

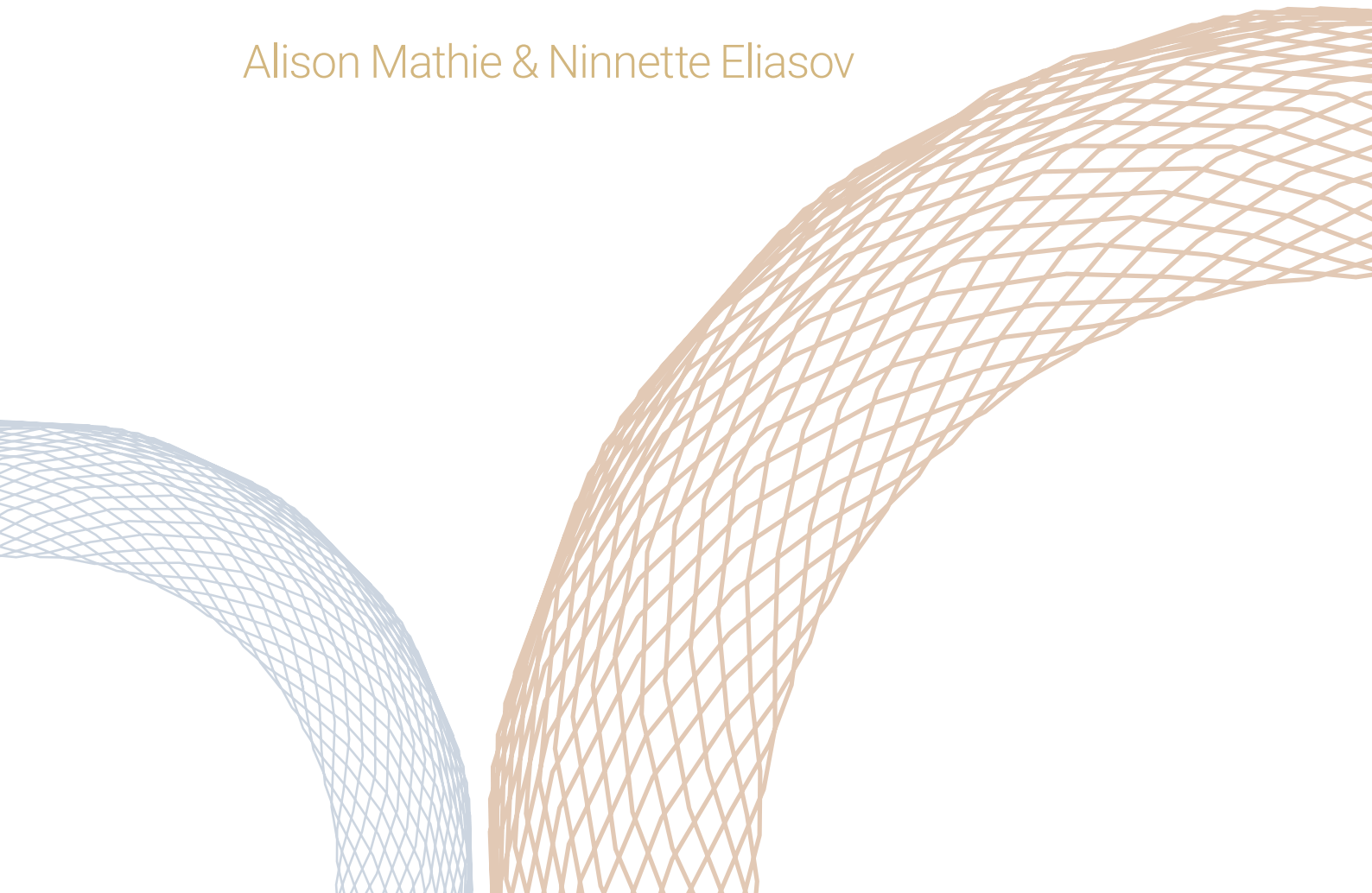


# Footprints: How a community grantmaker shifts the power

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The case of Ikhala Trust, South Africa

Alison Mathie & Ninnette Eliasov



'People always have power which is waiting to be tapped . . . Power while neutral in itself can be dispersed or shared among large numbers of people in the course of their human relationships, or concentrated in the hands of a few people or powerful institutions.'

**Philomena Mwaura, 2008**

'Power [is] an asset that individuals and organizations control and also a process to which we are all subject.'

