

**Building Relationships by Listening, Linking and Learning:
The Keys to Effective Development in South Africa**

Meghan Garrity

Macalester-Pomona-Swarthmore

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ABSTRACT:

One out of four of the world's population lives in absolute poverty. Twenty percent of these poor live in sub-Saharan Africa. Seventy percent of the absolute poor live in rural areas (Mikos 2001). These statistics paint a picture of a world in tremendous need of development. South Africa is no stranger to this development crisis. Approximately fifty percent of the country's population lives in poverty, unemployment rates are 26.6 percent and HIV/AIDS is the cause of an estimated 1,000 deaths per day (USAID 2006). This paper focuses on development solutions, investigating whether or not participatory development approaches are effective strategies and identifying the strengths and weaknesses as well as the methods implemented by organizations using these tactics.

The creation and evolution of development theory is first discussed as well as the current thinking and ideas on development paradigms. After a detailed analysis of development theory, I place South Africa in context, explaining the country's development strategies post-1994 and showing how they have transformed throughout the first decade of democracy. I then focus on a rural development NGO in Cape Town, the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT), using it as a case study to critique the implementation of a participatory approach to rural development. Finally, using this case study (in the context of the South Africa), I identify successes and challenges associated with the implementation these methods. With these objectives in mind, I hope to answer my research questions and discover effective development strategies.

SCAT's mission is to: "improve the quality of life of people living in rural communities with the aim of them living in a vibrant and sustainable environment" (SCAT Strat 2007). To do this it uses four strategies: institution building, capacity building, mobilizing resources, and developing intellectual capital. SCAT partners with over 50 local development agencies (LDAs) across South Africa in isolated rural communities, working in conjunction to realize sustainable progress. SCAT's tactics include: grantmaking, fieldwork, and the process of becoming a learning organization, each of which is instrumental in its success. By listening, linking, and learning, SCAT, and other organizations like it, can transform the process of rural development in South Africa and together create lasting and *effective* change.

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Section 1: INTRODUCTION

“Look at the world around you. It may see like an immovable, implacable place. It is not. With the slightest push -- in just the right place -- it can be tipped.” -Malcolm Gladwell

One out of four of the world’s population lives in absolute poverty. Twenty percent of these poor live in sub-Saharan Africa (Mikos 2001). Attempting to combat these conditions, the United Nations devised the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2000, and 191 UN member states agreed to the eight objectives set to eradicate extreme poverty by 2025. Despite promises, little progress has been made toward goal number one: to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who live on less than one dollar a day. According to the MDG 2006 Report, “In sub-Saharan Africa, although the poverty rate declined marginally, the number of people living in extreme poverty increased by 140 million.” It also states that “the [HIV/AIDS] epidemic remains centered in sub-Saharan Africa. With just over 10 percent of the world’s people, the region is home to 64 percent of HIV-positive people and to 90 percent of children (under 15) living with the virus” (MDG Report 2006). It appears that efforts to eradicate extreme hunger, achieve universal primary education, and to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis will not meet their objectives by the target date. The international development agenda appears to be failing in its original intentions.

Citizens living in rural areas are often the poorest; in fact, seventy percent of the absolute poor live in rural areas. Despite the statistics, financial support for rural development has been declining since the late 1980s (Mikos 2001). Although the rural areas consistently lag behind urban sections in the allocation of public investment and services, the UN has no distinct provisions in its goals addressing these different circumstances (Csaki 2001). Research has determined that the existing rural development strategies are not effective, and development throughout the world is in a state of crisis (Narman 1997).

South Africa is no stranger to this crisis. Approximately 50 percent of the country’s population lives in poverty, unemployment rates are 26.6 percent, and there are an estimated 1,000 deaths per day due to HIV/AIDS (USAID 2006). Despite these harsh statistics, South Africa has enjoyed 14 years of democracy after suffering 46 years of apartheid. In fact the country’s success and rise from apartheid have allowed it to economically dominate the sub-Saharan region of Africa and become one of the few African nations to join the group of upper-middle income countries (defined by the World Bank). Unfortunately, as the economy grows, the income inequalities increase as well. Those hit hardest by poverty live in rural areas where people continue

to suffer consequences of the “homelands” established by the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951.¹ These homelands continue to be penalized by the legacy of apartheid, with poverty rates ranging from 65 to 78 percent (Machethe 2004). Considering that 42% of South Africa’s population lives in the rural areas, rural poverty is an issue that needs to be addressed. The following table breaks down the inequalities between the poor rural areas and the national averages.

South Africa National/ Rural Comparisons

<u>Indicator</u>	<u>National (%)</u>	<u>Rural Areas (%)</u>
Unemployment Rate (official definition)	26.4	33.9
Unemployment Rate (expanded definition*)	37.0	52.2
Proportion of households with piped water	65.7	24.3
Proportion of households with access to safe water	79.4	40.3
Proportion of households using mainly wood for cooking	19.6	53.8
Proportion of households using mainly candles for lighting	20.0	41.9
Proportion of people with medical or health insurance	16.2	5.6
Proportion of households which depends on remittances as the main source of income	13.8	23.5
Proportion of households which never have a problem satisfying their food needs	50.9	35.2

*The expanded definition of unemployment factors in those who have given up and stopped looking for work, thus the figures in the second row are much higher than those in the first (Stats SA 2006).

Section 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Much still needs to be done in South Africa in terms of development. The focus of this paper is finding development practices that are effective, identifying who is making the most progress and the strategies used so they can be emulated by other organizations. I will search for these effective practices by investigating participatory development methods and asking these questions: Are participatory development approaches effective development strategies? What are the strengths and weaknesses of employing these strategies based on community involvement and local empowerment? And, what strategies and methods are being implemented by development organizations using this approach to fruitfully achieve its goals?

I have narrowed my questions by identifying four aims and objectives. First, I will examine the creation and evolution of development theory and discuss the current thinking on development paradigms, in which

¹ This act forced blacks from their homes, resettling them in remote undeveloped homelands in some of the most isolated and under-resourced areas of South Africa. The idea behind this act was to make the black Africans residents of the homelands and take away their status as South African citizens, thus making them aliens in their own nation (BBC New 2006).

participatory development will be examined. After a detailed analysis of development theory, I will place South Africa in context by explaining the country's development strategies post-1994 and showing how they have been transformed during the first decade of democracy. I will then focus on a rural development NGO in Cape Town, the Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT), using it as a case study to critique the implementation of a participatory approach to rural development. Finally, using this case study I will identify successes and challenges associated with the implementation these methods. By collecting my research around these four objectives, I hope to find answers to my questions and discover effective development strategies.

