Taking over the driver's seat

Ownership is one of the buzzwords in international development co-operation. Since the start of its Media Sector Plan in September 2000 the Netherlands institute for Southern Africa has begun to explore approaches that ensure ownership of capacity development processes.

Typical for the ownership process is to allow an open discourse every step of the way. Therefore, this publication is a work in progress. It describes the voyage of the Media Sector Plan up until now, based on many hours of interviewing. It tries to answer the question what ownership truly entails, and how to make it stay. Not from a donor's perspective, but from the perspective of NiZA's partners in Southern Africa, who have already incorporated ownership in impressive ways within their organisations.

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Experiences with and ideas about ownership in the NiZA Media Sector Plan

By
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and
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NiZA Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa

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This publication is a co-production of the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA) and the Netherlands institute for Southern Africa (NiZA).

NiZA

Netherlands institute for Southern Africa

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Handing over the steering wheel
Bob van der Winden

It is difficult to write a preface about ownership in development co-operation if you are a donor yourself. Yet, the Netherlands institute for Southern Africa wants to emphasise ownership in all its programmes and so has to hand over the steering wheel rather than take over the driver's seat.

Traditionally seen, capacity was 'built' by the donor organisation in the North as a transfer of knowledge to the partner organisation in the South, mostly by Dutch development workers, traditionally in the framework of Dutch managed projects.

Research over the years has led to the conclusion that this old model of knowledge transfer is untenable: the results are completely insufficient. As Fukuda-Parr et al put it in their book *Capacity For Development; New Solutions To Old Problems* (UNDP 2002):

'What has not been appreciated, however, is just how catastrophically wrong the entire approach has been. The process really needs to be turned inside out, with the first priority being encouragement for recipients to initiate the process. This starts from a deep understanding of local knowledge and practice - assessing the capabilities of individuals, institutions and the society as a whole, and working out ways to build on these incrementally.'

The paradigm shift promoted by United Nations Development Programme can be summarized as follows:

- 'The asymmetric donor-recipient relationship should be specifically addressed as a problem by taking countervailing measures' (Fukuda-Parr).
- Development is social transformation instead of improvement in conditions.
- Good policies for development have to be homegrown.
- Capacity development takes place on human resource level, organisational level, and institutional (societal) level.

- Knowledge has to be acquired as opposed to transferred.
- Local knowledge for development is more important than foreign: foreign knowledge can be acquired based on the local process.Schematically speaking the basic shift in paradigm can be described as follows:

Before:
Needs analysis by consultant ➙ input Western expertise in Southern recipient

Nowadays:
Joint needs analysis (South and North) ➙ joint planning ➙ input (expertise or funds) from the North or the South into process led by Southern partner

But again, the paradigm shift is primarily discussed amongst international development organisations and donors. The local NGO's in the South, nor their end benificiaries are sufficiently involved in this debate. This is one of the things NiZA is trying to provoke in the shaping of its programmes: involvement on policy level of partner organisations and end benificiaries in the process. That's what we consider ownership and that's what will certainly take a couple of years to achieve, so this brochure is just the beginning.

Bob van der Winden
Director of programmes, NiZA

NiZA's Media Sector Plan

The Media Sector Plan is part of NiZA's Media Programme, which also includes lobby and awareness raising activities in the North. A sector plan aims at strengthening not only individual partners, but also the whole sector. Co-operation and exchange between partner organisations is essential. A Zimbabwean partner for instance, assisted an Angolan partner in setting up a community publishing project. Partner organisations also work together to propose joint projects.

In the Media Sector Plan a total of 45 partner organisations from Southern Africa are invited (twice a year) to come forward with their needs, formulated in capacity development projects. Projects can range from long term placement of experts (1-3 years) through expert missions (up to 3 months), local costs, exchanges, and individual training. Seventy percent of the financed experts are coming from Southern Africa, thirty percent from The Netherlands and the rest of the world.

The partners in this plan are not just recipients: the ownership for the projects is to be with the media organisations in Southern Africa. They decide what they need, supported by the NiZA consultants and staff.

1. Introduction

Since the start of the Media Sector Plan in September 2000, the Netherlands institute for Southern Africa (NiZA) has begun to explore approaches that ensure ownership of capacity development processes in the media sector. The focus on ownership was partially encouraged by a seminar in Ghana's capital Accra a year earlier, during which more than ninety journalists, researchers, and media experts from twenty-five countries reflected on journalism professionalism, and sustainability of media in Africa.

At the Accra seminar the training of journalists was recognised as the most effective mechanism for capacity building in journalism skills on the continent. Yet about thirty years down the line, donor's media assistance had focused too much on building capacity with the donor's priorities instead of the beneficiaries'. Skills, experiences and technology were simply 'transferred' to developing countries, without taking into account local conditions, needs and capacities.

NiZA's Sector Plan is built on the recognition that the shift towards effective ownership of development co-operation can be sustained only if institutions in the South are included and empowered to manage the process of change.

Synergies and linkages

For that reason, the backbone of the Media Sector Plan is the co-operation with strategic partners in Southern Africa, which presently amounts to 45 media organisations in twelve countries. By working together with fixed partners, rather than funding projects on a once-off basis, NiZA believes that capacity enhancement becomes more sustainable. These partners and NiZA share common views on how to improve the quality of the media in the region, how to promote media diversity and freedom of the press, and how to improve the economic viability of media institutions.