**Eyeben and Guijt, 2016**

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## Introduction

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This case study<sup>1</sup> profiles the Ikhala Trust, a community grantmaker attempting to unleash the power that exists in local communities and shift and share the power of dominant institutions. Established in 2002, it provides small grants and mentoring support to community-based organizations operating within the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Small but mighty (and working with the small and potentially mighty) it has been at the vanguard of an approach to development assistance that is a clear departure from conventional philanthropic endeavours. Its grantmaking ethos is about valuing and investing in people and their assets, while helping to build capacities and networks so that community-based organizations can build community relationships themselves and connect to outside organizations to sustain their community-building work. Ikhala Trust assumes that ‘everyone has something to give’, whether time, money, or other resources, and that mobilizing these are in keeping with deep-rooted traditions of giving and helping. As such, their work shines the light on the potential for ‘community philanthropy’ to be the foundation for rebuilding civil society.

Whenever there is innovation, there is a critique of the old, a barrage of claims and aspirations for the new, and sceptical voices following soon after. This introduction is designed to help the reader navigate through these in order to appreciate the significance of Ikhala Trust’s work in the Eastern Cape, elaborated in the main body of this paper. We begin with a discussion of critiques of development assistance broadly, and how community philanthropy and citizen-led development fit into debates about better practice. We explore the aspirations and claims of community philanthropy and how Ikhala Trust attempts to respond to community initiative or work with communities to reinvigorate a sense of active citizenship in a post-apartheid context. Finally, we probe the Ikhala Trust experience to understand both the process and the results of trying to build on and revive community philanthropy.

1 The full case study is available on the Ikhala Trust website (<https://ikhala.org.za/about-us/>)

## The larger 'helping' ecosystem

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Most people are familiar with the broad-brush strokes of development assistance and the main players: bilateral government-to-government assistance; services of decentralized local government; philanthropic foundations; international and local non-government organizations; and (less well known and appreciated) – the wide array of associations and member-based organizations existing at the local community level. These state and civil society actors all play an important role in correcting the distortions of the market and, however imperfectly, 'democratizing' economic opportunity and realizing the rights of citizenship. Yet, frustrations emerge from all this, either from the weight of economic and political systems that pose intransigent obstacles to just and equitable development, or from trying to understand the histories, complexities and rhythms of local community life so that the appropriate response can be offered. As far as the latter is concerned, there is a substantial critique of how well-intentioned external agencies have inadvertently disabled rather than catalysed communities, and how '*some elements critical to community survival and prosperity have been lost in the process of development practice*' (Mathie and Cunningham, 2009, p2). More specifically, the critique is levelled at external organizations that focus on what is lacking in communities, failing to fully appreciate local assets and agency. They act as donors to recipients rather than as partners and co-investors.

Susan Wilkinson-Maposa and her co-authors (2005) provide important insights for filling this appreciation gap, or blind spot. They distinguish between the 'vertical' (top-down, one way) philanthropy of external funders to local communities and the 'horizontal' philanthropy of mutual self-help and obligations among community members. These horizontal help networks are fluid and dynamic yet embedded in local cultural traditions and values. In the context of South Africa, for example, the worldview of *ubuntu*, translated as '*I am because you are*', is often cited as fundamental, an acknowledgement in principle of the equality in standing of giver and receiver. Added to this are clan or extended family loyalties and obligations, the values instilled by faith-based organizations, self-help savings and various other informal ways of organizing to provide the mutual support necessary to manage living conditions and physical well-being in new social and cultural circumstances (Mati, 2017; Mattiar and Ngcoya, 2016).

Recognizing these local forms of help or philanthropy means we can better appreciate why 'vertical' forms of philanthropy by external organizations can be problematic. Their distance from day-to-day realities is one challenge, and this is compounded by the tendency for external decision-making, control and 'upward' accountability at the expense of genuine empowerment at the local community level (Judge, 2018; Eyben and Guijt, 2015). An unintended consequence can be unsustainable dependency on external relationships (as described in the Ikhala case, noted later in this paper) rather than an investment in sustainable internal relationships.

Fundamentally, vertical philanthropy is about a relationship of inequality, the wealthy giving to the poor. As a result, power differences between big donors and recipients

of funding tend to be reinforced in the act of helping. Even those NGOs in intermediary positions between donors and beneficiaries can struggle in the tension between implementing a donor agenda while at the same time honoring a 'participatory' ethos at the community level.

