



# NGO Week 2012 Case Study Report

Showcasing Civil Society  
Achievements through  
Case Studies



Uniting to fight *Poverty & Inequality*  
Cape Town | South Africa | November 2012

*be part of the action!!!* [www.sangocowc.org](http://www.sangocowc.org)



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD



UCT KNOWLEDGE CO-OP



NDA  
National  
Development  
Agency

## **1. LOCATING OUR DISCUSSION**

South Africa has made considerable progress in addressing its economic and social challenges since the advent of its democracy. Despite this, the South African landscape continues to be plagued by three fundamental challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. The increasing levels of corruption has catapulted this onto our national agenda since the impact of corruption and maladministration negatively affects economic and social development and diverts resources from where they needed most thereby perpetuating poverty. The developmental challenges facing our society continue to grow as many people continue to live in poverty with no real prospects of changing their current situation. One of the critical challenges to be addressed relates to the nature and quality of government and its capacity to improve the quality of life which people demand and deserve. The experience of poor people living in poverty is framed by powerlessness, a lack of voice with limited capabilities and capacities.

Civil society organisations (CSO's) have and continue to play a vital role in ensuring that the developmental agenda of government is advanced to ensure that it improves the quality of life of its citizens. These organisations ensure that the current state of poverty, unemployment and inequality and its impact on poor and vulnerable communities are highlighted and showcased. President Jacob Zuma said at the National NPO Summit in Johannesburg on Thursday, 16 August 2012 that the non-profit sector remains an indispensable partner to government as it pursues the development agenda. He said NPO's are those who interact with the poorest of the poor on a daily basis and government need to interact with them.

SANGOCO Western Cape hosted a case study preparatory workshop in partnership with the Social Responsiveness Unit based at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The need to host a case study seminar emerged as a resolution in NGO Week 2010. NGO Week 2012 provided a platform to showcase these best practice models, share, dialogue, and debate the opportunities and challenges within the civil society sector and collectively find ways to move forward. The case study presentations come at a critical juncture for civil society organisations, who despite significantly and positively impacting on the plight of poor people are faced with severe financial constraints. Currently the sector struggles to access resources and many organisations that have been part of the landscape for a long time either retrenching their staff or closing its doors. Both members and leaders of civil society gathered together at Community House to showcase their best practice case studies and find ways to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing communities and the civil

society sector. The conversations resulted in the development of key coherent outcomes geared towards action.

## **2. THE CASE STUDY PROGRAMME**

Civil society networks and umbrella organisation are actively involved in a range of programmes, projects and initiatives on a daily basis that seek to strengthen our democracy. Their role and importance in our society is unquestionable since both government and the private sector is unable to provide these services which contribute to the growth and development of our society. The need for effective partnerships between various stakeholders' remains critical and the use of case studies serve to highlight the invaluable role of civil society. The case studies served to:

