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Final Report: **Evaluation of ACT Ubumbano**

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CONTENTS

Acronyms	3
Executive Summary.....	4
Background and context	6
Evaluation approach and methodology.....	6
Purpose, objectives and scope	6
Evaluation approach	6
Evaluation questions.....	7
Data collection	8
Data analysis and validation	8
Limitations to the evaluation.....	8
Evaluation Findings	9
Relevance.....	9
Relevance to stakeholders.....	9
Project responsiveness to constituency need	10
Engagement with the faith sector	10
Coherence.....	11
Strategic coherence	11
Integration across the three strategic pillars.....	12
Coordination across members and target groups	13
Effectiveness	13
Theory of Change and main methodology	13
Being in solidarity	14
Gender focus	15
Learning spaces	15
Advocacy and Communications.....	16
Voice App.....	17
Small grants	17
The impact of Covid 19	18
Efficiency.....	19
Formal status and documents	19
Regional footprint.....	19
Secretariat structure, mandate and capacity	20
Reporting to stakeholders	21
Use of resources	21
Monitoring of achievements	22
Impact.....	22
Facilitating change and achieving results	22
Impact on power dynamics	23
Sustainability.....	24
Defining sustainability	24
So what then?	25
Conclusions.....	26
Recommendations.....	26
Improving governance	26
Strategy consolidation	27
Programme focus	28
Structure and people.....	28

VoiceApp.....	29
Knowledge management.....	29
Monitoring results	29
Finance	30
Annex	31
Documents reviewed	31
People interviewed.....	31

Acronyms

GBV	Gender-Based Violence
FBO	Faith-based organisation
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-profit Organisation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAFCEI	Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute)
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SDG	the Sustainable Development Goals
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
ZIMCODD	Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

Executive Summary

ACT Ubumbano is a network of 30 South(ern) African and three global/northern ACT Alliance partners working jointly to confront economic, gender and environmental injustice by facilitating critical joint reflection and collaboration and supporting innovative solidarity, learning and community action to address unjust power relations. ACT Ubumbano's higher level goal is to 'develop new forms of action for social justice that contribute to the transformation of structures of injustice and inequality by accompanying and supporting communities in their struggles', which reflects the conviction that social change will happen if there is increased community agency, mobilisation and voice. ACT Ubumbano works in three focus areas: Social and economic justice; environmental justice and climate change; gender justice and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Act Church of Sweden and Brot fuer die Welt required an evaluation of ACT Ubumbano for the period 2019-2021. Users of the evaluation are the key donors, Bread for the World and Act Church of Sweden, other ACT Ubumbano network members and stakeholders and its programme partners in Southern Africa. This evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach, including qualitative interviews, a document review and a validation process with key stakeholders.

This evaluation found that ACT Ubumbano's underpinning ideology, approach and interventions are all highly relevant to the needs of its partners and stakeholders. It appears to be highly relevant to its stakeholders because of its responsive approach to local struggles, its work focus areas, and its key methodology of providing reflective spaces within which organisations and activists can consider their practice. The faith-based sector is one of its key constituencies and the organisation facilitates vibrant dialogues here around how best to address social and economic inequality. ACT Ubumbano is an innovative and thoughtful actor in the development aid space.

ACT Ubumbano's approach is very well aligned and coherent with the approaches of its donors and with the needs of its identified partners and stakeholders. However, there is a lack of internal coherence in the way this approach is documented and presented. There is an imbalance in favour of gender work and more work is needed on intersectionality. All convening events have promoted dialogue, questioning of assumptions, learning from each other, sharing experiences and challenges, which indicates that ACT Ubumbano has promoted solidarity through ideas.