NiZA's assistance so far consists mainly of expert missions, for which partners can submit proposals twice a year , and which are funded through PSO, a Dutch umbrella organisation for capacity building linked to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands. The idea is that partners build synergies and linkages among each other as well, and co-operate in developing capacity tools, thus strengthening their impact on their environments, and regionally.

With this approach, NiZA, its partners in Southern Africa, and its umbrella organisation PSO have embarked upon a process, which in many ways is experimental: the focus on ownership, to do away with supply-driven aid and to stop using only foreign experts to fill the gaps.

It appears difficult to break the mould, perhaps because the old development practices fit in perfectly with the myth of western superiority, both in the North and the South. The journey to ownership also is a long one, which requires other ways of thinking, planning, and strategising, and which comes with much uncertainty since, now that the genie is out of the bottle, nobody really knows where and when the process will end.

Southern perspective

In September 2002, the four-year Media Sector Plan was halfway. This was marked by a partner consultation meeting in Windhoek, Namibia, where almost thirty organisations from different corners of Southern Africa were present. They reflected upon the ownership process so far, and made an input into the midterm review of the overall policy, reformulating it with great consideration according to their own views.

This report is a result of the discussions that took place on ownership in the shadow of that meeting. Since it has been a characteristic of the ownership process to allow an open discourse every step of the way, this report too should be seen as a work in process. It describes the voyage up until now, based on the documentation that is available and many hours of interviewing.

Most importantly, it tries to answer the question what ownership truly entails, and how to make it stay. Not from a donor's perspective, but from a southern one, from NiZA's partners who have already incorporated ownership in impressive ways within their organisations, to ensure the participation of their own constituencies.

As shown in the first two chapters, there are no blueprints for ownership, just experiences of individual organisations, and a couple of preconditions. There is also no shortage of ideas, just the problem of how to free oneself from old practices. Ownership does not arise from a simple transfer of resources; it must be based on strong commitment and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities among the partners.

The third chapter of this report sheds some light on a specific example within the NiZA Media Sector Plan: the formation of the Southern African Media Trainers' Network (SAMTRAN). This network, when fully up and running, could provide for the ultimate form of ownership: regional collaborations, through which individual organisations can have a much stronger impact on their environment. Though SAMTRAN is finding some stumbling blocks on its way, there is a definite need for closer exchanges of experiences and knowledge between media organisations in Southern Africa, to find out how they can assert their leadership of managing resources, and take over the driver's seat.

2. Foreign blueprints or homegrown concepts

When the Berg-commission published its report *Rethinking Technical Co-operation*, in the early 1990's, it probably did not do more than confirming what some development workers already knew, and others were scared to admit: more than three decades of development work had brought rather meagre results, let alone any great success stories. The report prompted a process of soul-searching and rethinking in the donor organisation circle, with the world's main sponsor of development, the United Nations Development Programme, as well as some governments in the North, undertaking a major policy overhaul.

Strategy papers and conferences became filled with words like 'ownership', 'commitment', 'not donor-driven' development processes, but 'responsibility' and 'participation of key stakeholders'. From now on, development should start from local conditions and capacities, and should be about stimulating local institutions. 'Before a country can begin to build its capacity, it has to decide for itself what its goals are and how it plans to get there', Eveline Herfkens, former Minister of Development Co-operation in the Netherlands, told a crowd gathered at a Worldbank seminar in 2001. A general consensus on what had been wrong with old models of development, and a common understanding of new practices took hold. Or didn't it?

Crazy people

Eronini Megwa, head of the Journalism Department at Peninsula Technikon in Cape Town, South Africa, recalls a donor meeting in November 2001 in the Netherlands, where he observed two factions: those who favoured change and those who did not.

'When we did our presentation, the kind of questions asked, told us that a lot of people hadn't actually come around to the new concept of looking at donor funding. We were talking about, before funding is provided, that an important, in fact, critical part of the process should involve an assessment to find out the kind of capacities already existing.

You know, people were looking at us as if they were thinking: where are these crazy people coming from? In fact, somebody was asking a very tricky question: what is the history of this? If you had the capacity all this time, why didn't you use them? Why did you have to come to us?

We handled it diplomatically by telling him that, because of our colonial past, the

North tended to look down upon us. It felt that, to improve the conditions in the South, somebody had to be parachuted here, to save us like in a relief type of thing, dropping food from the air.

Yes, we admit that we operate from a relatively weak position, but that does not mean we do not have the relevant capacity. Northern partners have to be sensitive to that reality. But some organisations are so straight jacketed in their way of thinking that they can never move beyond their own agenda. They just don't listen.'

The wind of change in development funding is not a storm, but a slight breeze, Mike Daka, former director of ZAMCOM, also believes. His media training institute in Lusaka was in its early days a project of the Ministry of Information in Zambia, and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation of the Liberal Party in Germany. It took years of fighting to get where ZAMCOM is now: independent. Daka:

'The Friedrich Naumann Foundation did not want to leave; it was a comfortable environment for them. In their reports they were saying: people are not ready to assume responsibility and take over. When I became director, I ended the arrangement because it had served its purpose, and was no longer useful. The institution grew stronger after that.'

Chicken and egg

John Mukela, director of the Maputo-based regional training institute Nordic-SADC Journalism Center (NSJ), talks about the 'strategic objectives' of some donors that oftentimes twist the funding process, together with the ever-present focus on justifiable expenditure of donor funds:

'The Americans are an easy example. There is that saying: America never has permanent enemies, but it always has permanent interests. Their funding is always conditional; USAID has kind of an imposed process on organisations. Not in the sense that it tells organisations what to do, but government interests always drive it. It is kind of a chicken and egg situation.