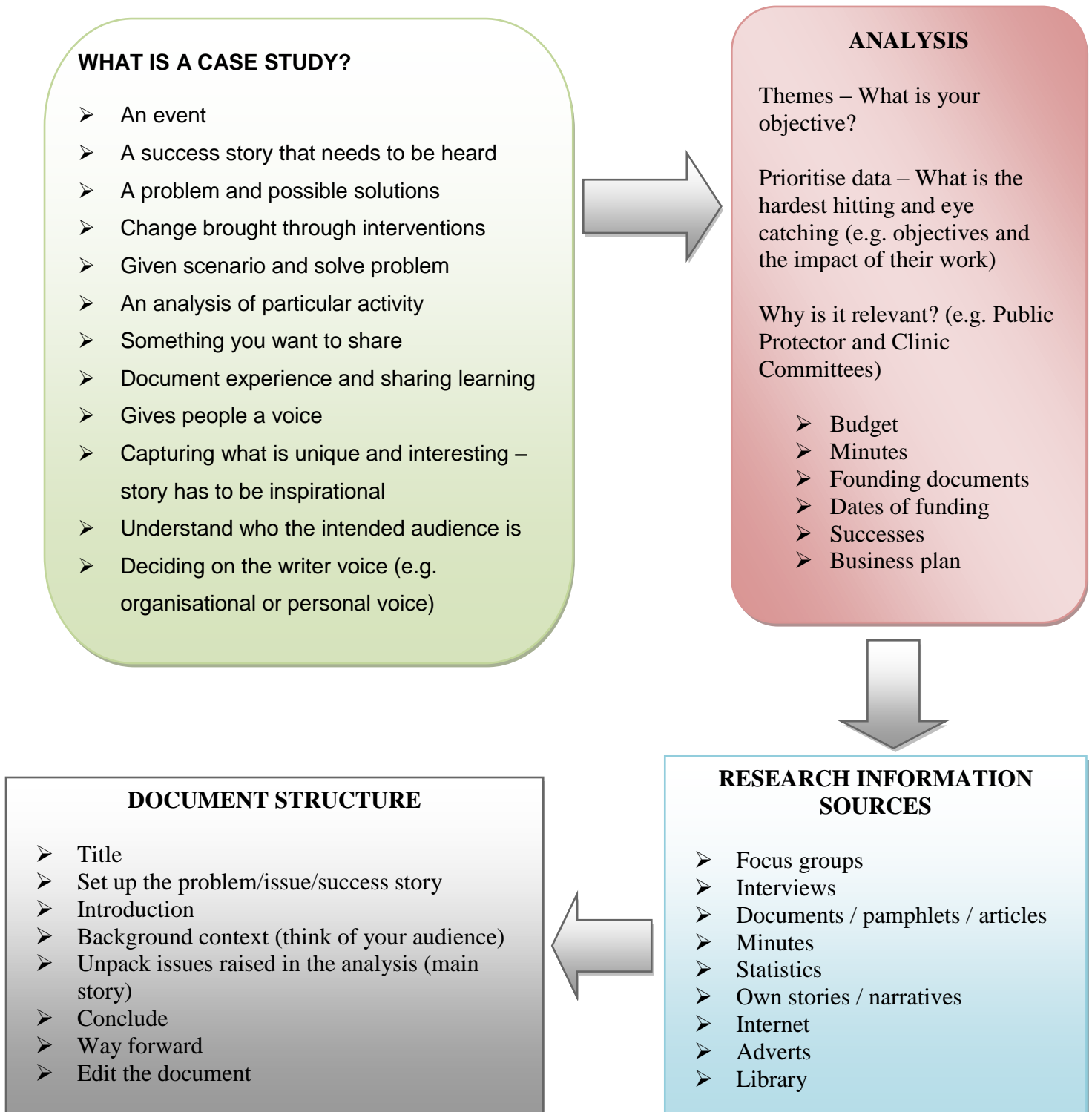
- (i) Provide a platform for sectoral networks or organisations to showcase best practice models or highlight challenges and lessons learnt with the possibility of galvanising the strength of the organisation or mobilising resources.
- (ii) Position organisations based on a clear reflection, critical engagement and understanding about their challenges or opportunities.
- (iii) Share experiences and network with other organisations.
- (iv) Build and strengthen knowledge partnership between SANGOCO and higher education institutions (i.e. Social Responsiveness Unit). This would include exploring ways of building research capacity and documenting best practice in the sector.
- (v) Kick-start on-going dialogue and reflection of best practice models within civil society to strengthen networks and showcase civil society contribution to the growth and development of our society.

### **2.1. Case Study Workshop**

The preparatory case study workshop brought together representatives from CSOs actively involved in umbrella networks and civil society coalitions. The intention of the workshop was to improve civil society's capacity to document and write up their work and experiences through case studies. The sessions were interactive with the participants to ensure maximum benefit to assist organisations. The case study workshop was attended by approximately 14 members of the various SANGOCO sectoral networks.

The **first session** of the workshop was facilitated by Ms Salma Ismail and Ms Susan Gredley from the University of Cape Town. The session focused on the writing process and

the steps associated with crafting the case study. The facilitators focused on the following areas in the development of case studies:



The **second session** of the workshop was facilitated by Ms Jacky Thomas. The discussion focused on preparing and ensuring that organisations are able to actively participate in NGO

Week. The workshop focused on building the capacity and voice of civil society organisations and its members as opposed to people merely attending conferences and meetings which do not necessarily contribute to their own development.

SANGOCO Western Cape is a progressive civil society coalition which necessitates the foregrounding of race, gender and class issues. Coordinating a broad network of diverse civil society sectors, organisations and actors can present various challenges as all may not agree with the position and approaches of the organisation in such a dynamic political environment.

The reality is that progressive civil society structures are not receiving funding to ensure its survival. Quasi NGO's are being set up by government who receives a large share of the funding allocation as opposed to primarily benefiting organisations who directly work with communities. Government tends to generally fund civil society organisations which advance their own agenda.

## **2.2. NGO Week – Case Study Presentations**

The preparatory workshop assisted organisations to structure their case study to reflect their experiences, capturing what is unique and interesting thereby sharing learning. The platform allowed sectoral networks or organisations to highlight challenges and lessons learnt with the possibility of galvanising the strength of the organisation or for mobilising resources. The case study presentations brought together approximately 80 representatives from CSOs actively involved in umbrella networks and civil society coalitions. The case studies were presented in a manner which is simplistic to understand and provide clear evidence of the argument being presented. The aim of the case study presentations were to:

- (i) Share and explore experiences and network with other organisations in the area of civil society policy and programme engagement in view of a collective assessment of existing efforts and initiatives.
- (ii) Start building the capacity of CSOs to develop case studies
- (iii) Develop a plan of action to strengthen the capacities of CSO umbrella networks.