Section 3: METHODOLOGY

Using secondary sources such as books, academic journals, government documents, and NGO reports, I studied the evolution of development theories, investigated rural development strategies, and looked specifically at the work of rural development NGOs and the variety of strategies used. I then used SCAT as a case study to provide me with first-hand information regarding the development sector in general and rural development in particular. The case study includes my own empirical observations while working with the organization, SCAT archives, personal interviews and discussions with SCAT staff, and field visits to some communities to witness participatory development strategies in action. I incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data in order to offer an objective and well-rounded analysis of effective development, taking care not to become subjective due to my personal involvement with the organization.

Section 4: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins with an exploration of development theory, starting with a description of older development theories, followed by a concentration on the people-centered development approach, which is the focus of this paper. Placing South African rural development in context, I then investigate current national strategies and how these are, or are not, being implemented. Last, I explore the role of NGOs in the country and examine the changes in the development sector pre- and post- apartheid.

4.1: Development Theory

Today development is a trope constantly used in the media and the political sphere, but development is a fairly new term. Development theory originated at a hotel in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944 where the Allied Powers met shortly before D-day to discuss the structure of the new world economy after World War II. The fruits of the meeting were the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

(GATT), all designed to create a more stable, free flowing international trading environment. When the developing countries began to gain independence in the mid-1900s, questions of their development came to the vanguard (Rapley 1996). The West took responsibility to develop these *underdeveloped* countries and modernization theory was born.²

Modernization theory dominated development thinking in the 1950s and 1960s, with the view that the developing world should follow the development process of the developed nations. Walt Rostow, a champion of this theory, outlined basic steps that developing countries should take to become less ‘backwards’ and more developed. In Latin American countries in the 1960s another development theory was growing in popularity, dependency theory. Dependency theory fundamentally contrasted with modernization, claiming that conditions in developing countries were the result of underdevelopment created by the developed world. The proposed solution by dependency theory proponents such as Andre Gunder Frank and Fernando Henrique Cardoso was for developing countries to break ties with developed nations and pursue their own domestic interests. Import-substitution policies were used in an attempt to achieve this break. Both modernization and dependency theory, however, failed to solve the development problems of the Third World.

The first oil crisis in 1973 dramatically impacted both the developing countries and the development sector as a whole. As oil prices skyrocketed, OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) countries deposited their cash in Western banks. Needing to earn interest for their OPEC investors, the banks then offered low-interest loans to many developing countries for dubious development projects, hoping to earn quick and easy returns on these vast sums of OPEC money. Enticed, many third world countries borrowed large sums to jumpstart various projects. These projects often proved unstable and many failed, leaving poor countries burdened with large debt. And so the debt crisis began, only to be exacerbated by the second oil shock in 1979 (Rapley 1996). The failure of modernization and dependency theory, combined with the debt catastrophe, put the developing world in a state of emergency.

Structural adjustment policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank were designed in the 1980s to solve this development disaster. If the developing countries wanted help from these lending institutions they had to accept their reconstruction guidelines, placing them in a Catch 22: to escape their calamitous state they needed to borrow money, but the only institutions from which to obtain large sums were the IMF or World Bank. Thus,

² See Appendix 1 for a detailed analysis of development theories.

many developing countries were forced to accept macroeconomic policies not necessarily tailored to their specific needs (Davids 2005).³

Aside from the structural adjustment policies that arose in the 1980s, a shift toward people-centered development was also starting to emerge. In the early 1980s development workers began looking for new ways to collect data from rural peoples. Robert Chambers, one of these development workers, popularized new techniques for collecting data that brought about a ‘reversal of learning’ (Chambers 1983). This approach emphasized the importance of people as agents of their own change. Taking the focus away from the development practitioner and placing the spotlight on the people completely shifted the top-down approaches to development now considered unsustainable because of their inherent dependency on outside solutions (Chambers 1997). Although development is a relatively new sector, theories abound; the four theories mentioned above represent the main paradigms leading up to present development thinking and give a sense of the major changes that have occurred.

4.2: Contemporary Thought

“One thing seems clear in the 3rd world – what works on paper may not work in practice. We are left to wonder if an entirely new development debate is about to begin.” -John Rapley

If development today could be summed up in one word it would be – debate. Experts define development differently and thus propose various solutions. This section summarizes current development dialogue, providing a framework in which effective development can be analyzed. The 21st century has yet to be dominated by a prevailing development theory or paradigm. In fact, Pieterse (1998) suggests that current thinking is beginning to question the relevance of a development paradigm at all. He claims that over the past two decades the goals of development have been redefined with measurement of development shifting from solely GDP growth to a wider focus on overall human development (Pieterse 1998). Unfortunately, human development is difficult to statistically calculate, as factors combining quantitative and qualitative information must be considered rather than just the economic measures of the GDP.

The importance of considering the human side of development has been widely accepted but has not ended or even diminished the debate. Pieterse believes that, “mainstream development is increasingly caught on the horns of a dilemma between the aims of human and social development, and the constraints of structural adjustment and global monetarism represented by the international financial institutions” (1998: 345). He implies that the debate has shifted from mainstream development vs. alternative development theories, to human development vs. structural adjustment – two forms of mainstream development. Pieterse assumes that

³ Development theorists agree that while structural adjustment policies have worked in some Latin American countries they have generally failed in Africa (Davids 2005).

alternative development is now a part of mainstream development, which is controversial since alternative development has a separate discourse all together. The difference between the two modes of thought is well illustrated by the changes in Robert Chambers's book titles over time. The title of his 1983 book was *Putting the Last First*, his 1997 book, *Putting the First Last*. This small change had great implications for development: Putting the last first implies that (Northern) development practitioners have power over the underdeveloped people of the third world, placing them in a lesser position. Putting the first last involves a shift in power, with development experts taking a back seat to the ideas and theories of the poor (Chambers 1997). The notion of putting the first last is at the center of the discourse surrounding alternative development; this core issue of power separates it from the mainstream.