Governments have their own constituencies, and need to account for development assistance, and to show something: this development assistance was used and this is the result. Organisations in the South draw up a proposal that fits into that strategic objective, even though it is not really relevant to what they require. They just do it because they know they will be able to get some funding. And in the end, it is a waste.'

Jeanette Minnie, a Johannesburg-based freedom of expression consultant, observes that over the years, the donor world has become 'quite an industry in itself, a self-perpetuating industry for many people'. Pointing to the reluctance of some donors to incorporate 'true ownership' in their programmes, she says:

'Ultimately, ownership goes much further than the conception donors would have. Governments and recipients, two sides with equally amounts of interests, would say: why do we need the people in the middle? The Ministry of Foreign Affairs can give us the money directly. Everyone here knows that ownership in that way can work. And, in its logical conclusions, may go there in time.

That is the danger, which Northern development organisations are beginning to face. Because it means working themselves out of jobs, and closing Northern institutions down.

In that sense, donor agencies have an interest in perpetuating the system. While that is the case, the South capitalises on it. It suits the South, because it provides a stronger case for a flow of money since there are people who actively want to provide it because it keeps them in jobs.'

In fact, while it may seem a current trend in the North to talk about 'ownership', to the South it is nothing new. Ownership has been a much discussed topic for decades already, partly inspired by the experience of colonialism, partly born out of frustration with African leadership since independence. Up to a few years ago, Jeanette Minnie was the regional director of the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA) in Windhoek, an organisation that seeks to promote the free flow of information and co-operation between media workers in the region, as a principal means of nurturing democracy and human rights. Minnie:

'When MISA was founded, in 1992, some very hard and specific decisions were made to ensure that it would be under nobody else's control other than the members of the organisation, by no government in the SADC region, and by no donor anywhere in the north.

From the earliest days of the formation of MISA, this message was directly communicated to donors. Why? Because the members of MISA are citizens of Africa, and live in Africa, and like everybody else wish to shape their own future.'

Taking charge

Some beautiful, almost poetic sounding definitions of ownership go around in Southern Africa:

John Mukela, director of NSJ, Mozambique:

> *'Ownership is the bases from which real change can begin.'*

Emily Brown, head of the Media Department of the Polytechnic of Namibia in Windhoek:

> *'Ownership says something about taking charge of, being prepared to nurture, to invest into, to monitor, and to be responsible for, whatever the project or activity entails. It is not about: to have or to possess. In fact, to reach ownership, you really have to let go, to release.*
>
> *The term ownership implies development from one level of expertise to the next; it means the end part of a wonderful cycle in which people share whatever resources they have: skills, knowledge, money, and all these energies.*
>
> *And at the end of the day, it is about saying: yes, I stand accountable. I take responsibility.'*

No fruits without roots is a book published by the Harare-based African Community Publishing and Development Trust (ACPDT). The organisation's approach to development is innovative, and the only one of its kind. It persuades villagers all over Zimbabwe to conduct their own research and publish their life experiences, in order to give a boost to the people's self-respect, which is damaged by severe poverty. Kathy Bond Stewart, who is one of the founders and directors of ACPDT, explains:

> *'Negative psychological attitudes are a major block to change. The problem with many development projects is that they are external; they bring things into impoverished communities. People were telling us: it doesn't make any difference to us; we are so broken.*

Emily Brown, head of the Media Department of the Polytechnic, Windhoek, Namibia

We at ACPDT believe that change starts from the inside, when people are realising that they have value as a human being, that they have a few relationships that matter, and that their mind and creativity are instant, and collectively they can move things.

It requires a very deep, unshaken commitment, which demands, in turn, ownership. You can only have that deep commitment if you own the process and the organisation.

And ownership is exceptionally urgent in Zimbabwe right now, to counterbalance bribery and violence, the two main tools of suppression by the government. Unless an organisation is very strong, and owned by the people, it can easily break. And many did. So, ownership is crucial.'

Donors should look more deeply for existing capacities to build on. Because communities in the South might look – like that tropical fruit, the calabash – empty inside, on the face of it useless, asking for things from elsewhere to be put inside. But at a closer look one realises that it has many seeds, hidden. Capacity is ever present, even without external inputs. Eronini Megwa agrees:

'Maybe we have not looked deep and far enough to locate these capacities. I think that is what donors should do: to put mechanisms into place, to identify capacities, tap into those, and bring them together with capacities that exist in the North. That is real partnership. You give southern partners a sense of belonging, a sense of self-pride, of ownership. It will be a genuine claim to ownership. Because people in the South will be able to say: I know that it is mine. I know I took part in nurturing this, and therefore, I must take care in making sure this succeeds. People should be given that feeling of power.

By doing so, you are saying to the South: we are not just dishing out money, just to satisfy our own ego or agenda, but we are doing it because we know that we value your contribution. Without these projects we may not be, so you must come into the process. We need your active participation in order for this project to work, because if it does not succeed, we have failed.'