Various presentations were made by a range of sectoral networks which include:

- (a) Cape Metropolitan Health Forum
- (b) The National Health Insurance (NHI)

- (c) Western Cape Anti-corruption Forum
- (d) Treatment Action Campaign
- (e) The Children's Movement
- (f) The Western Cape Network on Disability

Sectoral networks presented their case studies in a manner which highlighted the following:

- (a) What are the aims and objectives of the various networks?
- (b) What lessons have we learnt?
- (c) What are the immediate challenges and opportunities?
- (d) What role do we expect SANGOCO to play in the next few years?

Following these presentations, group discussions were held focusing on three areas:

- (a) What lessons have we learnt?
- (b) What are the immediate challenges and opportunities?
- (c) What role do we expect SANGOCO to play?

One of the realities we must acknowledge is that civil society networks are not as strong as they should be. The recommendations from these group discussions were reported on in the plenary discussion and incorporated in the resolutions from NGO Week.

### **3. LOCATING SANGOCO WESTERN CAPE**

SANGOCO is the apex umbrella body for Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in the Western Cape that brings together a diverse range of CSO under a vision and mission. SANGOCO's **vision** is of a democratic society where poverty and inequality have been eradicated, and where ordinary men and women are able to participate in all decision-making processes that have an impact on their lives. Its **mission** is to promote civil society by uniting and strengthening the civil society sector to (i) enable it to influence development policy and (ii) advocate for programmes that meet the needs of the poor in the best possible way and at the least possible cost.

South Africa has one of the most unequal societies in the world where the gap between rich and poor continues to grow bigger. The Western Cape Province reflects this reality with the most service delivery protests in the country. The province has experienced various administrations which impact on sustainability of programmes due to political agendas and changing funding models, which severely affects the delivery of services and roll-out of

programmes meant to benefit local communities. The situation is exacerbated where especially in the Western Cape there is a deliberate attempt by provincial government to close down spaces for engagement with stakeholders. The complex and dynamic nature of the relationship between the Western Cape Government (WCG) and progressive civil society organisations has to be acknowledged.

Like many other civil society organisations the Coalition also has its fair share of challenges at present. The major challenge is a lack of funds to sustain the organisation over the medium to long term and resources to consistently offer programmes which benefit member organisations.

#### **4. KEY CHALLENGES**

- 4.1. Non-profit organisations tend to focus on their own survival and not on strengthening their sectoral network due to a severe lack of resources available for the sector. The networks are not convening regular meetings which further weaken the network and organisations associated to it.
- 4.2. Although it presented the sector with an opportunity to come together and reflect on our collective experiences and action, the number of people who attended was not as expected. The lack of appropriate representatives should be discussed in a frank way and review the path we have traversed, face the challenges in the present whilst looking to the future. Only if we can confront our own strengths and challenges will we be able to address the levels of poverty and inequality within our communities.
- 4.3. The complex and dynamic nature of the relationship amongst civil society organisations should be acknowledged and at times can be seen as a race to the bottom in the scramble for limited resources. Despite the vast number of civil society organisations, it is common knowledge that often a few key individuals and organisations have driven a civil society agenda on the mandate of a fragmented and often weak civil society.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

NGO Week 2012 was an important platform to enable us to focus on sharing and clarifying our collective developmental objectives and programmes of action. One of the key challenges was to establish a strong and vibrant civil society through building capacity of the NPO sector. This would include influencing key policies and legislation and decision making

processes to promote the interest of the poor.

Strong and focused leadership and common commitment is needed to ensure that SANGOCO is able to implement and fulfill its mandate and for our membership to have confidence in our ability to do so collectively as civil society networks. Critical to this is building a human rights culture, provide strong leadership and governance, build organisational capacities, facilitate access to resources and monitor and evaluate the processes. (i.e. key yardsticks of measure).

One of the key questions relate to how a progressive and pro-active civil society, maintain its cross sectoral unity of principle (i.e. fighting for its beliefs and avoid being co-opted). The politics of engagement is more difficult than non engagement and these questions cannot be resolved outside of a struggle.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Salma Ismail	Facilitator – University of Cape Town
Susan Gridley	Facilitator – University of Cape Town
Barbara Schmid	Project Manager – University of Cape Town
Joshua Wolmarans	SANGOCO
Jacky Thomas	SANGOCO
Naledi Hlalukana	SANGOCO
Josie Abrahams	NHI Coalition
Lin Helme	Adult Learning Forum / Share
Kenny Groenewald	Adult Learning Forum / Share
Sonia Hindley	Adult Learning Forum / Share
Nothini Tyityi	Adult Learning Forum / Share
Damaris Fritz	Metro Community Health Forum
Thamsanqa Boo	Engineering Science and Technology Intellects
Mntuwoxolo Ngudle	Engineering Science and Technology Intellects
Shanaaz Viljoen	Children’s Resource Centre
Aziza Abdullah	Children’s Resource Centre