A central reason for ACT Ubumbano's establishment was to explore how organisations from the north and south could better stand in solidarity with one another. ACT Ubumbano has been effective in implementing its stated mandate and objectives, even in the face of the Covid 19 pandemic. ACT Ubumbano is building a body of knowledge and understanding about how to connect and support local struggles, as well as actively confronting issues of power and power relations. The Theory of Change is a good framework for action and potentially for monitoring outcomes and impact. The conversation around how to stand effectively in solidarity is ongoing and there are a range of strategic questions to be addressed in terms of balancing ACT Ubumbano's leadership and supportive role, and these are being explored through implementation. ACT Ubumbano's convening role and reflective practice are valued by stakeholders, and it works actively to create learning spaces, accessible advocacy and learning documentation to support a diversity of struggles. Innovative vehicles to support emergent struggles such as the Voice App and small grants are still 'under construction' with a number of aspects requiring resolution. Act Ubumbano has consistently said that it does not want to be a grant-making organisation. However, partner organisation and activists on the ground see a shrinking space and capacity for organisations and communities to make their voices heard. In this context, small grants have contributed to specific activities aimed at advancing local struggles.

ACT Ubumbano is relatively efficient in terms of the way it uses resources in the implementation of its mandate. Because the organisation is relatively young, and because it has recently been constituted formally as an NPO, systems and processes, as well as strategic and optimal use of resources are still to be refined and structured in the best possible way to facilitate operations. ACT Ubumbano is clearly a learning organisation, and it is expected that these processes will be dynamic, and based on lessons learned along the way. The ambitions of ACT

Ubumbano are currently larger than the secretariat's capacity, and it will be important to ensure that there is sufficient support to enable the senior staff to work at the appropriate level.

ACT Ubumbano has had varying degrees of direct and indirect impact within the spaces where it engages. In particular, it has sparked ongoing thinking about gender issues within the faith-based community. It has enabled community-based initiatives through its small grants, and provides ongoing spaces for dialogue and reflection for a range of organisations. It also begins to give substance to the E3 donors' ambitions to deal differently with north/south power relations. ACT Ubumbano has also constructively facilitated conversations around power and power dynamics. While ACT Ubumbano seeks to remain responsive to emergent struggles and community voices and does not want to lead in this area, the organisation – through its actions – plays a leadership role in enabling reflective practice.

ACT Ubumbano's convenings and dialogues have contributed to new learning and thinking among partners and that participants go on to consider how they implement solidarity actions. While there is a relatively good sense of what works in terms of ACT Ubumbano's approach, there are some ACT Ubumbano processes or projects (such as the VoiceApp) that need further work to improve reach and ongoing benefit to users. There is also work to be done around how direct support processes take recipient groups a step forward in their struggles.

ACT Ubumbano appears to have worked hard to implement its work within the spirit of the Kopanong principles. ACT Ubumbano resonates with the fact that faith is a way of life with most South Africans, where it is infused deeply with local culture and tradition. religion and the way this has been institutionalised in society into structures of oppression

ACT Ubumbano is a new organisation and it is trying out a range of approaches based on a clear and thoughtful ideological position. It is constrained by relatively limited resources, and from 2020 onwards, by the conditions and limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. ACT Ubumbano will always have to deal with the tension between leading and responding in solidarity, and the tension between responsiveness and impact. While there are a range of issues that this evaluation has identified as needing attention, all of these have emerged as part of the overall approach that includes innovation and a considerable appetite for risk. This evaluation considers, therefore, that the issues identified are part of ACT Ubumbano's broader learning journey.

Recommendations

1. Improve governance through institution of a Board Charter, identifying critical Board competencies that members must have, identifying key Board sub committees that can support organisational functioning.
2. Consolidate the strategy using the Theory of Change as a framework through a consultative process. This process should describe ACT Ubumbano's leadership and address how small grants link to other programme work.
3. Tighten programme focus in various ways including deciding on how to address the climate and economic justice pillars, convening dialogues around intersectionality, and establishing a mentorship programme to build the new generation of activists.
4. Ensure relevant policies for functioning (eg HR), align job titles with the constitution, and determine how various key aspects of work are handled (board secretary, administration, knowledge management, facilitation, grant management) – which should be in-house or undertaken by consultants. In line with this ensure that staff are working at the level commensurate with their skills and remuneration.
5. Develop a process strategy for the VoiceApp project
6. Ensure that a robust monitoring system is implemented using the Theory of Change as a framework

