WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

PERSPECTIVES FROM A RESOURCE MOBILISATION
FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMME

IDRC | CRDI
Canada

INYATHELO
The South African Institute
for Advancement

AMREF
In Deus Nos Fides

KCCO
Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology

Maternal
Newborn and
Child
Health
Institute
SAFE MOTHERHOOD HEALTHY CHILDREN

REACH Trust

The RMR Programme cohort with IDRC and Inyathelo staff at the final workshop in Tanzania, June 2015. *Photo by Emmanuel Ochola*

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A MESSAGE FROM THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE (IDRC)

To contribute to lasting development solutions, research organisations need funding strategies that support their vision and goals over the long-term. IDRC's Resource Mobilisation for Research (RMR) programme helps grantees to lay the foundations for financial sustainability and organisational performance. During an 18 month period (2013-2015) the IDRC's Resource Mobilization Program supported the advancement of a cohort of four health research organisations in East Africa: Kilimanjaro Centre of Community Ophthalmology (*Tanzania*); Maternal Newborn and Child Health Institute (*Uganda*); Africa Mental Health Foundation (*Kenya*); and Research for Equity and Community Health Trust (*Malawi*). To this end the IDRC brought Inyathelo: The South African Institute for Advancement on board to work alongside the cohort as a mentor.

To learn more about the IDRC and its work, please visit: www.idrc.ca

ABOUT INYATHELO AND THE ADVANCEMENT APPROACH

Inyathelo works to sustain and strengthen civil society organisations and grow local philanthropy in support of a vibrant democracy in South Africa. To achieve its goals in working to strengthen civil society, Inyathelo has pioneered the concept and practice of Advancement in the South African non-profit sector. We encourage organisations to build and maintain strong relationships with key external constituencies, including the state, beneficiaries, media, their supporters and the communities in which they operate in order to bring about long-lasting social change; invest in and develop social capital and social cohesion and to promote a culture of social giving.

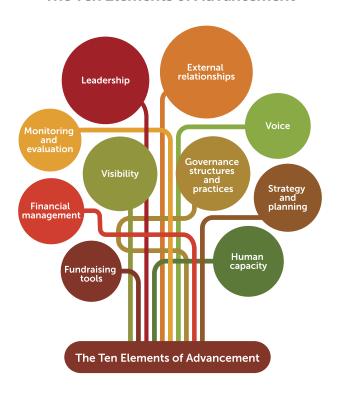To learn more about Inyathelo and its work, please visit www.inyathelo.org.za.

THE ADVANCEMENT APPROACH

Inyathelo defines Advancement as a systematic and integrated approach to building and managing external relationships with key constituencies in order to attract support.

In other words, Advancement is about:

- The organisational cohesion of institutions in terms of their planning, fundraising, marketing and communications, and relationship-building functions;
- The strategic use of specialised technical functions, including prospect research, relationship-building strategies, targeted proposal writing, and donor recognition;
- Strong and accountable institutional leadership and high-level leadership commitment to Advancement;
- The alignment of fundraising efforts with the strategic priorities and long-term development plans of the institution;
- A shift from a charitable paradigm to one of positioning for investment and attracting support;
- Ethical and professional standards for fundraising that hold the Advancement operation accountable both to the institution and to donors.

The Ten Elements of Advancement

In more detail, the ten Advancement elements comprise the following – with policies and information management cutting across each:

1	**Governance structures and practices**	Principles and practices of effective non-profit governance
		Role and responsibilities of the board
		Legislative framework
2	**Strategy and planning**	From strategic frameworks to resource mobilisation plans, cultivation plans, etc.
3	**Leadership in Advancement**	Leadership *for Advancement*

4	Human capacity - to enact Advancement functions	Functions and competences necessary for Advancement work
5	External relationships – influential networks, philanthropists & grantseeking communities	Relationship mapping
		Networking
		Strategic management of donor relations (inc reporting)
6	Voice – about issues	Media and communications to promote visibility of organisation's issues
7	Visibility - of organisation	Media and communications to promote visibility of organisation itself
8	Fundraising tools	Case for support, project development plan, prospect research, cultivation, asking, holding meetings, proposal writing, stewarding, etc
9	Financial management	Budgeting (for projects and programmes, which addresses sustainability, and includes Advancement operations)
		Financial management - including reporting
		Financial planning
10	Monitoring and evaluation	Collection of data for reporting
		Monitoring to check delivery and adjust activities
		Evaluating effectiveness & impact

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

For this particular RMR programme, the IDRC created the space for the cohort and for Inyathelo to share our respective capacity building journeys of the 18 month programme period. The rationale for the reflective approach was to give the cohort the opportunity to evaluate their organisational development and to articulate their journey as a change story – all of which assists organisations in strategically positioning themselves. Their change stories are captured in a publication entitled *Seasons and Sustainability STORIES OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE.* For Inyathelo, the reflective approach affords us the opportunity to evaluate our practice and to share the lessons we've learnt in working as a mentor organisation to the cohort.