Alternative development has many names, including appropriate development, participatory development, people-centered development, human-scale development, people's self-development, autonomous development, and holistic development (Pieterse 1998). Regardless of name, the thinking implied in them emphasizes people's agency in the development process and their capacity to effect social change. It is development from below rather than "mainstream," top-down methods and is usually implemented by NGOs or other grassroots organizations. While these alternative strategies have common roots, including participation, empowerment, sustainability, and social learning, a fundamental theory has not been produced. As Pieterse states, "it would be difficult to claim that alternative development represents a paradigm break in development for it lacks sufficient theoretical cohesion" (1998: 349). It is in this intentional move away from theory and towards action that alternative development methods counter mainstream development strategies.

Rahman (1993) questions the importance of theory in his claim, "If people are the principal actors in the alternative development paradigm, the relevant reality must be the people's own, constructed by them only" (quoted in Pieterse 1998: 357). This may be the best starting point for contextualizing contemporary development discourse. There is certainly overlap today between mainstream and alternative development as they share some of the same rhetoric: participation, working *with* the poor, and local action (Pieterse 1998). The shift from working *for* the poor to now working *with* them summarizes the greatest fundamental change in the evolution of development. The key issue then is, "the wide gap between social development, the sense of popular and human development, and the policies adopted by the WTO and Bretton Woods institutions" (Pieterse 1998: 370). The essential difference between mainstream and alternative development can be summarized in Chambers's terms - should the last be put first or the first last?

Narman identifies an emerging gap between theory and practice in development. "Irrespective of how development is defined, it is not difficult to find empirical evidence of a crisis" (1997: 217). The greatest crisis,

aside from statistics showing a lack of growth in developing countries, is that academics and development practitioners cannot agree on a universal way forward. A main problem with theory is that it offers analytical criticisms of other thinkers and strategies but rarely provides an alternative or constructive solution (Narman 1997).

4.3: South Africa in Context

“Great ambition without contribution is without significance.” -The Emperor’s Club (2002)

Following a discussion of development theory, it is important to place South Africa in context. Its struggle and success in peaceful transition to a democratic society, under the leadership of Nelson Mandela, was no small feat. The country is a beacon of success for other developing countries to emulate, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa. Understanding the framework of development in South Africa, within the greater context of development theory, will allow for an analysis of effective development strategies.

Following the 1994 elections, the Government of National Unity (GNU), composed of the African National Congress (ANC), the Nationalist Party, and the Inkatha Freedom Party implemented the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), based on the people-centered approach championed by Chambers. The program was meant to address the economic challenges of the nation by stimulating growth and alleviating poverty via its broad socioeconomic plan (Blumenfeld 1997). The RDP began as the ANC election manifesto but turned into a formal development policy with specific targets. As Blumenfeld states, “the RDP became a symbol for the process of national reconciliation and socioeconomic reconstruction” (1997: 68). The RDP outlined four main principles: meeting basic needs, developing human resources, building the economy, and democratizing state institutions and society (Moseley 2007). All the parties involved agreed with the RDP’s idealistic macroeconomic strategies, but the extensiveness of this strategy turned out to be its downfall, and the RDP office closed in 1996 after only two years of operation.

During the post-election stages, the RDP initially received support across the political spectrum and throughout the international community. However, the South African government failed to identify many of the program’s inherent weaknesses. For example, from the start there were questions of the program’s affordability, with cost estimates ranging from R40 billion to R700 billion (roughly \$8.5 to \$150 billion USD in 2007) (Blumenfeld 1997). Cost, however, was only one of its many problems. Bureaucratic incompetence, excessive red tape, allegations of fraud, and corruption within projects all worked to shorten the life of the RDP. Implementation was also problematic, with unrealistic targets set and a lack of experience by newly appointed government officials. Since much of the implementation was left to local and provincial administrators, their lack of experience, in turn, negatively affected the delivery of resources to their communities (Blumenfeld 1997).

Although the RDP seemingly offered solutions to many of the development problems facing South Africa, it failed to deliver adequately in terms of the ANC's election mandate, leading to a fundamental shift in the state's development strategies in 1996.

Dauids (2005) argues that the shift in 1996 from the RDP to the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) was a shift from people-centered development to macro neoliberal policies, with similar problems of delivery. GEAR was a macroeconomic strategy intended to develop a competitive, fast growing economy by increasing foreign direct investments, creating an open economy, increasing customer spending, reducing the federal deficit, and increasing GDP, to name just a few (Moseley 2007). This strategy has been heavily criticized for failing to deliver (similar to the RDP), but the South African government alone cannot be blamed for this ineffective policy.

When the ANC replaced the apartheid regime it came under increasing scrutiny from the IMF and World Bank. The influences of these two extremely powerful organizations set the stage for South Africa's shift to the neoliberal economic model that it uses today. In order to receive funding from these lending institutions, South Africa had to follow their rules, including privatization, currency devaluation, reducing government spending, eliminating subsidies, and creating an export-oriented market. The problem with these policies was that they were generally applied throughout the developing world and failed to consider the unique situation of individual borrowing countries (Moseley 2007). Unfortunately, these macro policies have done little to address the micro poverty problems on the ground, including housing, health and education. Through the context of South Africa's continuing operation within the structure of the neoliberal GEAR policy developed in 1996, I will analyze the effectiveness of participatory development strategies.

4.4: The Role of NGOs

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has." -Margaret Mead

As the political climate dramatically changed in South Africa after 1994, the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector also underwent massive transformations in the new democratic state. Before 1994 most of the NGOs in the country were political, concentrating on the anti-apartheid movement. With the backing of the international community, almost all foreign aid to South Africa was indirectly (and often illegally) channeled to these organizations. As apartheid came to an end in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the number of NGOs grew dramatically. In fact in 1990 South Africa had approximately 20,000 NGOs (Smith 2006). Since 1994, in the new era of democracy, these same NGOs struggle to redefine themselves outside of politics, as they

must restructure their purpose if they want to receive funding. Thus, NGOs have shifted focus from resistance to reconstruction.