Background and context

ACT Ubumbano is a network of 30 South(ern) African and 3 global/northern ACT Alliance partners¹ working jointly to confront economic, gender and environmental injustice by facilitating critical joint reflection and collaboration and supporting innovative solidarity, learning and community action to address unjust power relations. ACT Ubumbano's higher level goal is to 'develop new forms of action for social justice that contribute to the transformation of structures of injustice and inequality by accompanying and supporting communities in their struggles'², which reflects the conviction that social change will happen if there is increased community agency, mobilisation and voice. ACT Ubumbano works in three focus areas: Social and economic justice; environmental justice and climate change; gender justice and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). ACT Ubumbano situates itself within the global initiative to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, notably the SDGs 1 (no poverty), 3 (good health and well-being), 5 (gender equality), 10 (reduced inequalities), 13 (climate action) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) in Southern Africa. Key mechanisms to enable ACT Ubumbano's work are the Solidarity Hub and learning events that bring together network organisations, community organisations and movements, and activists. ACT Ubumbano has recently registered as a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) in South Africa, and has established a governing Board. It continues to be guided by an Advisory Group drawn from participating organisations.

Evaluation approach and methodology

Purpose, objectives and scope

Act Church of Sweden and Brot fuer die Welt required an evaluation of ACT Ubumbano for the period 2019-2021. The evaluation was required to 'be learning focused, participatory and external to ACT Ubumbano and its partners, and should analyse all three pillars which are the focus of ACT Ubumbano work'³ and also include a 'clear gender integration and power analysis perspective', consideration of the 'Core Humanitarian Standard', and be based on the DAC criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability.

Users of the evaluation are the key donors, Bread for the World and Act Church of Sweden, other ACT Ubumbano network members and stakeholders and its programme partners in Southern Africa. The users would like the evaluation to serve as a learning exercise, providing guidance around improving programme implementation and the formulation of future initiatives (utilisation focus). Ingrid Obery led this evaluation process with support from Tebogo Mokganyetji – both are based in South Africa.

Evaluation approach

This evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach, including qualitative interviews, a document review and a validation process with key stakeholders. The following principles and practices have guided the approach to this evaluation:

Utilisation-based and principles' focused evaluation: The writing of Michael Quinn-Patton⁴ is strongly influential in our evaluation and organisational development approach. The approach ensures that participatory processes are thought-provoking, reflective, stimulate discussion and help to re-connect with purpose and underpinning principles.

¹ Church of Sweden (CoS), Brot fuer die Welt (BftW) and Christian Aid. Southern members include some ACT Alliance members as well as a much wider group of civil society, including faith based and other organisations.

² <https://www.actubumbano.org/who-we-are/>

³ Evaluation Terms of Reference

⁴ Michael Quinn Patton. 2011. Essentials of Utilization-Focused Evaluation.
Michael Quinn Patton. 2017. Principles-Focused Evaluation: The GUIDE.

Developmental and participatory: Drawing on the knowledge and insights of evaluation informants, the evaluation takes the view that innovative programs experience both successes and setbacks; and that both are valid and appreciated. The evaluation therefore explores the emerging achievements to identify the principles for good practice and the set of circumstances that have led to success, while at the same time seeking to identify the learning opportunities encased in difficulties identified.

Holistic and appreciative inquiry: This evaluation looked at the relationships, structures and institutions within which ACT Ubumbano initiatives take place. It sought to understand both the direct interventions, and the broader setting within which they are made, and how engagements have contributed to enhanced experience, improved relationships, and the dissemination of new ideas and ways of thinking. Ultimately, the evaluation seeks to extract principles and approaches for good practice.