For Inyathelo our learning is ongoing and we continue to find that additional perspectives emerge as time passes by. This publication is therefore by no means an exhaustive account of the lessons we're learning but it is a working homage to the organisations we've worked with - on this programme and others - as well as to colleagues and associates we've worked with and learned from.
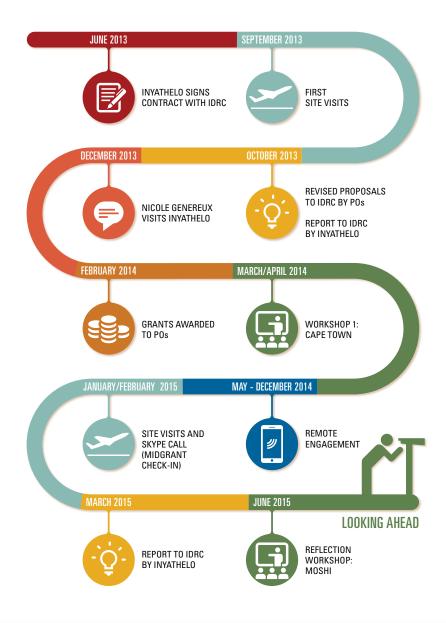
This publication is to be read in conjunction with *Seasons and Sustainability STORIES OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE*.

ABBREVIATIONS

IDRC	International Development Research Centre
Inyathelo	Inyathelo: The South African Institute of Advancement
RMR Project	Resource Mobilisation for Research Project
AMHF	Africa Mental Health Foundation
REACH Trust	Research for Equity and Community Health Trust
MNCHI	Maternal Newborn and Child Health Institute
KCCO	Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology
POs	Participating Organisations

THE IDRC RESOURCE MOBILISATION FOR RESEARCH PROJECT TIMELINE

SEPTEMBER 2013 TO JUNE 2015

JUNE 2013

INYATHELO SIGNS CONTRACT WITH IDRC

SEPTEMBER 2013

FIRST SITE VISITS

DECEMBER 2013

NICOLE GENEREUX VISITS INYATHELO

OCTOBER 2013

REVISED PROPOSALS TO IDRC BY POs

REPORT TO IDRC BY INYATHELO

FEBRUARY 2014

GRANTS AWARDED TO POs

MARCH/APRIL 2014

WORKSHOP 1: CAPE TOWN

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2015

SITE VISITS AND SKYPE CALL (MIDGRANT CHECK-IN)

MAY – DECEMBER 2014

REMOTE ENGAGEMENT

MARCH 2015

REPORT TO IDRC BY INYATHELO

JUNE 2015

REFLECTION WORKSHOP: MOSHI

LOOKING AHEAD

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

Inyathelo was brought on board by the IDRC to work alongside the participating organisations as they implemented their RMR grants. The IDRC's approach was therefore twofold: it provided an opportunity for organisations to expand their capacity by providing financial resource – the grant, and by providing the services of a capacity building organisation – to mentor. The programme unfolded over the course of 18 months and the primary means of support was via remote interaction, bookended by two sets of site visits – in 2013 and 2015, and an opening capacity building workshop – using the Advancement framework as an anchor - in 2014 and a concluding writeshop in 2015. The RMR Project is Inyathelo's first sustained work experience in East Africa.

Inyathelo used the Advancement approach, described on page 3, as the entry point to its capacity building interventions with the cohort.

Refer to the RMR project timeline on page 8 to see the series of activities and interactions over the course of the programme duration.

What follows is an account of what we're learning.

Advancement isn't one size fits all

Advancement is a multi-layered approach to engaging the external environment and encourages organisations to work in an integrated way to attract the resources optimal for sustainability. It's about strategic positioning for investment and requires organisations to think of resourcing beyond reactively responding to calls for proposals; Advancement, therefore, is not a euphemism for fundraising. As depicted earlier, the Advancement approach - when deconstructed - comprises 10 elements for consideration, viz. Governance; Leadership; Strategy and Planning; Building Relationships; Human Capacity; Voice; Visibility; Monitoring and Evaluation; Financial Management; and Fundraising Tools.

It is how these aspects of Advancement interact and engage each other in an integrated way that leads to effective relationship building with key stakeholders. By way of an example, an organisation can use its tools of visibility to amplify its voice on issues impacting on the sector in which it operates. That voice and visibility can

in turn build the profile and credibility of the organisation as well as strengthen the leadership profile – which is one way of cultivating relationships within particular constituency groups.