The role of the NGO sector (as intermediaries between donors and communities, or as independent entities) has become all the more tenuous in places where the space for civil society has shrunk, with increased regulation now curtailing their activity. In some countries, the State challenges the lack of legitimacy of NGO actors, especially when external funds are seen to be used for political activism (Mapstone, 2018). Sometimes the State claims that citizen participation and services to citizens are now within the purview of local government and 'civic participation' becomes enmeshed in political rhetoric and campaigning. In South Africa, rhetoric has brought many 'empty promises' over the past two decades and severe critics, even among those working for government who see how communities are manipulated for political gain:

'It killed me inside to be part of a system that abused 'social and community development' like it was abused by the oppressive apartheid regime as a tool to appease people rather than to enhance their capabilities and capacities of their livelihood strategies – which have always been asset-based – to achieve their own development objectives.'

**Motsuenyane, 2018**

By this logic, South Africa's social grants system, welcomed as a corrective measure for past injustice, has generated concerns about its unintended effects. These include the leakage of cash transfers, instead of being adequately invested in sustainable local social and economic development (Motsuenyane, 2018). In addition, there has been a failure of service delivery and participatory governance. Von Lieres and Piper (2016), for example, claim that the frustration about poor governance has deemed South Africa's attempt at political decentralization a 'failed formal participatory project.'

It is timely then to see how people organize locally and informally through self-help networks and social movements, and to consider how co-investment in community building initiatives is unfolding – potentially breathing new life into civil society, as reflected in the Ikhala Story.

## The promise of community philanthropy

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To distinguish it from community foundations, Doan (2018) defines community philanthropy as a process rather than an organizational form, emphasizing its social and cultural origins that pre-date more recent forms of development assistance. It is philanthropy BY and FROM the grassroots where community members, acting out of civic duty, contribute time and money to address issues directly affecting them (Hodgson

and Knight, 2010). It is the *'use of one's own assets for redistribution and as leverage that uniquely distinguishes community philanthropy from other community development practices'* (Doan, 2018, citing Kilmurray, 2015).

As a grantmaker, Ikhala Trust sees itself as a facilitating intermediary, injecting small grants to boost local community efforts, thus reinforcing nascent community philanthropy initiatives. Its funds<sup>2</sup> are modest and it places as much stock on accompaniment (through training, networking and mentoring) of the community members involved as it does on providing financial resources, recognizing the intrinsic value of non-monetary assistance for relationship building. Ikhala has extended its outreach to the farthest corners of rural Eastern Cape.

### **What assumptions, claims and promises of community philanthropy inspire this commitment?**

First of all, the approach has appeal in a context where, in many cases, people have internalized a sense of inadequacy and powerlessness through the legacy of apartheid, reinforced by paternalistic development assistance. Champions of community philanthropy challenge this deficit mindset and the passivity associated with it. Ikhala, for example, helps local leaders recognize underappreciated capacities and strengths, including mechanisms for mutual help and support that can help restore a sense of self-confidence, power and control. The principles of asset-based and citizen-led development (ABCD) for its community work and training efforts are fundamental, as the approach encourages people to recognize assets of all kinds – individual, social, economic, physical, political, and so on – and how these can be mobilized and multiplied for effective action.

Where the restoration of power is most telling is in the type of grantmaking that *'cedes the decision-making power about funding decisions – including the strategy and criteria behind those decisions – to the very communities that a foundation aims to serve'* (Gibson, 2018). It follows that a second reason for its appeal is that community grantmaking is a lever for disrupting and democratizing conventional donor-driven philanthropy.

A third reason is that it has coherence, combining an ethos with practice: existing horizontal forms of philanthropy are both validated (the ethos) and strengthened (practice) in an approach where the process is as important as the outcome (Gibson, 2018).

Additional claims follow: as well as increasing participants' sense of agency and leadership, community philanthropy tends to result in more effective philanthropic investments because it taps into local knowledge and experience. It nurtures a stronger civil society, based on civic mindedness, and has a greater prospect of sustainability (Gibson, 2018; Hodgson and Knight, 2012; Knight and Sahai, 2019). It supports self-organizing and strengthens social movements (Judge, 2018). How does it

2 Its funding partners include: Misereor and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, as well as Africa Groups of Sweden (Afrika Grupperna), ABSA, Eastern Cape Community Trust on Fisheries, VW Trust, Desmond Leech Bequest Fund and Gladys Niven Trust (through Nedbank Private Wealth) and LegalWise (see full case study).

accomplish this? It encourages participation by *'a mix of people who don't necessarily sit at the same table'* (Judge, 2018) avoids elite capture, works on developing relationships based on trust, and demonstrates how a small amount of money (in combination with the softer contributions of advice and mentorship support) can be more valuable than the dollar figure might suggest (Gibson, 2018). By building voice, local assets, and relationships that transcend institutional boundaries, it can help to build strong and active communities, with local ownership and accountability (Hodgson and Knight, 2012, Knight, 2012). Most interestingly, in the present day, community philanthropy can tap into new social networks fostered through cellular phones, social media and the internet – a new kind of co-created 'people power', particularly among youth.