Evaluation questions

The Terms of Reference provided a comprehensive set of questions aligned to the DAC criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability. Three additional questions were added during the inception phase to ensure that the information gathering process addressed all of the TOR's requirements.

Relevance	1. How has the ACT Ubumbano platform added value to its partners?
	2. Are the aims, vision, mission, and actions of ACT Ubumbano relevant to its members?
	3. To what extent, and in which way, is a faith component and religious perspective imbedded in the identity and actions of Act Ubumbano?
	4. How does ACT Ubumbano work together with/ relate to Act Alliance? When is ACT Ubumbano going to apply for membership in Act alliance?
	5. Did the project concept and design respond to the core needs/demands of the constituencies?
Coherence	1. Are the three thematic pillars relevant to work with partners? Does the organisation have capacity to work with all three pillars? If not, which should be prioritised?
	2. Does ACT Ubumbano look for opportunities to enable better coordination, learning and optimal use of resources across different members and target groups?
Effectiveness	1. What is ACT Ubumbano's theory of change?
	2. What were the major factors influencing the (non) achievement of the objectives?
	3. To what extent is a gender focus embedded in ACT Ubumbano's daily practice and the design, delivery and review of its coordination and support activities with members and target communities and constituencies?
Efficiency	1. Does ACT Ubumbano have relevant steering documents in place to facilitate effective working towards desired results? Are any needed to strengthen the organisation?
	2. What is the regional footprint of ACT Ubumbano? Is there a strategy to develop the regional approach and relate to SADC?
	3. Does the secretariat have relevant capacity, experience and competence to support partners within programming, advocacy and institutional funding/ fundraising?
	4. Does the Secretariat work in alignment with its mandate??
	5. How is ACT Ubumbano reporting results to its stakeholders?
	6. How have resources been used?
	7. Were activities implemented cost-efficient?
	8. Were project indicators and objectives achieved / within agreed timeframes?
Impact and Sustainability	1. Has the platform enabled/facilitated/helped partner organisations/ individuals achieve the change their work aims to achieve?
	2. What are the most important results of the organisation?
	3. How are emerging understandings of power relations addressed and the learnings incorporated into ongoing support, learning and engagement activities? Have these emergent views enabled constituencies to better advocate and amplify their voices around key issues ?
	4. Does ACT Ubumbano contribute to sustainable results relevant to its members? How?
	5. To what extent is ACT Ubumbano financially sustainable?

Data collection

Document review: The evaluation considered a total of 45 administrative, policy, and conceptual documents.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) constituted the bulk of the evaluation process. Informants included the ACT Ubumbano staff, representatives of the network partners, and people who have worked directly with the network over the period. KIIs were chosen from a list provided by the coordinator. Informants included representatives across South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Although field visits were originally proposed, the Covid-19 third wave made this unsafe, and all interviews were conducted online. All interviews were confidential. Where quotations are used in the text, they are from an interview, but reflect a commonly held opinion across a number of respondents.

Data analysis and validation

The evaluation looked at ACT Ubumbano's Theory of Change in relation to identified strategic outcomes and the proposed approaches in its strategy and funding agreements, and in relation to the different target groups and constituencies and their goals. The evaluation explored whether and how the proposed approaches have been implemented, and whether network partners and other relevant organisations have experienced these approaches as useful and appropriate in moving towards the desired outcomes. This was done by triangulating information from documents, staff interviews and KIIs.

An online validation workshop was held where the main findings, conclusions and recommendations were presented. Participants included Bread for the World, Act Church of Sweden, ACT Ubumbano Solidarity Hub staff, and key identified stakeholders.

This report combines the initial findings and conclusions and the input from the validation workshop.