More than the sum of its ten elements, Advancement is a way of thinking about organisational sustainability.

With the RMR Project, the Advancement approach was shared with the cohort during the initial site visits in September 2013. The Advancement approach and its ten elements would be used as the lens with which to identify areas of focus during the RMR project. The team conducting the site visits made observations and recommendations as to proposed areas of work but ultimately the organisations, after doing self-evaluation with a baseline assessment provided, decided what the objectives of the RMR project would be for them. This is in line with Inyathelo's approach of meeting organisations where they're situated and giving organisations the information and tools they need to drive their organisational development.
The participating organisations set specific milestones – given their plans with the grant funding and in conjunction with a holistic Advancement approach – at the first capacity building workshop in March / April 2013. On this occasion, the IDRC also provided the cohort with another opportunity to assess their objectives – in turn reinforcing the ideal that organisations set the agenda for and pace of their growth and development.

Notwithstanding the similarities that exist amongst organisation and this cohort in particular, organisations have different biographies, realities, and contexts (socio-economic, political, etc.) and are at varying stages of the organisational life cycle. It is for organisations to ascertain where they are and given how they're resourced and situated, prioritise accordingly.

There is no one size fits all in Advancement.

Advancement is a long-term approach: it requires time and resource.

At the end of the RMR project's last formal in-person engagement, the overwhelming feeling at the end of the three day interaction was that what was meant to be a culminating and final workshop, felt like it was only the beginning of a process. Given the size of the RMR grants, the organisations did well to the manage the scope of the project and what the Advancement approach could entail.

Advancement is a long-term approach which requires time and resource, including people and transaction costs. Organisations were able to meet their objectives in terms of the specific and time-sensitive project goals but in terms of their longer term visions for their Advancement and their overall organisational development, work would be ongoing.

Training, workshops, learning events, programme and the like provide the impetus for renewed commitment to overall organisational health. The challenge is therefore to provide organisations with the thinking and sufficient tools to be able to continue the focus on organisational development in as focused a way as with their programmatic work.

Organisations often start off in very similar places in terms of the Advancement journey but as mentioned earlier, the drafting of milestones sets organisations on their individual trajectories and can lead to very different engagements with each. This trajectory is also influenced by who's invested and engaged from the outset as well as the additional people resource that comes on board. The timing of people coming into a programme is of particular relevance especially in the case of a short programme.

In the case of the RMR project, appointments made after the first site visits and workshops meant that in some ways the relationship with the organisations remained "new" right until mid- and three-quarter way into the grant. The timing of the engagement was therefore staccato in part. Furthermore, given the holistic nature of the approach, it needs to be shared across the organisation. More importantly, leadership needs to buy into the approach and drive Advancement the initiative across the organisation. Without people seeing where they fit into a framework, the integrated and systematic nature of the approach is at risk. Where the thinking hasn't been shared with and infused into the organisation, it also impacts negatively on the Advancement journey and its timing.

The proposal dies hard

One of the biggest challenges in applying the Advancement approach is achieving the balance between immediate objectives and longer term sustainability goals. Issues around working in parallel - completing strategies and plans in tandem with existing deliverables - persist; this is the case for organisations new to and familiar with Advancement.

Positioning of the Advancement approach is therefore not to have organisations abandon existing processes that are working but finding ways to enhance and strengthen existing approaches, and to find ways to incorporate holistic thinking and the elements of Advancement not yet infused in the organisation. It's not about changing the nature of organisations, rather finding the ways in which they can rethink their approach to sustainability. It is also about encouraging organisations to be mindful of their cases for support and to revisit it for relevance – looking to see whether the missions are still relevant.

In addition to time and resource challenges mentioned earlier, organisations also carry intense programmatic loads which leaves very little time to focus on building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders – particularly new stakeholders. Also, organisations often do not recognise how much of the work already being done can be used to build relationships in the external environment, e.g. report writing is part of relationship building; speaking at conferences is part of voice and visibility, etc. It takes time for people within organisations to see how their portfolios and roles contributes to overall organisational sustainability.

Given all of the above, it takes time for organisations to move away from operating in a reactive way. It takes concerted effort to shift from responding to calls for proposals only to engaging the external environment through effective relationship building to attract support.

Building relationships, effective communications and content sharing are entwined

Central to the Advancement approach is the premise that organisations are only as strong as the relationships they cultivate and maintain. Given that a key feature of the RMR programme is the remote support provided by a mentoring organisation, effective relationship building would necessarily become the linchpin of the programme. For Inyathelo this spanned working with the participating organisations as well as with the IDRC – a funder fully vested in process and who wanted to be part of the journey, and working with Inyathelo staff and associates.