After the fall of apartheid, international donors began directing their funds away from grassroots organizations and toward the new ANC government, resulting in the demise of many NGOs. But with the GEAR economic strategy failing to reach the poorest of the poor, surviving NGOs continue to fill a critical development void but find themselves stressed by a lack of money. Not surprisingly, this is felt hardest in remote rural areas where NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) are often the only support mechanism for these vulnerable communities. Since the rural areas are often isolated from larger cities, these communities cannot rely on support and funding from big urban-based institutions.

On top of a lack of funding, international donors are tightening funding requirements for NGOs and often expect them to produce results in a very short time, which goes against the participatory nature of many of these organizations. They are forced to comply or seek other funding sources (Smith 2006). While plenty of money is flowing into the country for development, the bureaucracy of the process cripples the institutions most capable of producing change. Fortunately there are a few organizations that have survived the political transition and focus on small CBOs that fill a critical role but are often ignored by national policies and international funding. One such organization is the Social Change Assistance Trust, a rural development NGO based in Cape Town that refuses to ignore the rural poverty in South Africa's most isolated areas.

Section 5: CASE STUDY: SOCIAL CHANGE ASSISTANCE TRUST (SCAT)

Having discussed development theory in general, situating South Africa within the context of current development thinking, and describing the current role of NGOs in the country, I now introduce my case study of a particular NGO with which I worked and which prompted this research project. Through empirical research, my hands-on involvement with the organization, and a study of the NGO's archives and relevant documents, the aim of my field research has been to answer the questions stated at the outset of this paper. These include: Are participatory development approaches effective development strategies? What are the strengths and weaknesses of employing these strategies based on community involvement and local empowerment? And, what tactics does this NGO use that enable it to fruitfully achieve its goals?

5.1: Overview

"The one who leads best is the one who serves best." -Anonymous

SCAT is one of the leading and most established rural development NGOs in South Africa. Founded in 1984, it is one of the few successful grantmaking organizations in the country. It was created to provide greater

resources to CBOs by accessing international funding to counter poverty, lack of resources, and human rights violations. From the outset it has implemented a people-centered approach, today partnering with over 50 local development agencies (LDAs) and CBOs. SCAT has endured the transformation from pre- to post-apartheid South Africa. Unlike many other NGOs after 1994, it has not had to reassess its relevance because it did not play a specifically political role during apartheid. Originally funded solely by Norway (Norwegian Church Aid), SCAT had to diversify its donor base and search for different avenues of funding when its international funding was reduced and redirected to the South African government (SCAT CWCI 2007).

Today SCAT's mission is to "improve the quality of life of people living in rural communities with the aim of them living in a vibrant and sustainable environment" (SCAT Strat 2007). SCAT uses four strategies to implement its mission: institution building, capacity building, mobilizing resources and developing intellectual capital.

- Institution building* involves improving the structure of the LDA itself in terms of organizational development and management, conflict resolution and program/volunteer management.
- Capacity building* focuses on the skills of the LDA staff and works with them in training organization employees, volunteers and other community members.
- To mobilize resources* SCAT supports the LDAs financially and also works with them in diversifying their sources of funding.
- Developing the intellectual capital*, of both SCAT and their LDAs, enables them to become learning organizations (SCAT Strat 2007).

The organization aims to carry out the action-learning process of doing, observing, reflecting, learning, and re-planning before doing the next, championed by Chambers in the 1990s (Reeler 2007). This multi-dimensional design helps SCAT carry out its mission.

5.2: LDAs -- Who they are, what they do and the purpose they serve

"The trust of the people in the leaders reflects the confidence of the leaders in the people." -Paulo Freire

The LDAs that SCAT works with are primarily located in isolated rural areas of the Eastern, Northern, and Western Cape of South Africa and occasionally in the Free State and the Northwest Province.⁴ These are local organizations working on behalf of, and with, their communities to achieve local development. Members of the community elect the LDA staff and a volunteer committee to oversee the organization. The organizations' purposes are to raise and manage money and to provide services. Each LDA regularly reports to its community on the work that is being carried out. Staff is evaluated at these meetings and no one is guaranteed employment. Anyone from the communities can be a member of the LDA, as no previous qualifications are necessary. SCAT

⁴ See Appendix 2 for a map of these areas.

encourages the LDAs to support women to take positions within the LDA staff in order to promote equal gender participation (SCAT Web 2007).

LDAs wishing to partner with SCAT must submit: a report outlining community needs and priorities, the programs in place to respond to these needs, a detailed budget, the LDA's constitution, and the aims, objectives, and plans to meet the budget (SCAT Web 2007). SCAT then reviews the LDA's application and decides if it is a suitable candidate. Once a partner, an LDA must submit monthly reports on activities and finances as well as provide this information to the community it serves. LDA constitutions must also have a provision for an annual general meeting at which it presents audited financial records.

Partnering with these organizations has allowed SCAT to realize the people-centered approach it so strongly advocates. The LDAs, representing their own communities, have informed and subjective opinions about future development needs and objectives in their particular areas. According to SCAT's records, my own observations, and discussions with field workers, the working relationships that have developed between SCAT and these LDAs have empowered many of these small organizations to succeed in creating sustainable livelihoods.⁵ SCAT's role in the partnership is to provide financial support, capacity building, advice, and encouragement (SCAT Web 2007). Most important, a community receives none of these services unless it requests them – a bottom-up approach. The communities must devise their own proposals and training workshops and submit monthly reports on their progress. In this sense SCAT does not impose its (outside) strategies on the communities, nor does it provide funding without a system of checks and balances.

5.3: Programs

“The village is like a basket that has been broken and the pieces scattered. The pieces are still there but not everyone can see them. What has been broken can be rewoven slowly and gradually, but only by those who will take the time to stay close to the village people and build trust with them. I know for certain that this can be achieved, even though it must be done slowly and carefully. Eventually the village people are the weavers themselves and they carry the task forward further, further. The basket will be better than before, but first it must be something like the same.” -Meas Nee

SCAT currently has five programs that it uses in partnering with LDAs: three core programs and two theme-based programs. The three core programs are grantmaking, fieldwork, and training. The two thematic programs are HIV/AIDS and local economic development (LED). SCAT believes that an amalgam of all these programs is fundamental to its success (SCAT Strat 2007). Each program has different tasks and goals specific to each of the over 50 LDAs and CBOs with which SCAT works.