3. How to make ownership stick?

Ownership demands a lot of consultation, in order to gain the wider support that makes development sustainable. It might look like a messy process, using the brains of many instead of those of only a few. But it actually is not, promises Emily Brown of the Polytechnic of Namibia in Windhoek, reflecting upon her institution's own recent curriculum development project:

> *'If you take your constituencies through the process, the whole gallop, you do not have to go back and rearrange your programme at a later stage because it does not fulfil the needs. That would be putting the cart before the horse.*
>
> *You must start with hearing from people what has to go into the project. And carrying them all along the way means that your constituencies have also taken ownership. They bought into it, and all together it makes a wonderful process. Those who fear ownership are doing it the other way around.'*

The champion of 'chipping in' is probably Bush Radio, which broadcasts from Cape Town. Thinking and debating is free, seems to be the slogan, and losing track of bigger goals as a result, is less of a worry. When asked about the mechanisms that guarantee the much celebrated ownership and control by the audience over the station, Brenda Leonard answers:

> *'It is a long list. The most important ones: a monthly open forum, in which all aspects of Bush Radio are discussed. The Programme Selection Committee, comprising of people from within the community, which evaluates the current programming, identifies gaps, and makes recommendations. Then there is the open day, every three months, during which community members can compete for a volunteer position and become part of the Bush Radio's broadcasting-team, which is currently staffed with 106 people.*
>
> *The one concern about ownership, is that you can have a targeted audience, but those people are not going to take ownership serious unless they participate. That is the unfortunate part. So you have to look at ways in which you can involve people also at a broader scale. We do it through our outreach programme, by going to places where people are. We ask their opinion, and draw them to participate.*
>
> *For us, ownership means being able to take decisions and make recommendations in all aspects, whether it is programming, management or financing. You can't have a limited ownership, and say: you can only participate in A, B, and C, and not from A to Z. Control and ownership really comes from decision making power.*

And it is fun too, to ask people to just come forward with responses. People come up with so many ideas. Some of them are workable; some of them are not. But there is so much creativity.'

The refined mechanisms that guarantee meaningful participation seem to be a trait of community media. Zimbabwe-based ACPDT has also all kinds of forums in place to guarantee its target group a voice within the organisations. For starters, in every village 'a leadership team' manages the publishing programme locally. Kathy Bond Stewart:

'It is not like an NGO sending someone from outside. You actually build up their capacity of management. They are very involved in designing, and naming the projects. Moreover, a village leader designed the actual organisational structure of ACPDT, and three years from now, there will be self-managed community trusts, to run the programmes independently.

You have to be quite a strong person to let go of your own power, and to say: my role in this is very minimal. You people can take it, it belongs to you. It takes confidence in humanity, and the ability to let go of status, money, and being prepared to take high risks.

I think the main preconditions for ownership to work are about attitudes of the initiator, rather than material conditions. Attitudes are very hard to cultivate if they are not there. It is difficult to turn an arrogant person into a real activist.'

In the middle: Kathy Bond Steward, ACPDT, Harare, Zimbabwe

Flexible donors

The many meetings of strategic planning with just as many voices, and the programmes that have to be build upon all these needs and aspirations so as to enhance ownership, require adaptable organisational frameworks, and flexible donors. The latter is in a lot of cases a problem, says Bangani Ngeleza, a South African development consultant. He has worked over the years with different international funders, and has travelled the region for NiZA's Midterm Review research on the Media Sector Plan.

Programs are already designed, objectives articulated, and potential partners have to fit into so-called Logical Frameworks, a tool for project planning and evaluation that many donor organisations use. Ngeleza argues:

'In a lot of cases, there is very little flexibility to do projects that fall a bit outside a donor's portfolio. Projects are being rejected as a consequence, for technical reasons, and not because they are irrelevant. It freezes the partners in making choices; they are constraint by a certain structure that might not be useful to them. Donor organisations lose sense of the context. It does not allow for a better understanding of the partner, nor their needs.'

Ownership implies a more flexible approach by the donors, although this does not mean the total absence of a strict planning and evaluation framework. Bangani Ngeleza:

'Also in the case of ownership, money has been used, and you are talking about development, so you must have a way of measuring of what you have achieved. And if information on outcomes is sketchy, information on the impact, the changes in society the outcomes of activities have triggered, is altogether missing.'

Jeanette Minnie believes:

'It is very necessary for development to be well structured, with critical frameworks that really ensure aims and objectives, impacts and results, so there is really a tool by which to see if it is making any difference. That is important for donors in terms of identifying partners for continued assistance, and beginning to make a sifting between outcomes that are deficient and those that are not, so you do not end up funding bureaucracy, people who have offices and computers, but who are not doing much with them. There are just as many bureaucracies in the South as there are in the North.'

On the side of partner organisations a 'burning desire to do what they are doing' is, according to John Mukela, a requirement for ownership to work well in practice:

'The mission and strategy must be very clear in the organisation's mind, and it needs to be revisited constantly, to be upraised with where you have failed and to try and steer your ship to the right course again.

Sometimes, organisations formulate ideas, and these ideas remain static. It loses the initial impetus. In many cases, that has to do with weak leadership.

In our part of the world, governments have been very strong, and the private sector for the most part western owned. The non-governmental sector is a fairly new area of organisational development. It needs more experience, more mistakes to learn from.'

While the use of local know-how is preferred, organisations have to make sure that when an international expert is hired for a job, his or her skills set some root in the organisation. In other words: rent an expert, but train a trainer in the meantime.

John Mukela:

'In Africa, we are obviously behind for example in information technology. Our challenge is to use as much expertise as possible from those who have it, and at the same time ensure that the skills remain in the country, so that we can replicate the training for our own people.'

Mike Daka agrees:

'When we invite an expert, this person does not work independently of ourselves. There is always somebody from our organisation working with the expert. It is not only a way of ensuring that what the expert is doing fits in with what we feel needs to be done, and that the expert understands the context. It is also an exchange of knowledge. Because when the expert is gone, we want to take ownership of whatever activity, so it can continue.'