## The challenges of community philanthropy

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Given the claims of community philanthropy's effectiveness and sustainability, it is not surprising that its advocates often present the idea of community philanthropy as a 'new paradigm', rather than a poor cousin of the 'more famous celebrities' of conventional development assistance (Hodgson and Knight, 2010). At the same time, however, proponents are well aware of the challenges.

Some of these are listed by Gibson (2018), by whose account grantmaking to encourage community philanthropy can be: resource intensive; risky; biased; confounded by conflicts of interests; difficult to achieve with true representativeness in the community; at odds with grantmaker interests; not as participatory as intended; and, hard to measure.

Sometimes the very idea of community and the expectations implicit in community philanthropy can be daunting. In and of itself, the idea of 'community' can be hard to delineate and embrace fully, given differences in power, influence and privilege. For this reason, development practitioners often shy away from a 'whole community' approach (Aigner et al.) preferring a more modest approach by identifying a small group of active citizens who have ideas and energy to see them come to fruition.

This is Ikhala Trust's approach – supporting community philanthropy by, (as Elliott, 1999 describes: *'locating the energy for change'*) and helping those community members to extend relationships and alliances, thus gradually, *'building community from the inside out'* as ABCD's founders recommend (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993).

As the list of challenges suggests, this 'building from the inside-out' is not a question of simply flicking a new-type-of-practice switch. Ikhala Trust's experience provides important insights in this regard. For example, the Trust has had to contend with unexpected levels of community passivity ironically arising in a democratic era. The reasons are complex and persist despite South Africa's progressive Constitution and pro-poor policies. The legacies of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid, a new culture of aid dependency as well as community expectations of rights and entitlements (for government grants and basic services) have to be taken into consideration.



Ikhala has learned that working at the community level is not enough – finding allies in local government and the NGO sector is also important. Another critique of community philanthropy (and also ABCD) is that it can give an excuse for government and NGOs to off-load responsibilities on communities who are already socially and economically marginalized, thereby perpetuating existing inequality. Community philanthropy therefore finds itself inserted into debates about ‘social contracts’ and who should take responsibility for what in the development agenda, suggesting how communities can hold government accountable for services long-promised, while at the same time self-organizing to optimize deep rooted philanthropic traditions (in tandem with opportunities provided through local government, the corporate sector and NGOs).

This collaborative possibility fits well with the notion of a ‘Developmental Local Government’ which is espoused in South Africa’s policy framework, but yet to be authentically realized:

‘Developmental Local Government is local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives.’

**Republic of South Africa – White Paper on Local Government, 1998**

The fundamental point remains, however, that in order to realize true democracy (supported by active citizenry), the individual’s internal psychological state (or mental model) and the internal personal narrative that shapes the assumptions about how we understand and interact with our world must be the first to shift (Schmuck and Vlek, 2003).

## Looking for evidence of results: Measurement challenges

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Acknowledging the claims and challenges of community philanthropy helps to frame the questions we should ask to assess progress in this field and the gains of its advocates, such as Ikhala Trust. Seeking evidence of success is a contentious enterprise, however, partly because it can so easily slide into an exercise in upward accountability, measuring change through predetermined indicators, as if development interventions result in neat linear outcomes (a trap exposed by Eyben et al. in their ‘Big Push Back’ against monitoring and evaluation in results-based management). Instead of this conventional ‘top down approach’, this case study looks for stories that capture both the ethos and practice of community philanthropy that tap into power and agency at local levels; and show examples where community groups are reaching or exceeding their aspirations – recognizing context-specific illustrations of community-building in motion. We also look at the inevitable challenges that are faced, interpret the successes and glean lessons from Ikhala Trust’s approach.

