PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS A TOOL FOR MOBILISING COMMUNITIES TO ADDRESS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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Workshop objectives

- To disseminate findings from a CADRE study

*Contexts of risk for child sexual abuse: Community perspectives*

- To create safe spaces to discuss CSA and to encourage identification with and ownership of research findings

- To facilitate critical debate around the issue of child sexual abuse
Workshop location and participants

- **Rural Eastern Cape:**
  - 5 day workshop Pilot.
  - Participants from original study: Community members and service providers
  - **265** participants altogether
- **Peri-urban Western Cape**
  - 2 day workshop
  - Several NGO and CBO representatives, some original focus group participants
  - **50 participants.**
Why PLA methods?

- Methods that give rise to collective, critical dialogue over the social conditions that contribute to CSA, as well as providing practical tools for action-planning.

- Can lead to actual structural change by involving service providers as well as communities – collaborative action and better utilization of resources.
Robert Chambers (foundational thinker behind PLA) PLA can be described as:

“a growing family of approaches, methods, attitudes, behaviours and relationships to enable and empower people to share, analyse and enhance their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor, evaluate and reflect".
PLA methods used

- Story-telling – stories about child sexual abuse and situations that contribute to it in the community
- Problem trees: Identifying main causes and effects of the problem of child sexual abuse
- Matrix chart: Who is doing what to address child sexual abuse, and how well?
- 3-pile sort: Participants decide what they can do on their own, with some help, and what someone else needs to do.
- 1 year plan: Develop vision and action plan for way forward.
Illustrations of stories

Illustrations:

1. A story of a little boy who was abused. He was taken to a foster home, but his new family was not kind. They never let him play with other children and never gave him any toys. He was very sad and lonely. At the end, he was sent back to his own family, but they never came back to get him.

2. A pineapple group. One pineapple is sad and crying. She has an aunt who was taken to a luxury bed. The two pineapples are crying and asking for help. They were sleeping in a small room.

Illustrations by: (Names and ages of children who created the illustrations)
Problem trees: presentation
## Matrix chart

### Who is doing what, how well and why

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>How well</th>
<th>Why</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>Arrest perpetrator, first aid kit, victim protection</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Commitment but under-resourced. Was also discrepancy – 2 – because cases are not being followed up in court. Fault is also with the criminal justice system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Education, Prevention</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Identify children, door to door, home based care, taking to places of safety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflections on process: An analytical framework

- What were the key areas of dialogue?
- Was there critical engagement with the issue?
- Collaboration – working together to form an action plan?
- Transferability of action to everyday space: What has changed as a consequence of the dialogue, and where?
- Voice and choice: Power dynamics?
- What are the areas of contestation and difference?
Eastern Cape dialogue: Critical awareness, areas of contestation and power dynamics
Areas of critical dialogue

- Intra-familial abuse is hidden and on-going – child silenced, mother keeps quiet. Blame vs social pressure.
- Perpetrators are often men in positions of power
- Myths: Sex with a virgin causes HIV/AIDS
- Ukuthwala (child marriage, often without consent)
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Economic migration – fathers are alienated from families
- Economic dependency
- Dysfunctional families and poor parenting (lack of communication with child)
- Damaging psycho-social and physical effects
Action-planning

- **Communities on their own**
- Campaigns with tribal authorities
- Follow up of case with investigator of the crime
- Volunteer in the communities, to set up a referral service
- Increase communication with between parents and children

**With some help:**
- No bail for perpetrators
- Linking up with the criminal justice system

**Someone else needs to do**
- Collaboration of government departments
- Increasing networks between service delivery and volunteers,
One year goals

- Call for change within community e.g. Parents be capacitated to protect children and know their rights, men must manage to ‘control themselves’
- Call for improved service provision and collaboration:
  - SD must do more outreach work,
  - Need safe, confidential spaces for CSA victims e.g. Thutuzela at hospital.
  - Perpetrators must be convicted no more lost dockets
- Campaigns with tribal authorities where child protection workers must be invited
- Counsellor and social worker to refer to
- More jobs provided by Government
Areas that need further dialogue

- **Gender**: Need for further dialogue and thought given to empowering women/mothers and to alternative masculinities.