'You tell us'

In the discussion on ownership, the question of responsibility for inputs, management of activities, outputs and outcomes, and for reporting on all those, is also an important one. Partnerdriven initiatives place these duties largely on the partners' plate. 'Decentralisation' across-the-board is essential for ownership to spring up. Consultant Bangani Ngeleza:

'The principle should be that the partner organisation takes full charge of the process, and preferably, they must also manage the funds. They should be completely engaged in deciding what the intervention should be, the character of the expertise they need for the intervention, and the output that needs to be delivered.

There must not be any ambiguity. At the end of the day, partner organisations are the clients.'

In its final conclusion, ownership should mean financial self-sufficiency, is the opinion of Jeanette Minnie. The concept is being developed more and more by southern organisations, she says, pointing to the Southern African Media Development Fund (SAMDEF), which is part of MISA, and the Southern African Institute for Media Development (SAIMED). Both institutions, that once were one but were carved up recently, have acquired financial resources, partly from donors but also through investment, to support the independent media in the region. Minnie says:

'It would be real ownership if media enterprises could generate their own income, and pay for themselves, in a very hard business environment. That radical sense of independence is the strongest guarantee of media freedom.'

Currently, NiZA manages the funds within the Media Sector Plan to pay for its development assistance, which mainly consists of expert missions to partner organisations. It sometimes leads to confusion when experts believe they are accountable only to NiZA for their work, and not send their recommendations further southwards, to the ones that are supposed to own the process. NiZA has proposed to move decision making on assistance to the region, which could, when managed properly, further enhance ownership, and NiZA's understanding of local conditions. Bangani Ngeleza reflects on this:

'There is a lot of capacity that still needs to be built for that to happen. It takes a kind of thinking that is very focused on the outcome, on the results of what people do.

Also, as a donor it is important to be empowered in relationships with partners. Questions around ownership can disempower when they start to mean: you do everything your partners want you to do, because you want them to own the process. There is a strong element of power in ownership.

The fact of the matter is that donors like NiZA have an ideology; they have their own interpretation of how development works. If I was NiZA I would want my own understanding about development to be expressed in the kind of support I gave, without necessarily overshadowing the views of the people I work with. Like in any partnership, we have a dialogue that should arrive at a common understanding and a shared position on what needs to be done. It is a commonly owned process.

By coming back to the region as a donor, by consulting your partners on policies, you put yourself already at risk. Because you don't know what will come out of the consultation process. And the key question is: to what extend can you deal with all these expectations? You said that they own the process, and by consulting, you create expectations. You leave yourself vulnerable if you do not follow through. That might spoil your relationship. These NiZA-guys are crazy in a way to just come to the region, and say: you tell us.'

Air-time for training fees

It took ZAMCOM thirteen years of hard work before it was able to take full charge of all aspects of its institutional facilities. And not only that. The training institute, that began as a government funded entity, is developing commercial activities, such as broadcasting stations exchanging air-time for training fees. It does this to become less depended on external support. Mike Daka explains:

'We have evolved over three phases. And now, at the end of the third phase, we are very clear about what ownership truly entails. It was extremely difficult, because nobody else had done it before. Many times we were happy that we made progress, but many other times we were completely devastated, because we had some setbacks that almost derailed the whole process.

The government wanted to reverse the process and regain control; it was very painful for me personally since I was seen as the stumbling block. There was an effort to try to remove me from the institution, but I was able to weather the entire process, and here we are today.

Once you own something, there is an important thing you have to do: to look after it. Otherwise you will remain with nothing. It is so important that you continuously yield capacity to take care of what you have and to build on what you have. We recognise that we must continue to train ourselves, so we keep abreast with trends, and therefore continue to remain useful to the media. Indeed, if you don't continue building your capacity, you become irrelevant.'

Mike Daka, however, is, now that he found a successor, moving on to a new life. He has started a radio station that operates in a rural community six hundred kilometres away from the capital Lusaka. 'The name of the radio station translates from the local language into "breeze". It is drawn from the fresh air that comes from the mountains surrounding the area', Daka explains. 'We hope that our programmes will be like this breeze, having a cooling effect on the community.'

4. Owning the network: the case of SAMTRAN

The information age has instigated new ways of capacity building. Multinational co-operations for example are already using e-mail and intranets to create international networks that share best practices and lessons learnt. When they function well, networks can provide knowledge just in time, and just enough, and the beneficiaries have a much stronger sense of ownership. The relevance of networks is increasingly acknowledged by organisations in developing countries, to which the notion that only ideas from the North are worth trying, look less and less plausible. Through networks, institutions can learn directly from each other, sharing homegrown knowledge, and local successes and failures.

In Southern Africa, the wave of democratisation in the early 1990s has resulted in a massive increase in the number of media outlets and practitioners, while a general lack of expertise and skills set limitations on professionalism. A NiZA-funded assessment into media training needs[1] in the region identified collaboration between media trainers as an important area to enhance media training. The Polytechnic of Namibia learnt so from experience. It had been working on curriculum development for a new journalism and media programme since early 2000, and had found efforts to learn what was going on in the other countries of the region quite fruitless.

Collaboration

The desire to team up as media training institutes is widely felt in the region, as became apparent during the media trainers' first meeting, in the Namibian capital Windhoek in May 2001, which was supported by NiZA, and initiated by the Media Technology Department of the Polytechnic of Namibia. Over thirty media trainers from the region were present and expressed their wish to share experiences, and learn from other training institutions' programmes and activities. It was felt that discussions were needed on whether media training in the region was having the impact expected by the training providers. Trainers also mentioned their inclination to see shared utilisation of resources, and practical collaborative projects like student and trainer exchange programmes to be developed.