Grantmaking

⁵ Haarlem Advice Office in the Western Cape has been thus empowered that they now distribute food parcels for the Department of Social Development to farm workers and families earning less than R200 per month. They are also working with the local municipality to set up a project for the youth in the community as well as a computer-training center with Internet access.

SCAT is first and foremost a grantmaking organization, with 50 percent of its funds allocated to this function. It is one of only fifteen organizations in all of South Africa whose main focus is grantmaking (SCAT Strat 2007). This program is broken down into four subsections: core grants; fundraising incentive scheme (FRIS); development fund for training (DFT); and HIV/AIDS fund for development.

-Core Grants

Core grants range in size from R1500 to R4000 (about \$200 to \$570 USD in 2007), depending on the financial capabilities of the LDA and its ability to acquire funds from other sources. They are distributed monthly or quarterly, covering LDA staff salaries and administrative expenses (ODA 2004). This funding allows the LDAs to function sustainably and to focus on community programs and projects without the burden of organizational fees. This strategy allows each LDA to freely operate, without becoming dependent on SCAT, using the organization as a stepping-stone toward future autonomous sustainability.

-Fundraising Incentive Scheme (FRIS)

After more than 10 years of grant-making experience, SCAT's trustees concluded that many South African NGOs, and particularly their LDA partners, were too dependent on grants, making them vulnerable if their grants were discontinued. They decided to broaden the fundraising base of these organizations through an initiative called the Fundraising Incentive Scheme (FRIS). FRIS, launched in 1996, grants R5 for every R1 raised through community fundraising events, to a maximum of R25000 (ODA 2004). The idea behind the program is to reduce the LDAs' dependency on grants and encourage greater reliance on local efforts and resources.

Typical fundraising events held in the communities to obtain FRIS funding include: choral events, raffles, beauty/talent contests, dances, sports events, meat sales, and *braais* (barbecues). These events bring people together and encourage young and old alike to participate in community improvement. To receive FRIS funding based on such an event, the LDA must submit a claim form detailing community planning and cooperation, a monthly financial report, deposit slips verifying the money paid, and an explanation of all buying and selling for the event in cases where the money was not a community donation (in this case the names and contact details must be provided).

One of the unique features of this program is that, once approved, the money is given to the LDA to use at its own discretion within its organization's strategic objectives. Thus the funds are often used for payments to staff and volunteers, purchasing capital equipment, improving project development and paying bonuses, honorariums, or incentives. All of these uses stretch beyond the limits set by the core grants of SCAT (ODA 2004). The FRIS program encourages communities to come together, through fundraising efforts, to work

toward greater development for the community as a whole, thus fostering public participation as well as a spirit of *ubuntu* or togetherness.

FRIS is innovative in that it allows LDAs a scope for organic, self-directed development that it would not otherwise have. It is also bold. FRIS requires a high degree of trust, since SCAT allows LDAs to use the money at their own discretion. Match funding is a common (and criticized) grant-making mechanism – but a five times reward is unknown in the literature (ODA 2004). The “FRIS Model” also assumes that FRIS resources are better spent because the LDA and the community, not the funder, define the needs.

-The Development Fund for Training (DFT)

The Development Fund for Training (DFT) is an account from which LDAs can draw money for training sessions or workshops for their staff or volunteers. This program enables LDAs to train community members themselves, independent from SCAT. SCAT requires a plan and budget proposal before approval and a final report after training concludes in order for the LDA to collect the funds (SCAT Web 2007).

-The HIV/AIDS Fund for Development

The HIV/AIDS Fund for Development is similar to DFT in that LDAs can apply to this fund for work related to HIV/AIDS in their communities. The field workers, as well as SCAT’s HIV/AIDS coordinator, screen the plans and determine whether or not to allocate the funds (SCAT Web 2007). These programs are unique in that they do not just hand out money for training or HIV/AIDS as other development organizations do. The LDAs must come up with a plan or project and apply to the fund for the finances. In this sense the LDAs must initiate and determine where and for what it needs the money and design its own strategies.

Field Work

The field workers are SCAT’s physical connection to the communities it serves. They work directly with the local people to achieve not only SCAT’s vision, but also, and more important, the vision of the entire community. Each field worker is responsible for four to eleven LDAs, providing organizational guidance, linking LDAs to other organizations/funders, and helping with advocacy roles. While field workers visit their communities quarterly, they are in contact with them throughout the year via correspondence, planning, evaluations, claim forms, and financial and project reports.

The FRIS program best illustrates the field workers’ multiple roles. By encouraging LDAs to claim FRIS funding and discussing the benefits and methods of local fundraising the field workers act as coaches. They also function as referees, deciding whether or not a claim should be paid subsequent to a fundraising event. SCAT field workers must at times also play the role of mentor to LDAs, concerned not only that money is raised but

also that it promotes development – both in the manner in which it is raised and in the way in which it is spent (ODA 2004).

SCAT's field workers constantly brainstorm new ideas and strategies for increased data collection, improved assessment, and innovative programs. This relentless dedication to improving the lives of the people with whom they work is one of the greatest assets of the SCAT field team. As field worker Mhkululi Mazula states, "There are always challenges but you have to believe in what you do." At SCAT this faith in the process is a key component to its success.

Training

Training, the last component of SCAT's core programs, is done by the field workers or sometimes outsourced to other organizations. The idea behind SCAT's training program is to train LDA staff in the hope that they will spread their knowledge and skills throughout their communities. Field workers are always checking with the community, asking about skills and training needs. In this respect the community identifies its own needs, one of the many ways in which SCAT applies a participatory approach.

SCAT also holds cluster workshops three times a year (in the Eastern, Northern, and Western Cape), attended by multiple LDAs in each area. Since developing intellectual capital by creating learning institutions is one of SCAT's strategic objectives, cluster workshops are a great place for SCAT and the LDAs to learn and gain insight from one another. These workshops cover various topics including basic bookkeeping skills, administrative skills, leadership, and management training (SCAT Web 2007). From these sessions the LDA staff not only gain the tools they need to perform their quotidian duties but also, it is hoped, spread their knowledge by holding their own training workshops (SCAT Web 2007).

