

OUR TRUSTEES

The SCAT Trustees keep the organisation's governance in check. In this section they share their views on the work of SCAT.

A CHORUS OF VOICES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

By Nkosikhulule Xhawulengweni Nyembezi

Rural Voice II: 35 Stories for 35 Years is yet another opportunity for many voices in the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT) to tell stories about our collective efforts to bring about social change.

We want to use this occasion of our 35th anniversary to publicly thank our grantee partners, supporters, public and private donors for their work, and remind them of just how important they are. We opted for the idea of this book, as an anchor to our celebrations. We don't want this anniversary to so much be about understanding our milestones through a single voice. Instead, as a Trust, we also want beneficiaries to be able to use it to tell their stories and to say their own personal thanks.

As trustees, we also see and identify with our governance role as reflected in these stories- in the voices that are part of these conversations in so far as they also project the multidimensional aspects in the governance of SCAT. Several adaptations and faithful implementation of our bottom-up approach have enabled us to promote locally driven solutions to access to justice, gender equality, youth empowerment, delivery of basic services to communities and ensuring household food security. This is achieved through sustained partnerships with civil society organisations that share the same vision as ours, to promote social justice and learning.

While our adopted theory of change has taken our work this far in our resource constrained environment, and while several reports on our work over the years remain helpful in deepening the understanding of challenges we have overcome, they are insufficient in the presentation of who we are as a SCAT family. Our stories complete the picture. One might, as one reads these accounts, think about how these stories could have been told otherwise, and how the alternative telling would have changed the outcome. Hopefully, the experience will energise each one of us to work together to do more in the next 35 years and beyond, to ensure that poverty, inequality and other social ills are eradicated.



NKOSIKHULULE
XHAWULENGWENI NYEMBEZI
CHAIRPERSON



SUE ANDERSON
VICE CHAIRPERSON



KHOBOSO NTHUNYA
PROGRAMMES



VALERIE JONATHAN
FINANCE



LORENZO WAKEFIELD
CHAIR: FINANCE

STOPPING THE INEQUALITY TIME BOMB

By Lorenzo Wakefield

The effects of world climate change are becoming visible locally. Injustices such as poverty and chronic unemployment faced by communities in South Africa remain alarmingly high. They are a ticking timebomb waiting to explode and reverse gains achieved during the early years of our democracy. In the light of these challenges, the role of community-driven local development remains critically important. SCAT, through its grantmaking and special programmes, makes a valuable contribution in this area. As Trustees, we will continue to make sure that our strategy addresses the underlying causes of poverty and inequality in South Africa.



DEENA BOSCH
CHAIR: PROGRAMMES

KEEPING POWER BALANCES IN CHECK

By Deena Bosch

My relationship with SCAT started in the mid-1980s with the Bellville Community Health Project (BCHP). I joined SCAT as a staff member in the 1990s. The greatest lesson that we carried all these years has been how NOT TO FORCE power relations over SCAT-funded community organisations, while insisting on transparency and accountability in interactions with all stakeholders.

As a Trustee, this learning stayed and had to be exercised from a distance. Luckily distance offers room for weighing up the responsibilities and deliverables of SCAT, while seeking to meet the needs of communities we support. I'd say over these 35 years SCAT has lived by this practice.



JEREMY CHENNELLS
CHAIR: HUMAN RESOURCES

SCAT'S ROLE IN BUYING BELL HOUSE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN STELLENBOSCH

By Jeremy Chennells

During 1988, Stellenbosch was a bastion of Apartheid, and many civil society organisations struggled to find premises to operate in a harsh and hostile environment. Barry Streek, then director of SCAT, donated R300 000.00 towards the cost of purchasing the current Bell House building. It was a massive amount at that time.

For many years up to and after the advent of democracy, Bell House continued to provide a base to a network of civil society organisations. Now, Bell House has assumed a new primary tenant which effectively continues to further the mandate of the Trust, namely to serve the local youth in need.

Bell House is home to the Youth Outreach organisation, and permanently houses about 24 street children. Youth Outreach also feeds, clothes and educates daily up to a hundred needy children in Stellenbosch. That is also a remarkable continuity of 35 years of SCAT.

FOUNDER TRUSTEES

THE LITTLE GRANTMAKER THAT MADE A BIG IMPACT

Gordon Young and Di Oliver, two of the founding trustees of SCAT, reflect on the secrets of SCAT's success over the last 35 years.



GORDON YOUNG

By Gordon Young

SCAT has never been a large organisation, and when it started it was very small indeed. It operated in fact out of Barry Streek's dining room, and Benson the Labrador was an honorary member of staff. SCAT has, I believe, had an impact that belies its small staff and small budget. It's been the cog that's moved many wheels over a vast area of South Africa. If only our government could use its resources half as productively as SCAT does! In the early years from its foundation in 1984, frankly there was only a vague plan and some fine principles. Over time, the focus narrowed, and more and more activities were deliberately excluded. That is one of the secrets of SCAT's success - it tries to do one thing very well. It was quite a wild ride in the early years as we experimented with one thing and another. Conditions were difficult especially during the State of Emergency when SCAT in its quiet backroom way was seen as part of the Total Onslaught. In fact, the exciting aspect for everyone on this ride was the learning that happened along the way. So there's secret number two: SCAT has always been a learning organisation.

Where in the end did we focus the spotlight? Firstly, we agreed that rural areas were least well served, and that is where we would work exclusively. That way we'd help the smaller organisations which were signally un-networked, never got the invitation to the embassy receptions, and were too far away to be on the itinerary of any visiting donor. In a sense SCAT became an efficient "retailer" to smaller organisations who would otherwise get nothing. This meant that SCAT had to be proficient at raising money from the "wholesalers". That is the second angle in the spotlight.