## Ikhala Trust: Its aspirations, challenges and progress

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Ikhala Trust was formed in 2002, the idea of establishing a delegated fund emerging from a workshop held in 1999 hosted by the German charity Misereor. Misereor as the funding agency wanted to explore ways of strengthening cooperation and delegating responsibility to their local partners in South Africa. A guiding principle was 'subsidiarity' – partners making their own decisions where they operated. In the same vein, discussions also arose among local partners (practitioners and grantmakers) about how to shift decision-making power to the local community level. This required a radical shift in thinking: the foundational framework for Ikhala's model, located in the field of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987) meant valuing the potential of local organizing efforts, recognizing their strengths and assets, and investing in what people were already doing. Fittingly, the word Ikhala means aloe, an indigenous plant in Eastern Cape known for its resilience and ability to thrive in adverse conditions. In establishing Ikhala Trust, the founders wanted to nurture the seeds of such resilience, as described by Theresa Edlmann, a consultant who was part of the team that conceptualised the organization:

'There was a gap between small, incredibly innovative initiatives at community level that didn't have the institutional capacity and the networks to access the kinds of funding that they needed . . . They were led by individuals who showed extraordinary leadership skills but who needed support.'

**Theresa Edlmann, Consultant**

Seeing this gap, Ikhala began to award micro-grants to small community organizations or groups as co-investment in community initiatives. Small grants are not seed money and are not intended for larger, professionally staffed non-profit organizations. They are intended to support initiatives where people are connecting with others to do something that they feel has value in their community.

Over the years, Ikhala has focused its efforts mainly on women in small rural villages. These communities are diverse and so are the community initiatives in which Ikhala co-invests. They include, for example: a recycling initiative; a computer training facility for youth; child and youth development activities; community health and food security initiatives; entrepreneurship ventures; and, a community library. Ikhala also partners with other donor agencies as a conduit, to help them navigate their way through to the community level. For example, LegalWise's Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programme has partnered with local community groups and supported NGOs such as Siya Sonke and the Raphael Centre, through the link that Ikhala facilitated.

Apart from funding, Ikhala Trust may also provide in-kind donations like clothing, vegetable seedlings, second hand furniture, and office equipment. The idea behind these donations is to model and reinforce: the notion that horizontal philanthropy goes beyond money; recycling and upcycling as a way of making the most of the earth's precious

resources; and, tapping into the emerging global trend of a local economic system that utilizes bartering (exchange of goods and services) as well as cash. Meanwhile, capacity development is its long game: Ikhala offers training in asset-based community development (ABCD), Organisational Development (OD) and Project Management (PM), and provides mentoring and ongoing support.

For the ABCD training, they were able to draw upon and adapt training materials from the Coady International Institute in order to shift the prevailing mindset of needs, deficits and problems to one that places greater emphasis on assets and opportunities. ABCD principles resonated with Ikhala's approach, since Appreciative Inquiry and the broader family of strengths-based approaches had been foundational. Ikhala may not have called it 'ABCD', but they had already articulated their interest in supporting people and local leadership who were already organizing their own initiatives.

Over time, Ikhala Trust realized that their own support to communities would need to be amplified by alliances with other players who influence the development sector locally and internationally. Others were drawn into the fold: community grantmakers, academia, corporates, local government and local and international development sector players. This growing network helped link its community partners to a broader set of allies and supporters.

To date, Ikhala Trust has disbursed grant funding of +- 4.5 million ZAR to 142 small community-based organizations, with grants ranging from 10,000 ZAR to 30,000 ZAR (enough for leverage of further funds but not too much to constitute a financial risk). Ikhala is often the first formal funder that a community partner may have. By and large, community organizations are run by volunteers, in that they contribute from their own pockets and use their own resources, time and skills to support development activities. They often are both the beneficiaries of the services as well as those executing these activities. Most do not have offices and may not be in a position to receive funding from larger, formal donors.

In the case of Kwenzikele Community Development Centre (KCDC) for example, a young graduate was keen to start a computer training facility. With the help of her family, she bought a few computers and friends contributed others. Starting with nine computers, she approached neighbours and local leaders to form a board, and began operating a small computer training facility and internet café from a Rondavel (hut) in the family homestead. Her organization formed a partnership with READ Educational Trust and a local primary school, and assisted the school to establish a library and vegetable garden. Volunteers taught children dance and sport. In 2011, KCDC met Ikhala Trust through a mutual contact and, impressed by the tenacity and resourcefulness of the youth, Ikhala readily invested, becoming KCDC's first funder. Subsequently, it helped to manage funds for KCDC provided by the New Settlers Foundation and influenced the organization's decision to pursue a business model through mobile computer training for its future sustainability.

Ikhala Trust is one of the few community grantmaking organizations that will support operational costs like: airtime; travel costs (mostly public transport); refreshments and catering; and, administration expenses like bank charges, stationery, photocopying, etc.

