery and trouble-shooting. They aimed to look at the existing structures and identify the gaps, and came up with the idea of setting up an inter-sector children's forum to function at local, provincial, and national level. There is a provision made for a coordinating structure in the children's bill in the chapter on collaboration. Existing forums would continue but feed into a bigger coordinating structure.

Their next steps were to draft a document with terms of reference, a strategy and action plan. Their priority actions were to finalise a concept paper by end of January 2008, to call a meeting of all stakeholders for buy-in in February 2008, to develop strategy, plans, and budgets. They asked the

group for participation.

2. Self-Sufficiency/Exit Strategy

(Host: Roger Tuckeldoe, Department of Agriculture)

The challenge addressed by this group is that a child is only in the system until the age of 18. They met to develop ideas for how the child can better be prepared before 18 to be self-sufficient, once the system is no longer supporting them. The innovation idea was to set up a savings account with a certain amount of money when the child is born. Throughout his life he will be given opportunity to learn about using money. The aim would be to both enable a financial foundation but also to develop the moral fibre of the child.

This group's top priorities were to embark on research, identify champions to collaborate with, to start a programme design and to start piloting the initiatives. They asked the group for open minds, out-of-the-box thinking and other ideas for assisting the child after 18.

3. OVC Donor Network

(Hosts: Russell Davies, Hope HIV and Kate Miszewski, Old Mutual)

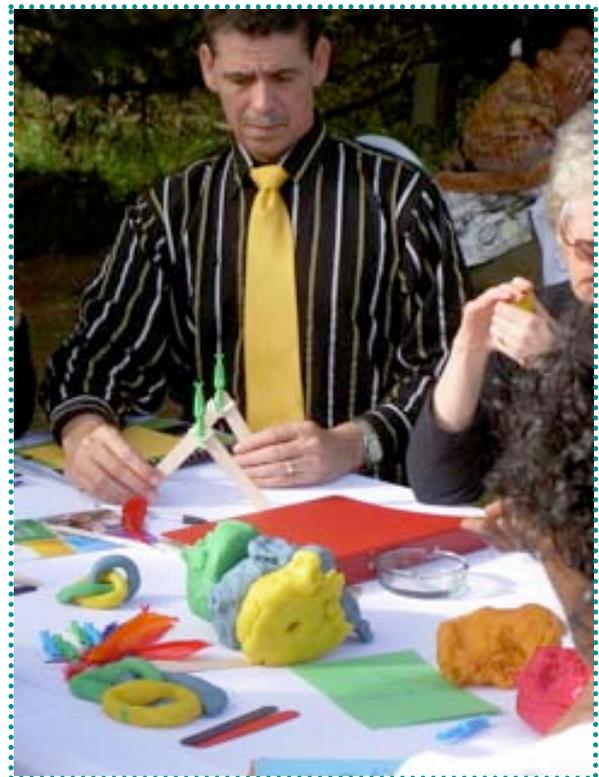
The OVC Donor Network group aims to better target and co-ordinate the funding of community based OVC projects in South Africa with a view to reducing duplication and inequity and creating opportunities for collaborative initiatives. Their immediate priorities were to develop a terms of reference, distribute contact details, and schedule a meeting in January. They intended to dedicate a full time person, and UNICEF volunteered to draw it together. They asked the group to share terms of reference to avoid duplication.

4. Uneven Distribution of Resources for Children and Families

(Host: Joan Van Niekerk, Childline)

It was noted by some service providers that in some areas (both in terms of type of service needed and geographical area) there are gaps in resources, and in other areas there may be overlap. However identifying areas in which lacks and duplications occur is difficult due to the lack of a comprehensive directory of services. The lack of a directory of services to vulnerable children also makes appropriate referrals difficult. Considering this, this group's idea involved putting together a "Children & Family Yellow Pages" to help with identifying gaps, areas for scaling up services, and to enable referrals. This directory would need to be maintained on an ongoing basis.

The priorities were to approach a strong coordinating body and request that it takes ownership (eg. the children's sector SANAC group/ NACCA/ The Children's Forum) in order: to identify the type of information that everyone would find useful; collect the information needed for such a directory; compile the directory in a user friendly format; and, identify data distribution points including ones



accessible to rural communities. It is important that this activity take place across sectors and across directorate within sectors. They asked the group to cooperate in providing information, resources and in helping to develop a budget.

