



POCKETS OF EXCELLENCE

Outwardly the Lavender Hill Story is one of youth at risk and their perception and response to their everyday challenges. More subtly it talks about the catalytic role of the Community Development Foundation Western Cape (CDF WCape) in its search for innovative and better outcomes via a development agenda.

The Lavender Hill community is riddled with negativity in all spheres of community life. Yet, despite this there are “pockets of good” simmering on the edges, waiting to be unearthed. Unfortunately, these ‘pockets of good’ have not emerged as ‘good news stories’ through the media but are rather consumed or overlooked by a negative portrayal of township life. The work of CDF WCape is in essence about the lives of peoples (impact and transformation and /or facilitating change). Guided by CDF WCape’s theory of change, a process evolved when working on issues and themes that highlighted lack of resources and support structures, and the limited pool of role models and mentorships. The PhotoSpeak Programme themed ‘governance through the eyes of the youth’ encourages young people, trained in basic photography, to capture images of events in their communities linked to the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of South Africa. These photographic images raise awareness and insights to rights and responsibilities from which actions and solutions unfold.

When the youth of Lavender Hill joined the PhotoSpeak Programme in 2008 the prospects for successful take-off was bleak. Risks included the youth themselves, digital cameras on loan that were floating in the community making youth easy targets, and cameras being used as bargaining tools for gang-and-drug related activities. Trust and trusting each other were on a continuous downward spiral. Building trust via dialogue CDF WCape assisted youth to break down barriers. The PhotoSpeak Programme became the catalyst for change and an important link to the education system. The participating school saw the programme as an opportunity for learners to reach their full potential.

Dubbed the “photo shoot” project, the programme banners are used and displayed regularly, particularly during big events at school and community levels. This creates further opportunities for dialogue.

Although the process is slow and time consuming and marred by sporadic flare ups of gang-and-drug related violence causing setbacks and regrouping of purpose, the intervention remains pro-active and ongoing with the youth leading the pace for change.

CDF WCape’s role continues to be one of facilitating the process of hope, a pivotal component of the organisation’s development agenda. Youth activities are profiled in annual reports and newsletters, and spaces of learning and exposure are created by assigning youth as photographers at events and as co-trainers of the PhotoSpeak Programme.

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September 2012