As a grantmaker, Ikhala Trust knows full well that money is not the only form of assistance community organizers need. It provides mentorship and support to ensure that capacity is built, which in turn strengthens the case for investment and support by others. Ikhala Trust's Annual Report explains how on-site visits are integral to its approach – advice, mentoring, coaching and listening to stories face-to-face are followed up with communication by phone, even if it is simply for grantees to *'chat and share their thoughts and feelings with us, knowing that we care and will listen'* (Annual Report 2010–2011). Similarly, Ikhala Trust fosters and rewards success through annual celebration events and awards for its grantees.

## Challenges

Despite the progress of reinvigorating and supporting community philanthropy, it is important to outline the challenges faced by Ikhala Trust, or comparable organizations for that matter. We mention these first so that the context of the progress it has made can be more fully appreciated. Challenges translate into costs for Ikhala Trust in terms of time and effort, and have to be set against the longer-term benefits of this kind of work. To review these, we first outline some of the challenges faced by the community-based organizations themselves, for these give an idea of the situation Ikhala is responding to.

First, at the local community level, there is increased frustration at the failure of government to provide basic services. Without these services, pressure is often transferred to Ikhala's community partners who do not have the necessary resources and capacity to respond. Increased expectations can create tension within these organizations (Annual Report 2017–2018). Not only have local government services been woefully inadequate or non-existent, but civil society generally has become more fragile. In turn, a weakened civil society has been unable to hold the state accountable and community organizations have been left to shoulder the burden of failed services. In this situation, the balance of citizen rights to services, and of citizen responsibilities to each other, is off-kilter. Ikhala Trust finds itself right in the midst of a potential crisis, supporting resilience but in an uphill struggle, where the slope gets steeper and the mythological rock of Sisyphus even heavier. It is no wonder that at the periodic workshops Ikhala Trust holds frustration has to be eased by dialogue among multiple stakeholders and by engaging with government and the donor sector to influence the state of play.

Second, clear communication and trust among the founders and the members of community organizations is not always easy to achieve. Financial assistance can sometimes cause conflict: it can set up expectations for volunteer payment or suspicions about its distribution. Leaders need the skills to manage as well as lead; they can be vulnerable to criticism, they may be reluctant to admit mistakes and may resist

change. They have to be able to earn legitimacy, and sometimes the conflict situations encountered are because that legitimacy is challenged.

The challenges faced by Ikhala Trust flow from these challenges at the community level. First, providing a small grant with the expectation that grant management and reporting will go smoothly can sometimes be misplaced. It takes time to build the culture and capacity of organizations to carry out basic reporting tasks so that there can be effective communication between these community organizations and Ikhala Trust. Mentoring visits are therefore built in to the costs of the partnership, and are supplemented by regular telephonic communication to solicit necessary data and information that Ikhala needs to monitor outcomes and results. This is also an accountability issue: Ikhala needs data and stories that demonstrate what the grant and other support has allowed the community organization to do, and is itself experiencing increasing pressure from its own donors to produce tangible evidence of change.

Over time Ikhala Trust has struggled more and more to find organizations that have managed to sustain themselves at a community level in the midst of the huge social, political and economic stressors described above. Despite the annual learning opportunities Ikhala Trust provides, so that its community partners can exchange ideas and find ways to collaborate, according to consultant Theresa Edlmann, *'organizations are struggling to coalesce more and more.'*

Thirdly, there are the vagaries and politics of the aid system, in which Ikhala tries to be an honest broker. Ikhala's slow and steady approach often starts off with a small grant in order to get to know the organization better and increase its leverage. The grantmaking and review process will determine whether to continue the relationship, provide further capacity building interventions or just exit, recognizing a lack of fit between Ikhala Trust and the partner. In successful instances, Ikhala is able to mentor until such a time as the community based organization can open up other sources of funding or bolster its own income generating efforts.

However, the networks that Ikhala drew on in its earlier days are not as robust as they once were. Many of the larger donor agencies are no longer operating in the country, and numerous civil society networks have collapsed, partly as a result. Connections forged are not necessarily permanent. Othandweni Home-Based Care, for example, after Ikhala's initial support, was able to secure funding from the Independent Development Trust's expanded community works programme, generating temporary employment for 80 people. This ended after three years with a devastating impact on the organization (Bernie Dolley, personal communication). Sometimes, mainstream donors set up unrealistic expectations and provoke an organizational crisis through inflated grants that need to be spent quickly. Sometimes, territoriality and competition for funding is at play. According to Ikhala's Director:

'... finding exciting, stimulating and innovative small grassroots organizations has not been easy as these are often shielded from donors by the more established formal NGOs who wish to access funds for themselves. In our experience, the more exposure to the outside world

that community partners have had, the more they tend to try and beat the system and sometimes are not completely honest and transparent.’