Theme-based Programs

In addition to the three core programs, SCAT has two theme-based programs that are not part of its foundational strategy but are designed to address key development issues that require special focus. SCAT strongly encourages its partners to engage with local economic development (LED) opportunities in their communities by starting small businesses, working with municipalities to create economic projects, and initiating savings schemes (SCAT Web 2007). SCAT's LED program provides consulting support to interested communities and helps to link communities to opportunities. Upon initial interest and success, amongst the LDAs, SCAT is working to improve and expand this program. Another theme-based program is HIV/AIDS, one of South Africa's greatest problems, and one of the main barriers to its growth and development. This target program was established in 2002 to assist in the development of community responses to HIV/AIDS, specifically in the rural context (SCAT Web 2007). The program started with six activator sites in 2002 and grew to 35 sites

in 2007. The LDAs have proven to be significant players in fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic, as they are able to assist villages and farm communities where services are often lacking (Nkompela 2005).

5.4: Challenges to the People-Centered Approach

“I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” –Michael Jordan

Many of SCAT’s LDA partners face development dilemmas, which vary greatly from organization to organization and within different towns and provinces. They include funding, lack of consistency in staff, relationships with municipalities (local and provincial), inefficiency of local governments, and the politics of development work.

Funding may be the biggest challenge LDAs face. Although SCAT supports its partners, it cannot finance these organizations alone. Reasons for funding problems include difficulties in grant writing, poor allocation of funding from municipalities, and difficulties receiving money from external donors (such as the Ford Foundation). Preferring relationships with more structured organizations like SCAT, international donors question the stability of LDAs and CBOs, especially the inconsistency in LDA staff.

LDAs offer opportunities to gain valuable skills, thus enticing many people to use them for personal development. Their newly acquired skills make LDA staff attractive candidates for local government positions offering much higher salaries, resulting in a constant brain drain from the community organizations. Another challenge for LDA staff is that they are usually volunteers who are paid only when money is available. The dedication of these volunteers is admirable, but without a consistent source of income they struggle to run an entire organization. Another challenge is that some organizations provide training to LDAs but do not provide money for daily operational costs or specific programs that LDAs designed themselves. While training is important, foundational finances are needed to keep the organization running. SCAT is unique in that it provides core grants for administrative costs so that LDAs can focus on community needs without having to worry about managerial finances.

Local government inefficiency is another issue that affects the work of LDAs (Mazula 2007, personal communication, 20 April 2007). Often local government workers are employed for their politics, not their skills. Friends or family are often hired regardless of experience or qualifications; this is especially true in the Eastern Cape. Municipalities often hire expensive outside consultants to deal with financial matters, draining money from the government and in turn the LDAs. Many problems result from the mismanagement of local and provincial government resources. Often the ineffective allocation of funding leads to waste. Provincial and local governments, for example, must allocate money to community organizations throughout the year. When this

does not happen properly fiscal dumping of unspent funds occurs at the year's end (Mazula 2007, pers. comm., 20 April). Although smaller CBOs always welcome such extra funding, the influx actually harms them as they rush to spend the money within the local government's stipulated time frame and subsidize projects that have not been properly planned. This creates a vicious cycle of local government pouring funds into small organizations that, in turn, fund unstable programs. If the proper infrastructure is not in place, the money goes to waste.

Poor relationships with local governments and municipalities are obstacles LDAs often encounter. Some have very good relationships with their local governments, which often leads to success. A good relationship benefits both the LDA and the local government, as the LDA can work as the conduit between the higher political authority and the local people. Unfortunately, municipalities are sometimes poorly informed about development programs they are required to finance and thus are intimidated by knowledgeable LDAs who seek their funding. This source of tension often results in the municipality shunning the LDA, which is seen as a threat. LDAs also face the politics of development work and the political climate of South Africa post 1994. The shift in international funding from local CBOs to the national government has negatively affected small rural communities, and slow government service delivery has left them severely under-resourced.

SCAT has also faced challenges internally, among them funding and measuring and evaluation strategies. In 2004 and 2005 SCAT realized that it needed to diversify its donor base as it was relying too much on one donor. It has since done this and, as a result, has received more discretionary money with which it can allocate where it sees fit. Some of the new funding sources include the Ford Foundation, the Open Society Foundation for South Africa and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, to name a few. Now that its funds have stabilized, SCAT struggles to find an accurate measurement and evaluation strategy. The field of development is caught up in an age of accountability. To solve the problem of failing development, the development sector has demanded that organizations *prove*, often statistically, that their programs are successful.

The problem, however, is not ineffective measuring but ineffective results. SCAT is not lacking in success, but is trying to redefine what it means to be successful, focusing less on statistical gains and more on overall sustainability. It is working with Andre Proctor from Keystone, an organization that believes "accountability, monitoring and evaluation could become less an instrument for control and compliance and more supportive of organizational and societal learning, leading to more effective and sustainable development" (SCAT AR 2007). This idea of transforming into a learning organization is one of SCAT's four main strategies. It involves valuing both successes and failures and using both as tools for growth. It also requires measuring effectiveness outside of quantitative data and instead encouraging narratives from community members detailing

their progress (Reeler 2007). As new challenges appear, SCAT devises specific strategies to address the problems and create the best environment for growth, within SCAT and within its partner communities.

5.5: Advantages and Successes

“To leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has lived easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.” -Ralph Waldo Emerson

Despite many challenges, there are many successes and advantages to SCAT’s participatory approach. With only fifteen staff members, SCAT can take advantage of its small size to revise and amend its practices without having to deal with layers of bureaucracy. SCAT analyzes its mission, vision and strategic objectives in an annual strategic review and makes adjustments to accommodate changes in the field and in the communities it serves. It also evaluates its programs to determine whether any new ones should be added or older ones revised.