In building the relationship with the IDRC, Inyathelo adopted a multi-layered approach involving the Inyathelo leadership team as well as programme staff. Regular teleconferences were conducted via telephone and Skype, six reports were submitted over the 18 month period, planning and debriefing meetings before and after workshops were conducted, and there was sustained online communications between the two entities.

The planning of the September 2013 site visits and the site visits themselves were the first contact points in the relationship journey with the cohort. Despite the advantages enjoyed by leaps in technological developments, physically meeting people within their organisational settings, contexts and realities cannot be downplayed. It amplified the contextual insights – organisational, socio-economic, etc. and the appreciation of the practical challenges organisations face – power outages, intermittent internet access, etc.

Refer to the RMR project timeline on page 8 to see the range of interactions with the cohort over the 18 month period. Remote support was the primary means of engagement and this comprised email and Skype engagement mostly. With Skype, the combination of voice and instant chat worked well – especially in terms creating a conversation history and alleviating any misunderstanding where things were lost in translation. Initially we'd thought about creating an online platform via which the group could interact with each other and for information dissemination. Given very full workloads and given very specific milestone setting, it was decided to keep things simple. Email communication, except for times when either Inyathelo or the cohort had intermittent internet access, proved to work well for information disseminiation as organisations had specific needs and requests and Inyathelo provided relevant feedback and resources accordingly. The two workshops, particularly the first one, were useful in terms of providing organisations with as much information and resources as is possible. Organisations could then work through the information

- given their milestones - and in general, monthly, and in some case fortnightly interactions were arranged to either discuss a subject area or to review and feedback on documents.

The participating organisations maintained their communications with the IDRC too and in some ways there was interaction within the cohort but not necessarily to the optimal extent - owing to time constraints. Given that key constituencies in the funding environment are looking to see more consolidation amongst organisations, this is something that could be built into future programmes.

In hindsight, we think that an additional workshop midway through the programme would've given us and the cohort a chance to reconnect and also for newer staff members to on board. Also, given limited time for the cohort to engage each other, time allocated to a workshop provides the perfect opportunity for peer connection. We also received feedback from the cohort that they would have valued the chance to connect with their portfolio counterparts in bespoke peer group conversations.

To mentor is to learn twice

As part of its key activities, Inyathelo provides advisory services to non-profit organisations and institutions; it has done so in a formal capacity since 2010. The strength of the advisory services, known as the clinic, is derived from the ability to draw on relevant practitioners working on an array of subject areas related to Advancement and fundraising. The clinic therefore draws on internal capacity as well as external capacity. The RMR programme allowed Inyathelo to extend this advisory service in a sustained way to a fixed cohort – with the added advantage for the work that the IDRC provided financial support to the cohort to do the work. This set the RMR apart from the day to day advisory services we offer: the RMR provided sustained mentorship and financial resources.

A practitioner was assigned to coordinate site visits, learning engagements, and to perform the liaison role between Inyathelo and the IDRC, and as point person for the cohort. In providing support to the cohort, the practitioner would consult with Inyathelo leadership, colleagues and associates, and Inyathelo's extended network of practitioners. Bespoke support provided would be the consolidated inputs drawn from an array of resources as well as materials Inyathelo has developed over time. More than the provision of resources, the mentorship role focused on providing additional perspective whether it be on documents for review, plans that were being put together, the understanding of the Advancement approach, etc.

Initially the communications were mostly with the directors but over time and as new people came on board, the communications were between the Inyathelo practitioner and the coordinators assigned to focus on the RMR project. Initially there was concern that there may be a disconnect between Inyathelo and the directors within the group but the coordinators did well to consistently communicate upwards, and with key teleconferences the directors were part of the communications. The mentorship therefore remained robust with key conversations involving the relevant people.

While drawing on various resources and inputs, the benefit of one Inyathelo practitioner working across the cohort is that what we were learning in one context could more easily and intuitively be shared with others, and likewise with any challenges that surfaced. It also made for fluid communications with all involved in the programme. With creating learning events and documentation, it proved to be advantageous to have a practitioner on board who had a working knowledge and consistent communications with the group.

For Inyathelo, providing bespoke mentorship gives us the opportunity to interrogate our work and constantly evaluate the relevance of our approach, tools and resources. We in turn have learnt from the ways in which participating organisations have employed Advancement in their work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For Inyathelo our learning is ongoing and we continue to find that additional perspectives emerge as time passes by. This publication is therefore by no means an exhaustive account of the lessons we're learning but it is a working homage to the organisations we've worked with - on this programme and others - as well as to colleagues and associates we've worked with and learned from.

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