5. Database Project

(Host: Bheki Sibeko, Gauteng DoSD)

This group was inspired by a dream of creating a small island in our country where we can say that in this area all children are taken care of, because we have tracked all of them. Their priority actions were to convene a project team by end November 2007, to map plans and process in December, and present plans to stakeholders. They asked the academic sector to contribute work they are doing that could contribute and any other stakeholders to get involved and help.

6. Capacity Building

(Host: Zeni Thumbadoo, NACCW)

This group focused on the lack of a human resource capacity to deliver on the programmes we need to help children. They identified a need for recruitment, development, and up-scaling for all social service professionals at auxiliary and professional levels and called for the unblocking of sources of funding for development, accredited training and career pathing, and for innovative ways of training. In addition, the need for senior Departmental officials to advocate for the regulation of workers other than social workers as social service professionals was stressed.

Their priority actions were to set up a reference group and funding by end of February, and to advocate for the recognition and regulation of child and youth care workers as one of the social service professionals other than social workers who have a critical role to play in integrated service delivery. There is a need for both more trained & regulated personnel as well as a variety of social service professionals to meet the need of children at risk and in difficult circumstances. The development of a skilled work force in the welfare sector and especially in the context of poverty in the communities is a critical obligation.

7. Local Government

(Host: Khomotso Kgothadi, Presidency)

This group was focused on strengthening capacity, action planning, and collaboration in local government, and strengthening collaboration among the different tiers of government. Their priority actions were to use the legislation to mainstream children's issues in all departments and to dialogue on children's issues across all departments at all levels.

8. Scaling up

(Host: Pat Sullivan, Noah)

The assumption for this group is that we already have enough information within the sector that can help to address the challenge we are facing. Through collaboration and each sector contributing its appropriate role, it is possible to scale up the OVC response. They suggested having a coalition of donors releasing money to NGOs to mobilize the community to recreate the family unit to be identified within CBOs. Money should be provided to CBOs to unlock the resources that are already there. Their action priorities were to write and agree on an action plan. They asked the group for collaboration, commitment, and practice.

9. Accountability – Mechanisms to hold civil society accountable

(Host: Ntjantja Ned, Hollard Foundation)

The underlying argument for this group was that for civil society to be taken seriously they should have a mandate. HSRC offered to undertake beneficiary surveys, SCUK would consider funding for

baseline studies, mapping etc. Hope Worldwide offered to take responsibility to develop guidelines for programming in line with the children's bill. The participants in the group did not include enough civil society members so it was felt that someone must host a discussion with civil society.

Commitments and presentation on Leadership Network

As the final step in the Innovation Lab process, participants were taken through a process of writing about their own learnings, outcomes, and commitments from the process. This was followed by a presentation on the way forward with the OVC Leadership and Innovation Network.

Lessons and Outcomes

Looking back on the objectives of the workshop, it is important to reflect on what was achieved in this brief event, and what lessons were learned.

Initiatives

As can be seen from the previous section, many participants at the event developed ideas for collaboration and made immediate commitments to each other to work together on various initiatives. This was both as an outcome of the “speed dating” process and as an outcome of the facilitated innovation process. In the evaluations and follow-up phone conversations with participants it was apparent that these were real commitments and that there are strong intentions to follow through on them.

“The results of this workshop will lead to an improved, more integrated response.”

“The things we committed ourselves to, we will make it happen. I will push for that.”

However, the final day of the workshop was very rushed, as the agenda had gradually slipped behind schedule and time was needed to integrate the esteemed guests who arrived on that morning. Because of this, there was insufficient time to develop the nine innovation initiatives, to reflect critically on them, to integrate them with each other and with other initiatives happening in the country, and to refine them and make clear commitments moving forward. Some participants suggested in their evaluations that the first part of the workshop (seeing together) should have been shorter to give more time to the second part (creating together).

It is clear that there are a lot of linkages across various of these initiatives and a need to “join the dots”. Several of the initiative teams in their presentations on the final day requested other participants to help them to see where they might be duplicating something that is already happening. Much of this work is still to be done.

In addition, it is worth reflecting on the varying extents to which these initiatives really qualify as “innovations”, as well as the varying extents to which they are addressing the deeper underlying collaboration challenges which the group mapped out, and to what extent the Lab left the initiative teams with innovation tools that will help them as they take their next steps on the initiatives.

It is limited what can be achieved in three days. With more time and with some adjustments to the process and conditions of the Lab, more attention could be given to these questions. This is part of the thinking behind the follow-up work to the Innovation Lab as well as the design of the Leadership and Innovation network. The participants of the Leadership and Innovation Network will have more time to go in depth and create genuine innovations, as they will work through an innovation process during several meetings over the course of a full year.