Since SCAT works with many LDAs, it is hard to generalize successes; each is a unique case. This is where the field workers play such an integral role. They go into communities, listen to LDA staff, learn the distinct qualities of each locality, and tailor suggestions and possible projects to meet particular needs. One example of success was the FRIS program which in 2006 raised R200,000 with participation from 80 percent of the LDAs, up from 50 percent at the program’s start (SCAT AR 2007).⁶ FRIS has had a significant and positive impact on the LDAs and their communities, first by the local fundraising activities themselves and second by the expenditure of the FRIS funding. SCAT’s three cluster workshops, in 2006, focusing on education and awareness of local government were also key achievements since the importance of healthy relationships with local governments is vital, as these governments are a great source of LDA funding. The LDAs responded well to the training and are now better focused on building relationships with their municipalities.

SCAT’s theme-based programs also made some great strides forward in 2006. In June, SCAT produced an instructional LED toolkit CD-ROM translated into three languages and distributed to LDAs with information such as key terminology, project management, business plans, a contact list and a media gallery with photos of successful LED projects (SCAT AR 2007). Between January 2006 and January 2007 nine new HIV/AIDS activator sites were established, increasing the total to 35. These sites significantly contribute to reducing the stigma and denial surrounding the disease as well as providing counseling and support (SCAT Strat 2007). SCAT hopes to continue to increase the number of sites until all LDAs have one in their community: “What has emerged as an impact of the activator programmes in each site is the increased level of disclosure by individuals who are living with HIV. These brave individuals are helping to change the stigma attached to being positive” (SCAT AR 2007, 15). In collaboration with the activators, LDAs are also playing a large role in developing food

⁶ The figures quoted are taken from the 2006 annual report, the 2007 figures will be published in 2008.

security initiatives for people living with HIV. Community vegetable gardens improve the health of these people, produce a small income, and foster a sense of community and support. SCAT field workers also help by linking these activator sites to service providers and stakeholders in the HIV sector (SCAT Strat 2007).

Since SCAT works with over 50 LDAs, it is impossible to describe all their successes here. These are some highlights:

- Barkly West AO* (advice office) (NC⁷) has funding from SCAT for a bakery project. The organization has refurbished a building for the project and has conducted exposure visits to another bakery to learn how the bakery could function.
- Haarlem (WC)* has set up numerous innovative LED initiatives. One of these is a fencing project which sells its services to local farmers and the district municipality. One of the other projects is alien plant species clearing, contracted by the District Municipality as well as a contract to administer the leasing of farm equipment for private gardening.
- Ceres AO (WC)* has good working relationships with local government and is receiving funding from their District Municipality. They have set up a partnership with the museum, local government and tourism bureau to look into an economic development project for the employment of women.
- Elliot AO (EC)* also has a good relationship with the local municipality and has been instrumental in improving living standards in the town. The streets have been paved; the bus and taxi rank have been built and there are new houses for people. The AO has been identified by the Premier of the Eastern Cape's Office as one of the good organizations.
- Burgersdorp AO (EC)* works with farm workers who were treated unfairly on farms and with the eviction of farm workers. Human rights violations of farm workers are fairly common, but the office has had a lot of success dealing with such cases.
- For Beaufort (EC)* assisted orphans who were not attending school and has set up the Fort Beaufort Education Trust Fund for which funds were raised from local businesses. The fund ensures that children who were struggling in the past are now able to attend school (SCAT Strat 2007).

While some of these successes may seem small, they are improvements that the communities have identified and carried out themselves. SCAT, which is only a part of the process of community development, considers itself successful only when its partner communities improve.

Section 6: ANALYSIS

"Excellence is not an accomplishment. It is a spirit, a never-ending process." -Lawrence M. Miller

This case study has illustrated that SCAT implements a people-centered, participatory approach to development. Its partners have been and continue to improve their lives. Positive changes are constantly taking place as the communities, in association with SCAT, work to devise exemplary development projects and programs. The SCAT case study demonstrates that participatory development approaches in South Africa are

⁷ NC= Northern Cape, WC= Western Cape, EC= Eastern Cape

effective. This does not deny that other development strategies may be effective as well, since this project was limited in its scope to one particular NGO. However, as this strategy has proven successful, the methods and tactics should be emulated by other organizations (new or established) seeking significant development delivery, which is often lacking in government programs.

These strategies based on community involvement and local empowerment give everyone involved a voice and the opportunity to work in a collaborative way to achieve development. While micro-focused programs may seem insignificant on a large scale, service delivery is an increasing problem in South Africa; thus successful approaches should be encouraged and expanded. Rural poverty is an enormous challenge and can seem overwhelming. The success of participatory methods is that they are making sustainable progress rather than trying to devise macro solutions and, in the process, failing to deliver at all. Ironically one of the perceived weaknesses of participatory development is exactly what makes it so successful. It is slow. Meeting with community members, discussing ideas, and designing projects together all takes time. There is no a quick fix.

Another challenge to this approach is that its outcomes are hard to measure. The vision at the heart of participatory development is building relationships with communities, which then generate more effective development results. While some of the end results may be quantitatively measured the relationships cannot, yet without these connections progress would not be made. The solution to this dilemma is the transformation of organizations like SCAT, and other NGOs, into learning organizations. SCAT is trying to do this by working with organizations like Keystone, to find an effective measuring and evaluation strategy that reflects its true progress.

The methods SCAT uses in achieving its goals are grantmaking, fieldwork and the process of becoming a learning organization. Grantmaking was shown in the case study to be an extremely successful participatory development tactic. By providing grants to LDAs, SCAT empowers them to operate independently, entrusted to design and employ development strategies for their own community. In this way community members are themselves empowered to give voice to locally suitable and relevant development ideas. Fieldworkers are invaluable in this participatory process, working hand-in-hand with the communities to help them along the road to development by listening to their ideas, offering suggestions and linking them to other organizations and sources of funding. Finally the vision of becoming a learning organization is key to SCAT's success. Understanding that development is a process and embracing all aspects (both good and bad) of that process allows the organization to grow and develop together with the communities it serves and improve the quality of life for all those involved.