- **Contestation and difference**: Communities say poor follow up from services, service providers give best-case scenarios. Power-relations: How to enhance voice in heterogenous group?
Transferability of action to everyday space

- The challenge is in extending the space beyond the “liminal performative domain of the PRA exercise” to the everyday in which community decision-making takes place (Kesby, 2000)
- Caregivers and community members are now identifying and referring CSA survivors.
- Expressing love towards children
- Conducting community education campaigns and involving traditional leaders
- BUT what about wider shifts in power – gender relations, better service delivery etc. Limited transformative potential of this workshop.
Western Cape dissemination
Western Cape: Critical dialogue leading to collective action-planning

- Throughout the process participants were thinking forward: How to take this into the community?
- Analytical perspective of underlying causes of CSA including sociological factors.
- Self-awareness of composition of the group – mainly from NGOs.
- Conceptualised action becomes collaborative decision-making – steering committee formed and strategy planned.
- Critical perspective of service provision, especially SAPS and criminal justice system – leads to increased advocacy.
Western Cape: Areas of dialogue

- Abuse within the family is kept hidden
- Dysfunctional families and poor parenting (communication, trust etc)
- Substance abuse
- Shortage and poor quality of child protection services.
- Poverty and unemployment and gangsterism
- Stigma and silence around CSA and ignorance / lack of education.
- Contradictions in the law – child rights must preside.
- Openness, communication and better sexuality education in schools.
Story-telling
### PROBLEMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty + Unemployment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dysfunctional families (domestic violence)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor parenting &amp; communication fail in the home</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate justice system</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supervision</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortage of child protection services (or problems with quality)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigma &amp; silence about CSA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gangsterism</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor housing conditions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance / lack of education</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer pressure &amp; intimidation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornography &amp; sexualised media</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of programs for men + boys</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>WHAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAPS (HIV/AIDS)</td>
<td>CHILD PROTECTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAPS HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>CHILD PROTECTION</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPDA</td>
<td>CHILD PROTECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSD</td>
<td>CHILD PROTECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFELINE/CHILDLINE</td>
<td>COUNSELLING COMMUNITY WORK (SCHOOLS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOLS (EDUC &amp; CHILD PROTECTION)</td>
<td>EDUCATION &amp; CHILD PROTECTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACAN</td>
<td>CHILD PROTECTION ADVOCACY EDUCATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHILINA</td>
<td>CHILD PROTECTION ADVOCACY COMMUNITY CONCERN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There were several actions that participants said they could do on their own including:

- Form a steering committee.
- Volunteer with CBOs, becoming lay counsellors, organising workshops and campaigns and generating a referral network including all orgs working in the field of CSA
- Increased advocacy for children’s issues
- Creating places of safety for emergency removals
- Form a child-friendly waiting room at courts and police stations
One year goals

- Reduction in CSA
- Health services should be child–friendly: allocated space for children
- More effective follow-up for children
- More criminal convictions: Perpetrators kept away from children
- Mothers and grandmothers are empowered and more aware of CSA
- Support group for abused children and families
- State needs to see NGOs as partners
Western Cape Action

- Formed a steering committee or task team called “hands off our children”
- Mass education initiative, how to obtain participation from other role-players, training for ECDs, info sessions at primary schools, referral network, create more places of safety for children
- Anti-CSA March June 16th
- Friends of the court’ – lobby groups to advocate for spaces more child-friendly and for court cases to be carried out more quickly.
Conclusion: Similarities and Differences

- Different spaces, different process and dynamics – issue of social capital and levels of socio-economic power.
- WC included experienced child-care workers and community activists – knowledge, networks and political will.
- EC = diverse mixture of community members and some service providers. Communities with poor access to information and networks, service providers disconnected from communities due to poor infrastructure.
- In EC more energy needs to be put into developing the “invited” participatory space to help it become a space for meaningful dialogue and collaborative action-planning. Need for increased management of heterogenous actors and power dynamics.