Networking & relationship-building

In the evaluations and follow-up phone calls with participants, the networking was highlighted as the biggest and most meaningful result of the Lab. Although many delegates knew each other they hadn’t necessarily been given the safe and neutral space to network across sectors in this way before. Convene was successful in getting many critical players to

attend, and participants were generally satisfied with the mix of people who attended.

Participants pointed out that this networking was enabled through the context and process which was leveling the playing field, and allowing people to communicate more deeply and honestly. They valued both the opportunity to meet with people whom they had not met before, but also to meet their existing partners in new ways.

“Thank you for the opportunity to look into the eyes of the people with whom I’ve not met before, or have only communicated with by e-mail.”

Collaborative leadership

It is often hard to assess immediately how an event such as this has affected one’s leadership and capacity to collaborate. This is the most intangible of the objectives. We also realize it is impossible to shift a system to deep collaboration in a period of three days. Meanwhile, the feedback from participants on this point was that the Innovation Lab did achieve:

- Highlighting the importance of collaboration in the minds of participants;
- Providing the participants with an experience of collaboration;
- Surfacing and exploring some of the underlying challenges to collaboration;
- Providing sectors with a better understanding of each other;
- Initiating connections between participants at a “human level” which will facilitate collaboration;
- Initiating creative ideas to support collaboration; and
- Creating a space for networking.

“Collaboration will be my new job description and focus.”

In addition, in their evaluations, participants mentioned other benefits to their leadership development:

- Personal growth;
- The ability to stand back and reflect;
- Having felt exhausted at the end of the year, gained “renewal”, “empowerment”, “energy”, “stimulation”, and “motivation”;
- Gained practical skills and tools of “going deeper”.

Support for the Leadership and Innovation Network

Of the evaluations that were filled out all stakeholders were interested in participating or considering participating in the Leadership and Innovation Network. The presentation on the network was cut short as people had to get to the airport, and didn’t allow for questions and answers though, so most participants felt they needed more clarity and information about it. In addition to mobilising potential members for the Network, the Innovation Lab also established potential additional funding sources and other sources of support.

Additional lessons

Additional points of learning from the evaluations and the reflections of the organizing team itself included:

- *Venue*: Spier was a beautiful venue for the workshop, highly conducive to participants having time to renew themselves, feel appreciated, and connect with each other. Meanwhile, some participants felt it was too luxurious considering the topic. In addition, the meeting room setup in the wine cellar was not ideal for a variety of reasons, and the walking distance to the outdoor rooms given the weather conditions didn’t allow for their use as much as planned.

- *Group size:* The group size was large for this type of process, and this challenge was exacerbated by having an additional 12 esteemed guests arrive on the last day. It was difficult to integrate the guests so that they would have a meaningful experience and at the same time not disrupt the work which the group was in the middle of. This idea of inviting in esteemed guests on the final day would need to be revisited if such a programme is repeated.
- *Insufficient closure:* The final day of the Innovation Lab was very rushed, and the closure of the Lab was insufficient. Participants had quite different assessments of the first two days vs. the final day because of this time pressure, and feeling pushed through the process on the final day. This compromised the quality of the initiatives and their clarity on way forward, and also did not allow time for questions and comments on the leadership network. Part of the reason for this was the imperative for participants to experience a full miniature-version of the process that is intended for the Leadership Network, so that the Innovation Lab could serve as a pilot or test-case for the Leadership Network. Alleviating this challenge would require more realism in the process design, more foresight on logistical issues, as well as rethinking the idea of inviting in new participants to join a process that is already underway.

In summary, the Innovation Lab did meet its objectives and provided a valuable and worthwhile experience for participants. At the same time, there was room for improvement which offers rich lessons for the future.

Way Forward

As explained earlier, the Innovation Lab was not a standalone event. In early 2008, an OVC Leadership and Innovation Network of stakeholders will be convened. Over the course of 2008 and early 2009, they will participate in a longer and more in-depth process similar to the process of the Innovation Lab – seeing together, reflecting together, and creating together. In addition to this innovation and collaboration work, they will attend networking sessions and receive leadership coaching, and they will receive support in between the events to keep up the momentum.

The OVC Leadership and Innovation Network will invite members to sign up for one year at a time. The membership of the first year will likely include many of the people who were at the Innovation Lab at Spier, but also other similar stakeholders. Each year the network will focus on three innovation themes – three areas that have been defined by stakeholders as in need of creative thinking. The innovation initiatives that resulted from the Innovation Lab and the follow-up phone calls with participants will help to inform these innovation themes for the first year.