**Bernie Dolley, Ikhala Trust Director**

## **Progress**

Given these challenges, we ask: is the approach that Ikhala Trust is taking appropriate? Is the effort worthwhile? Is incremental progress still a sign of success if you consider the counterfactual (i.e. what would have happened if Ikhala Trust was not there?). Is its work contributing to a revived civil society and strengthened community philanthropy, even if the journey is to be a long one?

From the stories told and the interviews conducted for this case study, we can see signs of strengthened community philanthropy as a process. We see this in the acknowledgement that people are coming together in their communities to take action: *‘People are taking their own initiative and meeting together on their own, and we are finding ways to work together’* (community partner), and in the ripple effect of Ikhala Trust’s training of community partners:

‘We learnt to help others to do the same, to help people to appreciate their assets and to see they can do something about their own situation.’

**Community partner**

‘We didn’t appreciate our resources before or give a monetary value to the time we spend in our organizations. Now we look for our own assets and look at what we can contribute . . . It has built up my confidence . . . I feel I have something to offer.’

**Community partner**

An example in practice is in the community of Joza, where entrepreneurial groups have been formed by women who wish to assist one another in formalizing and establishing their businesses (crafting and sewing, farming, catering, early childhood development and small traders). They have initiated Siya Sonke as a local support system, assisted by Raphael Centre, a local NGO. Through Ikhala Trust, Raphael Centre staff were trained as ABCD trainers and equipped with a toolkit to popularize the approach. Siya Sonke is an outcome of such local ABCD training workshops. In turn, it helps residents of Joza articulate the multiple interrelated assets in the community that could be unlocked and enhanced to promote social cohesion, increased economic self-reliance, and healthy life choices. Siya Sonke’s progress report records measured increases in social, human, natural, material, and economic assets and claims that their members rate the ability to recognise and mobilise their assets, the change of attitude as most significant to them (Siya Sonka progress report, 2019).

Being able to mobilize assets towards a community initiative is evidence of the horizontal mutualism characteristic of community philanthropy. Port Elizabeth Mental Health, for example, has seen an increase in parental involvement in schools, of community

members helping with building maintenance activities and vegetable gardens for group homes, as well as university graduates volunteering their time in the community. In Kwa-Zulu Natal, the Woodford community mobilized their labour and sourced local resources for a community library, with financial support from Legalwise as a result of the company's asset based approach. Some organizations report *how* they mobilize support. For example, in addition to face-to-face encouragement, Hugs of Hope in Hofmeyer uses Facebook to publicize their work more broadly in a successful appeal for in-kind donations from the community (Bernie Dolley, Ikhala Trust Director).

We also see signs of progress in terms of the strengthened capacity and sustainability of community-based organizations. The practical guidance of Ikhala Trust ranges from setting up filing and record-keeping systems, to developing clear and measurable (SMART) objectives and rudimentary monitoring and reporting. Mentorship and training have strengthened capacity and built solidarity. When combined, these elements build the potential of organizations to thrive. As JBay Recycling of Jeffreys Bay explains:

'We had never had an external donor and were surprised when we were offered a grant from Ikhala Trust to support our activities. We struggled with monthly reports and initially found them tiresome to do. But it paid off in the end as we were able to collate our information in such a way that we were able to attract a donor and received more money than we had asked for. We have now learnt the importance of regular data capturing and more importantly regular reporting.'

#### **JBay Recycling**

Community partners noted that they have gained a better understanding of themselves and the community development space they work in. This helped them to engage with donors with more honesty, integrity and self-confidence. Through attending events organized by Ikhala Trust, such as the annual ABCD Festival or external workshops, community partners have been able to raise their voice and profile and have made useful connections with organizations outside their normal spheres. Various community partners emphasized the power of networks and connections they had made: in Jeffreys Bay in 2016, Mpendulo Savings invited Ikhala Trust to run a workshop to see if there was a way of bringing all the community based organizations and NGOs operating in this small town together. The Kouga2gether network was established as a result and the group has grown from around 15 people at the first session to 67 people who have now joined the network, sharing resources and information (Bernie Dolley, personal communication).