It led to the creation of the Southern African Media Trainers' Network (SAMTRAN), which was launched in Grahamstown, South Africa, during the second regional media trainers' seminar in September 2001. Its vision is to achieve high quality media train-

1. Conducted by Johannesburg-based Gender Links in 2001 in co-operation with NSJ, Mozambique.

ing that responds to the needs of society, media organisations and media practitioners, and to build free, fair, and vibrant media as well as a strong regional identity. Membership of the network, that would exist mostly on the internet as a web-based database of information on materials and human resources, is open to all media trainers at both individual and institutional level, by annual subscription.

The founding members of the network identified four key areas of activities for SAMTRAN: information sharing and networking, study materials, curricula and methodology, and standard setting and accreditation.

Today, it is still widely agreed that the success of SAMTRAN would offer numerous opportunities. The network presents the chance of a more coherent vision on media training, increased knowledge and co-operation.

John Mukela who heads the Steering Committee:

'It will challenge the notion that good ideas only come from the north. It recognises that training material, manuals, methodologies have been imported, and that we do not have locally based examples in a very structured manner.'

Bangani Ngeleza looks at SAMTRAN as a potential vehicle that can help identifying training priorities in the region, and strengthening ownership.

'When you have a strong network, you can say: some of the things that we are currently doing at NiZA, such as assessing applications, SAMTRAN could do for the sub-sector. So you could run part of the programme from the region.'

Committee-member Shiraj Jamal of the Broadcasting Training Institute in Cape Town, South Africa:

'This is one project that people are passionate about. People who participate in SAMTRAN are from all levels of media, right from community media up to university level.'

The presence of at least forty training institutions in one room at the launch of the network in Grahamstown was, perhaps, also unique in the history of media training in the region, and shows the grassroots' need for the network. However, since then, a few major constraints came into sight. One of them concerns 'the experienced levels of commitment of members to the practical ideals of regional networking', says Sam Phiri, formerly of Nordic-SADC Journalism Center in Maputo, Mozambique, where the secretariat of SAMTRAN is currently based, adding:

> *'Commitment has to be demonstrated by the practical steps taken to further the goals. Especially since scepticism exists about the potentialities of regional initiatives, largely because of the diversity of participants.'*

The setting-up process has moved very slowly.

Free of charge

Initially, institutions agreed that SAMTRAN should be an informal network, mainly managed by its members. This means that they have to be highly motivated and have the will to provide administrative and co-ordination services free of charge to each other. But cutting its cloth according to its pockets apparently is difficult, which brings in aspirations for institutionalised administrative and co-ordination support. This would make the network dependent on donor funds, since it cannot afford such assistance from the pockets of its own members.

Jeannette Minnie was involved in evaluating networks in the Balkan region, one of which was a media trainers' network that has been running successfully for three years now. She doesn't agree with an institutionalised set-up of SAMTRAN:

> *'In Southern Africa, there is a tendency to think that a network means, not a network, but another institution. In my view, a network is when members use existing capacities to co-operate in more effective ways for better outcomes that serves them all. It is not about looking for resources outside of themselves; setting up an overall arching organisation.*
>
> *In the Balkan I really saw a network functioning. It elects an institution as the chair, not a person, that has to have the capacity to provide the secretarial and co-ordinate services for two years. Then another organisation in the network takes the burden on itself. There is a lot of transparency and efficiency, every one knew all the time by email what was going on, and they seemed to have developed a lot of trust in each other. The members felt a very strong sense of ownership. The network was theirs.'*

Superficial ownership

Eronini Megwa is sceptical as well about the way SAMTRAN is set up.

 'There is an African proverb that says public property is nobody's property. The moral is that when many people own something, and you do not have any clear, well-thought out policy that points out responsibilities, nobody will actually own anything.

Usually, the example given in Africa, to illustrate this proverb, is the ownership of animals. If a goat is owned by many people, and none of these people are given specific responsibilities, for example that in the morning one person feeds it and in the afternoon it is someone else's turn, it will starve to death because everyone will say: it is not my time to feed it. That is precisely the analogy.

Although media training institutions set it up, SAMTRAN entails a superficial ownership. Similar structures have failed in Africa, and if we don't look for a more sustainable and effective strategy, SAMTRAN will probably go the same way.'

In Southern Africa some inter-organisational collaboration is already going on. Mike Daka is seeking advice from Bush Radio in Cape Town, while setting up his radio station in Zambia, and is talking to 'our friends in Harare, who are carrying out community publishing, because I strongly think that community radio and publishing can complement each other.'

Moreover, the *Handbook on Journalism Ethics: African Case Studies* was published in May 2001 as a large collaboration effort between different partners in the region. The research, which contains fourteen studies on media ethics based on daily experiences of journalists and media organisations, was initiated by MISA in Windhoek, carried out by African media experts, and published by Mediaworks in Cape Town. An important component of the book is the Media Ethics Worksheet, a practical training guide that may help journalists searching for ethical solutions within local African conditions, and which is being used by different media training institutes.