The invitations to join the Leadership and Innovation Network will be distributed shortly to all the participants in the Innovation Lab as well as other stakeholders.

In addition to the way forward on the establishment of the Leadership and Innovation Network, Convene will support follow-up work specific to this Innovation Lab. This will involve helping to “join the dots” and track outcomes on the nine specific initiatives that came out, in order to ensure that the Lab does not go down in history as another “talk shop”. A video will be produced for the Innovation Lab as well, and a website will be launched both to serve as a focal point for follow-up work to the Lab as well as the Leadership and Innovation Network.

We look forward to continuing this work in 2008 and to improving the quality and quantity of care for South Africa’s children.

For more information, or to offer comments or questions on this report, please contact:

Mille Bojer
Reos Social Innovation
bojer@reospartners.com

Ann Lamont
Convene
ann@convene.co.za

Annexure

List of Participants

Government:

Dr. Connie Kganakga, Department of Social Development
Dr. Maria Mabetoa, Department of Social Development
Johanna De Beer, Department of Social Development
Zaheera Mohamed, National Treasury
Andile Xonti, Department of Social Development, Western Cape
Bheki Sibeko, Department of Social Development, Gauteng
Sylvia Stevens-Maziya, Department of Social Development, Gauteng
Tshidi Maaga, Department of Social Development
Musa Mbere, Department of Social Development
Sarah N Mazibuko, Department of Health
Cynthia Mgijima, Department of Education
Xoliswa Bikitsha, Department of Education
Brennand Smith, Department of Education
Khomotso Kgothadi, Presidency
Roger Tuckeldoe, Department of Agriculture
Thembekile Mgobo, Department of Housing

Civil Society:

Adern Nkandela, Nelson Mandela Childrens Fund
Fikile Ngcobo, Nelson Mandela Childrens Fund
Pat Sullivan, Noah
Yvonne Spain, CINDI
Joan Van Niekerk, Childline
Ashley Theron, Child Welfare
Megan Briede, Child Welfare
Ashley DuPlooy, Starfish
Jonathan Morgan, REPSSI
Dr. Shereen Usdin, Soul City
Zeni Thumbadoo, NACCW
Kim Feinberg, The Tomorrow Trust
Dr. Aubrey Msimeki, We Can Soweto
Bishop John Mutula, We Can Soweto
Chippa Sithole, CRDC
Debbie Watson, Tumelong Mission
Richard Montsho, South African Catholic Bishops Conference
Len Le Roux, Synergos

Business:

Gillian Stern, Hollard Foundation
Ntjantja Ned, Hollard Foundation
Simone Rawlings, Investec

George Gibbs, ABSA Foundation
Louise Duys, Unilever
Kate Miszewski, Old Mutual Foundation
Colin Brown, Deutsche Bank

Donors and International Development Agencies:

Heidi Loening, UNICEF
Bernadette Moffat, Elma Philanthropies
Anita Sampson, USAID/Pepfar
Lynette Mudekanye, Save the Children
Marianne MacRobert, DG Murray Trust
Lynn Campbell, DG Murray Trust
Judith Flick, Oxfam
Russell Davies, Hope HIV

Academic/Research/Medical:

Shirley Pendlebury, The Children's Institute
Cati Vadwa, Children's Rights Centre
Marnie Vujovic, Harriet Shezi Children's Clinic
Linda Richter, HSRC

Esteemed guests for November 9:

Bongi Kunene, Presidency
Wiseman Magasela, Department of Social Development
Gugu Ndebele, Department of Education
Dr. Simpiwe Mngadi, DPLG
Kgotso Schoeman, Kagiso Trust
Bongi Mkhabela, Nelson Mandela Children's Fund
Teboho Klass, South African Council of Churches
Marc Aguirre, Hope Worldwiev
Patrick Enthoven, Hollard
Peter de Beyer, Old Mutual
Julia Zingu, Save the Children UK
Kathy Ackerman, Ackerman PnP Foundation?

Organising and facilitation team:

Ann Lamont, Convene
Nana Moiloa, Convene
Marianne "Mille" Bojer, Reos
Marianne Knuth, Reos
Gavin Andersson, Reos
Vanessa Sayers, Reos
Adele Wildschut, Synergos
Hilda Gertze, Synergos
Lydia Mason