The third aspect of the spotlight is what we came to call the Local Development Agency (LDA). This really isn't just jargon. SCAT supports Agencies (that is, organisations) that are Local (that is, that are grounded in a specific community) and promote Development. Many of these started as advice offices, which were a form of resistance organisation operating in open view. They emerged in the 1980s to exploit the grey areas between legal and illegal opposition to apartheid. When apartheid had been conquered, some of these fell by the wayside, but many undertook the task of re-construction, and many new ones were formed to bring to their communities the economic and social benefits of freedom, in addition to their new political rights.

The fourth angle could be called "respect for autonomy". It is too easy for grantmakers to lord it over their "clients". We didn't want clients, we wanted partners. A key principle in SCAT's work is to be responsive rather than initiate its own programmes. SCAT has never told a Local Development Agency what its programme should be; how much it should pay its staff; who it should employ; who it should not employ; and so forth.



The focus described above took some years to crystallise, and I suppose it will always be evolving. Alongside this process, SCAT came to develop a very specific way of working. Local Development Agencies, while remaining autonomous, did have to comply with some governance requirements. They needed to produce audited financial statements every year (for which SCAT provided the funding supplemental to the main budget); they needed to account to their communities at an annual general meeting, and submit themselves to re-election; they had to have an annual plan; and they did have to be willing to endure field visits from SCAT's fieldworkers, which were not always comfortable experiences. A recipient of SCAT's funds does have to show how they are spending it.

We learnt too that, while SCAT is fundamentally a grantmaker at the "retail" level, shortage of money is probably not a poor community's biggest problem. Showering money upon such a community could be a recipe for strife, not progress. We saw other funders experience very great disappointments when they dropped cash upon poorly organised communities, sometimes making any useful interventions in that area impossible for years to come. We found that the less money we gave, and the more intensive organisational support that came from SCAT's fieldworkers, the better the outcome. In time we came to define SCAT as a "developmental grantmaker" and if you need a two-word description of SCAT - those are the two words.

Minerva's owl, in the words of the proverb, takes flight only in the gathering dusk (Minerva being the goddess of wisdom). We understood what we were doing long after we had begun doing it. SCAT was building institutions! The Local Development Agencies were to become stable centres of activity; they were to outlive their founders; they were to become financially more sustainable through diversification of funding sources; and they were to bring tangible developmental benefits to their community over many years. In some cases, the organisations supported by SCAT have not achieved this stability, but in many cases they have evolved into resilient institutions. Careful fieldwork and, what Di Oliver called by the Afrikaans word, "*begeleiding*", over many years, were the key ingredients.

Finally, SCAT was responsible for some interesting innovations. During the 1980s, for example, the government of the day introduced a Fundraising Act which made the raising of foreign funds illegal without ministerial permission, which would never have been granted. We devised a scheme to evade this: SCAT entered into contracts with the foreign funders, and back-to-back contracts with the Local Development Agencies. We weren't fundraising anymore, we were entering into binding commercial contracts! It worked. After 1990, the legislation was revoked, and SCAT could resume normal methods.

Then SCAT introduced the Fundraising Incentive Scheme (FRIS) to encourage Local Development Agencies to raise money in their own locales. SCAT pays a reward of up to R5.00 for every R1.00 raised. Tremendous ingenuity and hard work were ignited by this scheme, and much money was raised even in these poor communities, by way of beauty parades, raffles, disco evenings and the like. A favourite was to get a sheep donated, cut up and sold in pieces. Local fundraising activities are good for the Local Development Agency, since it re-inforces their autonomy and binds them closer to their communities. This scheme continues to this day.

IT ALL STARTED WITH A CANDLE-LIT LUNCH

By Di Oliver

In 1984 Barry Streek made an appointment to see me. I had not met him before, but admired his journalistic skills and enjoyed his cooking column in the Cape Times. Barry's affable nature and persuasive approach soon had me agreeing to become a third trustee of a yet-to-be-born organisation. Gordon Young was already on board. That was the start of SCAT becoming an integral part of my life for twenty-five years.

SCAT was born at a luncheon arranged at the Cape Town home of the Acting Consul-General, later Secretary General, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Bjarne Lindstrom. We signed the legal documents at the candle-lit lunch table. Burning candles at lunch was a charming Norwegian custom that was new to me. The gentle warmth of the flames held promise for what had been born.

It is thirty-five years later and time to celebrate what has been achieved. From the outset SCAT sought to be an enabling organisation. In other words, it aimed at strengthening work on the ground by being a resource and funding partner and not a director or manager of staff who did the work. Each local initiative was independent, set its own goals and decided how it would implement them. Communities were besieged by apartheid's tight grip 35 years ago, but despite the risks, individuals came forward to initiate advice offices and other local organisations that stood for justice and were desperate for change. Despite the odds, they fought every inch of the way to achieve success in their endeavours. We designed SCAT's funding criteria to encourage and support the development of local organisations that could be held accountable, both for the work they undertook in the name of local communities and for the finances they raised and received. There were only a few organisations that couldn't make the grade, sometimes through no fault of their own. Sometimes they re-organised themselves and tried again. This was always reason for celebration.

Norwegian Church Aid was SCAT's pioneer funder. It placed its trust in the formation of a South African-based trust and SCAT's first three trustees to address social change. We owe them a great debt of gratitude. Norwegian funding continued for many years and a range of other funders joined them. SCAT owes its profound gratitude to them all. Without them, rural rights and development needs in our country would very easily remain in the realm of silence.



DI OLIVER



BARRY STREEK



BJARNE LINDSTRØM