Eronini Megwa, Peninsula Technikon, Cape Town, South Africa

Likewise, Capetown-based Eronini Megwa assisted the Polytechnic of Namibia with curriculum development, and currently co-operates on research and student development. It is working well, he says:

> *'What led to this form of collaboration was that first opportunity, provided by NiZA, for someone from Peninsula Technikon to go to Polytechnic and work with them; to come up with a curriculum. From there, we discovered that we could actually work together, without anyone feeling superior or inferior.*
>
> *People did ask me: Megwa, why are you working for the Polytechnic when some of your students are coming from Namibia? Do you know what that means? If you help the Polytechnic of Namibia set up a Media Technology Department, you will be losing out. I said: no, if you look at the demand-situation in the Southern African region for media studies, the Polytechnic of Namibia wouldn't be able to respond to the needs. That competition is not real, it is something theoretical.'*

Intellectual property

Within SAMTRAN, however, there is still the fear of losing out, because 'we are all competing for the same slices of the Southern African pie', says Emily Brown. Especially the sharing of curricula poses problems, since study programmes are the intellectual property of training institutes, and selling training is a core business.

Shiraj Jamal, Broadcasting Training Institute, South Africa:

> *'The decision to put whatever you have for everyone's consumption is really your own. A lot of effort, time and money have gone into it, which might be a case for your own survival.'*

John Mukela, NSJ Mozambique:

> *'My organisation just published an ethics-training manual, which we are going to make available to any organisation that wants to buy it. But it has to be a practical need. If I have to convene a course, but I don't have the curriculum, I should be able to get it from someone.'*

In genuine partnerships, however, competition is not a problem, says consultant Bangani Ngeleza:

> *'There are no treats; the competition edge is removed. If institutions are truly committed to a particular vision of the region, collaboration becomes the main challenge. You become strong, although you are using resources of your partners.'*

Emily Brown, Polytechnic of Namibia:

'Fear cripples, and if I think about how much I have benefited, just by opening up and being willing to share, I'd rather have that. We will remain competitive in the sense that we will always strive for quality.

Competitiveness keeps you on your toes, and makes you alert to things that must be included and considered. But competitiveness in terms of not wanting to share, because this is mine only, is short-sided. Tough luck if they can't offer the quality that we do. And if they do, students have a choice of where to go, and that is what life is all about. People should be able to chose.'

The curriculum development project of the Polytechnic of Namibia, on which Eronini Megwa collaborated, was approved by the Polytechnic's Senate without any problem, and was praised highly. Megwa, Peninsula Technikon, South Africa, states:

'My personal feeling then was: my goodness, I wished I had this sort of opportunity to develop our own curriculum. It wasn't a sense of jealousy or envy. In a way, it was an affirmation of the quality of that particular output. And if I had the same opportunity, I would want to go the same route.

You know, one interesting part is that I never picked up that document to look at it and say: "What can I take from here? What can I steal from this?" It never crossed my mind.

Nevertheless, intellectual property is a huge obstacle, and SAMTRAN has to find a creative way to deal with it. SAMTRAN has to be strengthened, even if it means setting up a secretariat. It has to find effective models to facilitate networking and collaborations.

If we for example need training, instead of applying to NiZA directly, we could apply to SAMTRAN. But now members would say: what is the guarantee that the SAMTRAN secretary doesn't have a prejudice towards us. You see, this is the fear, how is the network going to deal with that?'

Element of self-interest

Partnerships among media institutions in Southern Africa are not yet strong, consultant Bangani Ngeleza observes from a distance:

'More can be done to improve and accelerate. But members of SAMTRAN also have to be realistic about partnerships. It shouldn't be romanticised too much. We are

still dealing with individual institutions. There is an element of self-interest. People can let go of their own good in the interest of a bigger society, but for building partnerships, we need to find out what each individual organisation is taking out of it.

Tying institutions to a common purpose is crucial. To me, that is the only way because institutions will be pushed to really communicate. I do not think that a network can be strengthened from purely talk. You can have consultant-meetings all you want, but not until such time that there are joint programmes, members will commit. If you have a three years collaborative programme, for instance, and each institution has things to deliver in relation to this programme, then you really develop partner relationships.

But then, it also takes time. You cannot all of a sudden be partners, by saying: we are partners. Theoretically, yes you can. But fundamentally, a partnership goes very deeply; it is an understanding. You don't want to rush it. You invest time in building it, by consistently supporting the kinds of things where people come together. You invest in it, by encouraging people to submit joint programmes.

After some time, it will gain its own momentum. Then you have trust, that feeling of ease. Members would be able to say to each other: when you are somewhere, and speak on behalf of the partners, I can sleep very comfortably. I know you will represent my views correctly. I will not be suspicious, but know that in our relationship you will always think about my interests as well. It will take some time, and that is fine. The process has started.'

5. Monitoring ownership

The process of ownership requires, as daily practice shows, much freedom. But to give free reins is something else than a shaky planning and evaluation framework, or even the absence of any structure. Outcomes of projects, the visible effects, and the changes in societies that were triggered, have to be measured somehow. Therefore, NiZA and its partners have started to develop an extensive monitoring framework, which guarantees clear targets at all levels (beneficiaries, partner organisations, cluster programmes, NiZA and backdonor PSO), inputs, outcomes and impact, as well as true ownership of development.

During the partner consultation meeting in Windhoek, Namibia, in September 2002 it was recognised that in the first two years of the Media Sector Plan, during 2000-2002, NiZA and its partners had mainly focused on measuring results of activities. The realisation is that from now on, if you want ownership to come true, an important focus is needed on monitoring and evaluation in a participative way, with much input from partner organisations.