Section 7: CONCLUSION

SCAT's success is best described by field manager Linda Diedericks: "We really believe in a participatory approach, that people can change themselves." This faith in the people inspires SCAT to trust in the process, and together, by working in partnership with LDAs and CBOs, achieve effective development. The organization works at the local level, building horizontal relationships from the ground up. Although progress may be slow, there is sustainable improvement. In fact, development must be slow if it is to be sustainable. Organizations similar to SCAT in their participatory approach should work in partnership to achieve effective development. While the results at first may be small and local, these are the first steps on a steep road towards change. By listening, linking and learning, SCAT, and other organizations like it, can transform the process of rural development in South Africa and together create lasting *effective* change.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Development Theories/Paradigms

Theory/Paradigm	Key Theorists	Strategy	Criticisms
Modernization (1950-1960s)	Rostow, Lerner	'Westernization', Linear approach, Specific stages of development (Rostow's [1960] stages of econ. growth) -Traditional society -Preconditions for take-off -Take-off -Drive to maturity -Age of Mass Consumption Western society thought of as superior, Underdevelopment is just a stage	Rostow's terms "traditional" and "modern" are derogatory and too vague, Western arrogance: assumes 'backward' developing nations need Western help, Western consumption is the final stage of modernization, too macro of a solution
Dependency (1960s)	Frank, Cardoso	-Originated in Latin America, 1 st world perpetuated underdevelopment of 3 rd world by exploiting them -Underdevelopment <i>not</i> a stage of development -Used terms 'core' and 'periphery': -Intl: 1 st world core exploited 3 rd world periphery (raw materials) -Natl: urban core oppressed rural periphery (physical resources) -1 st world prospered thanks to the 3 rd just as urban centers developed at expense of rural areas -Need to break chain of dependency to escape- import substitution	Too much emphasis on external factors, ignores internal issues, developing countries cannot remove themselves from world system, too macro and oversimplified a solution, assumed universal/broad answer to problems of development

		-Strategy failed: industry accounted for more investment than output, continued high employment and inequalities	
Structural Adjustment (SA) (1980s)	IMF, World Bank	<p>Response to 1970s debt crisis, banks forced 3rd world to adopt their SA policies if they wanted funding,</p> <p>Purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -increase efficiency of state and market to restore growth and progress <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -increase powers of entrepreneurs and investors -increase competition -lower cost -restore macroeconomic stability <p>Strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -privatization, currency devaluation, reducing government spending, eliminating subsidies, and creating an export orientated market <p>-State should play a lesser role and allow the market to dominate, has worked in some Latin American countries but failed miserably in Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Policies are too macro -Threatens the sovereignty of national economies because an outside organization dictates a nation's economic policy -Privatization reduces state capacity -Local environments can become casualties to pro-trade policies -Inequality has increased due to SA
People-Centered Development (1980s & 1990s)	Chambers, Burkey, Korten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Involves public participation, social learning, empowerment and sustainability -Micro solutions focused on people and communities at the local level -People as the agents of their own change, active participants rather than passive subjects -Field workers build relationships with the people they serve; understand their social, cultural and political contexts in order to better help them accomplish their aims -Development practitioner takes on the passive role with the people actively take their development into their own hands -Analysis, action and reflection cycle -Personal changes that are made, human development rather than just economic development is achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strategy looks great on paper but it is impractical in application -Too time-consuming, costly, delays the implementation of projects, brings outstanding conflicts to the surface -Obsession with the local, insufficient understanding of power relations and the role of agency in social change -Unrealistic to expect this alternative theory to revolutionize existing power structures and relies too much on this great political change; too radical

*Sources: (Rapley, 1996), (Davids 2005), (Chambers 1997), (Burkey 1993), (Hickey and Mohan 2004)

Appendix 2: Map of South Africa (SCAT areas of work outlined)

SCAT worked with 56 LDAs in 2006 and 53 in 2007, most of them are located in three provinces: the Northern Cape, Western Cape or Eastern Cape.



* Republic of South Africa Travel Information, 2005, [Online] Accessed 10 April 2007, Available at: www.africangamesafari.com/sa.html.

Appendix 3: 2006 List of SCAT LDAs (56)

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| Adelaide Advice Office (EC) | Maclear Advice Office (EC) |
| Bathurst Advice Office (EC) | Masibambane Advice Office (WC) |
| Barkly East Community Advice Office (EC) | Masiphakameni Advice Office (EC) |
| Barkly West Advice Office (NC) | Matatiele Advice Office (EC) |
| Berlin Advice Office (EC) | Middleburg Advice Office (EC) |
| Botriver Advice Office (WC) | Molteno Advice Office (EC) |
| Burgersdorp Advice Office (EC) | Montague Advice Office (WC) |
| Ceres Advice Office (WC) | Mt Fletcher Advice Office (EC) |
| Daliwe Advice Office (EC) | NababEEP Advice Office (NC) |
| Dordrecht Legal Advice Office (EC) | Nelspoort Advice Office (WC) |
| ECCO (WC) | Ngcele Advice Office (EC) |
| Elandsbaai Community Development Organization (WC) | Nonesi Advice Office (EC) |
| Elliot Legal Advice Office (EC) | Overburg Youth and Development Centre (WC) |
| Fort Beaufort Advice Office (EC) | Peace Afrika Youth Centre (EC) |
| Franschhoek Advice Office (WC) | Peddie Advice Office (EC) |
| Gansbaai Advice Office (WC) | Port Nolloth Advice Office (NC) |
| Haarlem Advice and Development Centre (WC) | Port St Johns Advice Office (EC) |
| Hewu Advice Office (EC) | Prince Albert Advice Office (WC) |
| Hofmeyer Advice Office (EC) | Rouxville Advice Office (FS) |
| Indwe Legal Advice Office (EC) | Spoegrivier Advice Office (NC) |
| Itireleng Advice Office (NC) | Steytlerville Advice Office (EC) |
| Jeffreys Bay Office (EC) | Swellendam Advice Office (WC) |
| Karoo Gender Education Project (WC) | Thuso Advice Office (NC) |
| Komaggas Advice Office (NC) | Tshatshu Advice Office (EC) |
| Lady Frere Advice Office (EC) | Tshedimosetso Advice Office (NC) |
| Libode Advice Office (EC) | Uitenhage Advice Office (EC) |
| Lesedi Advice Office (NC) | Uniondale Advice Office (WC) |
| Macassar Advice Office (WC) | Xalanga Community Advice Office (EC) |

EC- Eastern Cape, FS- Free State, NC- Northern Cape, WC- Western Cape

References

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