Similarly, Somila Community Development Association reports: *'We are excited about the doors you have opened for us. Just to mention a few: GLZ, Sage Foundation, and the Donaldson Trust.'* Others recognize the risk that Ikhala Trust takes in working with embryonic community organizations, acknowledging the support they needed and received. Says the Manufacturing Co-op:

‘You took us under your wing and nurtured us. You went outside and beyond your scope, not knowing us and took the financial risk to assist us. You brought us light at the right time. You made a point of mentoring us, showing us the ropes and giving us guidance in managing our co-op. The workshops, financial support and assisting us when conflict arose – will always be treasured and remembered.’

#### **Manufacturing Co-op, monthly report**

In short, apart from the financial assistance to get projects moving on the ground, the support from Ikhala Trust boosts motivation, hope and confidence. So remarks a community partner: *‘It is good to have someone out there who understands us and challenges us, but also someone we can ask for support, or someone to listen.’*

It is significant, however, that Ikhala Trust’s efforts to promote community philanthropy have often been most successful when carried out in partnership with local NGOs and other organizations that have taken the asset-based philosophy on board, often through Ikhala’s influence.<sup>3</sup>

Ikhala Trust is itself evolving, as Sarah Hugow, the Chairperson of Ikhala’s board, explained in the organization’s 2014–15 Annual Report:

‘There is a re-balancing of the focus of the Trust, moving from a traditional focus on grant-making to one where relationship building, capacity development and policy advocacy are of equal importance to our work. This seems to be a natural evolution of our thinking as we engage stakeholders on the most effective way to catalyse sustainable community-led initiatives.’

#### **Sarah Hugow**

Perhaps Ikhala’s influence on the way NGOs and others work in community is its biggest contribution to the promotion of community philanthropy.

<sup>3</sup> The full case study (available on <https://ikhala.org.za/>) gives the examples of the non profit Port Elizabeth Mental Health, the corporate social responsibility wing of Legalwise, and the Raphael Centre in Grahamstown.



## Conclusion

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It is early days for a revitalization of community philanthropy and a renewal of civil society in the community settings where Ikhala Trust works. Results so far are mixed — on the one hand are communities where community-based organizations have earned legitimacy, in others there is suspicion; in some there is community ownership, in others ownership is by a few; in some there are signs of sustainable success; in others success is short-lived. Where there is success, we can learn from community partners what Ikhala Trust has done to make a difference — inspiring confidence, taking risks, helping people to recognize strengths and assets, building capacity and linking community organizations to a broader network of allies and donors. In terms of Veneklasen and Miller's (2002) typology, there is renewed sense of 'power within' at the individual level, as well as 'power with' and 'power to' at the local community level; all of which are necessary for 'shifting power over' from entrenched power holders.

Increasingly clear, however, is that community philanthropy cannot exist in a vacuum. Nor can it be achieved through one community grantmaker alone. Instead, the whole community development ecosystem has to shift, or perhaps jiggle in such a way that different actors complement rather than frustrate each other. South Africa is not alone in being ripe for discussion about rights and responsibilities of citizenship, setting tentative boundaries between what should be expected of local government, what is expected of local citizens, and how other actors can help fill the gaps without competing with each other for scarce resources. The frustration at the failures of participatory democracy are putting a strain on such aspirations for clarity and shared purpose, and it is time for the narrative to shift.

Ikhala Trust is uniquely placed then to work on the other side of the equation, using its local expertise to legitimize its advice to NGOs, to the corporate 'social responsibility' wings, to university departments training community development workers, to donors and to local government. These actors need to strengthen their expertise in responding to community initiative, in nurturing community capacity, in recognizing the importance of community members being at the table of discussion as equal partners, and to complement what local communities can mobilise to achieve their goals.

There is, as Motsuenyane (2018) argues, much to be done to pick up the pieces of reconciliation in South Africa and reinvest in local propensity to respond to social and economic opportunity. Stories of success and failure on the front line by nascent community organizations can inspire and reassure, but ensuring their established place in a larger ecosystem of supportive NGOs and local government champions is perhaps the larger challenge.

Power shifts, not just through local empowerment but through powerful institutions sharing power, stepping back and stepping forward when necessary to keep the momentum going.

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The GFCF works with individual community foundations and other local grantmakers and their networks, particularly in the global south and the emerging economies of Central and Eastern Europe. Through small grants, technical support, and networking, the GFCF helps local institutions to strengthen and grow so that they can fulfil their potential as vehicles for local development, and as part of the infrastructure for durable development, poverty alleviation, and citizen participation.

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