Outcome instead of output

One of the main issues in this is to focus evaluation on 'outcome' rather than 'output' of projects and (long term) NiZA involvement. Outcome can be defined as the difference that the tangible outputs are making on partner organisations. These are not as immediate as outputs but it should be possible to observe them as programming progresses.

Generally speaking: development projects call for systematic and focused *knowledge* of the achievements that were brought forward by (foreign funded) projects. Not only because of the taxpayers of the foreign country (upward accountability), but also because of the very beneficiaries of the projects carried out by the partner organisations (downward accountability).

Knowledge, rather than *measurement*, is used here because outcome cannot be easily measured, as opposed to output. Traditionally, development projects are measured (including 'SMART' formulated goals and indicators) in quantitative ways. Yet, it becomes more and more acknowledged that quantitative methodology can only measure output, to a very limited extent outcome and almost never impact (see also Abma & Noordegraaf, 2003).

To give a practical example: suppose a partner organisation trains twenty journalists in financial reporting. The fact that seventeen of them attended the full fourteen

days of the course is *output*. The improvement of the reporting they did in their respective media is *outcome*. If their reporting has had an influence on the public, and may be even on politics in their countries, this is *impact*.

A paradigm shift in the way of working must ultimately also lead to a change in evaluation methodology. Therefore NiZA has started a series of pilot projects about which we hope to publish later:

- A monitoring pilot project in which partner organisations will be visited on a regular base and a dialogue will take place based on a topic list of questions through which the partners as well as NiZA can learn, rather than control.
- A participative evaluation project in which the aim is to evaluate all actors in the aid chain, ranging from the tax payer in the Netherlands to the end beneficiary in Africa.

6. Conclusions and remarks

The conclusions of this overview of ideas and experiences on ownership, mainly aim at stimulating the exchange of ideas on new initiatives in the area of capacity building in media development in the Southern Africa region, and Africa in general.

As this study shows, ownership is a much talked about issue, in donor circles in the North as well as in organisations in the South, but the process of putting it into practice is slow. Rigid strategic objectives and the strong focus on justifiable expenditure of donor funds oftentimes twist the funding process. Organisations in the South try to fit into the donors' objectives, but oftentimes, at the end of the day, activities are not really relevant to what they require. This is sometimes also a result of a weak mission and strategy on their part. So, ownership demands creativity, imagination, and flexibility on both sides, as well as strong leadership and strategies, and a constant fine-tuning of needs and support.

'To reach ownership you have to let go', Emily Brown says in this report. But losing control means losing power, which can be threatening to donor organisations. Thus, the question of power is an important one: should ownership mean complete independence from donors or a partnership, a commonly owned process of development? The process of collaboration between NiZA and its partners in capacity development and expertise building of media in Southern Africa has been seen as a joint learning, and a long term input process by all partners involved.

But still, ownership hurts in practice, and can be risky, as Bangani Ngeleza explains. To build real partnerships, to overcome fears of losing out, and to do away with competition that is too strong takes time, as also the case of SAMTRAN shows. Partnerships become consolidated when organisations are tied to a common purpose; when they are eager to really communicate and set up joint programmes.

Moreover, ownership is strongly linked to capacity building, perhaps almost synonymous. 'Change starts from the inside, requires a deep commitment, which is only possible if you own the process and the organisation', Kathy Bond Stewart argues.

Donors should put mechanisms into place to identify capacities; tap into those. If skills are brought by a foreign expert, they should stay as much as possible in the country, and should be passed on. Also, for ownership to work in practice, extensive participation and consultation has to take place among all stakeholders. In this way, ownership is democracy, and flourishes when everyone is able to take decisions and make recommendations. This, again, requires adaptable organisational frameworks for donors to be able to understand the context and needs, which in turn brings in a potential weakness: outcomes of projects, and the impact, are hard to measure.

This possible Achilles' heel forms the main challenge of NiZA and its partners in Southern Africa in the coming years. It is recognised that valid criteria to effectively monitor the results, outcome, and impact has to be a joint action. So, the dare ahead is how NiZA and its partners will follow-up with what has been learnt.

This publication is only a start in this learning process.

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Furthermore, many thanks to all the people who were willing to talk about their experiences with and ideas about ownership of development:

- Kathy Bond Stewart (ACPDT, Zimbabwe).
- Emily Brown (Polytechnic of Namibia, Namibia).
- Mike Daka (ZAMCOM, Zambia).
- Shiraj Jamal (Broadcasting Training Institute, South Africa).
- Brenda Leonard (Bush Radio, Cape Town).
- Colleen Lowe Morna (Gender Links, South Africa).
- Eronini Megwa (Peninsula Technikon, South Africa).

- Jeanette Minnie (consultant, South Africa).
- John Mukela (NSJ, Mozambique).
- Bangani Ngeleza (Consultant, South Africa).
- Jose Paulo (Rádio Ecclésia, Angola).
- Sam Phiri (formerly NSJ, Mozambique, currently Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, South Africa).
- António de Sousa (Rádio Ecclésia, Angola).
- Bob van der Winden (NiZA, the Netherlands).

List of abbreviations

ACPDT	African Community Publishing and Development Trust
MISA	Media Institute Southern Africa
NiZA	The Netherlands institute for Southern Africa
NSJ	Nordic-SADC Journalism Center
PSO	Personnel Services Overseas
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SAMDEF	Southern African Media Development Fund
SAIMED	Southern African Institute for Media Development
SAMTRAN	Southern African Media Trainers Network
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZAMCOM	Zambia Institute of Mass Communication

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