Limitations to the evaluation

This evaluation was severely limited by the Covid-19 3rd wave in Southern Africa in mid-2021. This meant that no field visits were possible, and therefore focus group discussions were not held. The timeframe for data collection was limited and not quite as many KIIs were done as was originally envisaged, although there was good representation from current and former board/advisory group members and member organisations. KIIs were also constrained because a number of those approached (at least three times each), failed to respond to the interview requests. However, the evaluators believe that sufficient evidence of ACT Ubumbano's performance was gathered to enable a reasonable assessment.

Evaluation Findings

These findings represent the evaluators' conclusions about the performance of ACT Ubumbano over the period 2019-2021. The evaluation analysis sought to bring together all of the information from documents, interviews and the validation process, providing a set of data showing the evidence for the conclusions reached, and recommendations based on these conclusions. The findings are presented under the headings of Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability, and the evaluation questions pertaining to each of these are addressed in these sections.

ACT Ubumbano presents itself as an organisation that is committed to ongoing reflective practice in order to improve its approach and impact. This is evidenced by the fact that this is the second evaluation in five years. The 2019 evaluation explored ACT Ubumbano's foundation phase from 2017-2018 and found that 'the ACT Ubumbano solidarity initiative is based on principled frameworks, for both the North and South, and a transformational and emancipatory approach. Its orientation analyses the root causes of problems, espouses a reflective and learning process, which accompanies, supports and is in solidarity with the struggles for social justice led by the poor.'⁵ This evaluation has taken the findings of the 2019 evaluation into account and has also considered the extent to which the 2019 evaluation recommendations have been actioned.

Relevance

Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies

This evaluation found that ACT Ubumbano's underpinning ideology, approach and interventions are all highly relevant to the needs of its partners and stakeholders. The faith-based sector is one of its key constituencies and the organisation facilitates vibrant dialogues here around how best to address social and economic inequality.

Relevance to stakeholders

Are the aims, vision, mission, and actions of ACT Ubumbano relevant to its members? The ACT Ubumbano constitution states the organisational purpose and main objective is to 'be a network of Southern African and European non-profit organisations that works for economic, gender and environmental justice in South Africa and its neighbouring countries and, in doing so, develops new forms of action for social justice that contribute to the transformation of structures of injustice and inequality'.⁶

The organisation's stated higher-level goal is to 'develop new forms of action for social justice that contribute to the transformation of structures of injustice and inequality by accompanying and supporting communities in their struggles'⁷, making it highly relevant to its member organisations, activists and linked partners. This goal is based on the conclusion that social change will happen if there is increased community agency, mobilisation and voice. ACT Ubumbano's Theory of Change shows its intention to deal with the specifically stated issues as they are articulated by communities engaged in specific struggles.

ACT Ubumbano's current grant agreements are based on the 2019 funding proposal which outline a set of objectives for the programme. The original proposal provides a detailed analysis of the situation in Southern Africa in terms of ongoing levels of extreme inequality, the erosion of civic space and the increasingly isolated nature of community struggles which means the fracturing of social cohesion. The proposal highlights the fact that social problems are exacerbated as a result of 'interconnected economic, gender and environmental

⁵ 2019 Evaluation

⁶ ACT Ubumbano Constitution

⁷

injustice'.⁸ It also details the key issues to be addressed, including declining organisational capacity and the difficulty of sustaining political organisation in the face of extreme poverty, the fact that community voices are largely ignored by the state, resulting in increasingly violent responses from communities who feel unheard, and the deeply embedded patriarchy and religious prejudices which facilitate systemic gender inequality and Gender-Based Violence: the 'challenge for everyone is to start re-mobilising from the ground up, as a dynamic process that must be actively engaged....Civil society, communities and the church faith leaders and social movements have to find new political forms...'⁹

There is clear alignment between the project proposals and agreements and the stated approaches of the E3 donor organisations, in particular, the process of re-examining power relations, and the nature of both power and solidarity between north and south. Overall, ACT Ubumbano's guiding and structuring documentation appears to reflect its founding principles and approach, making it highly relevant to the identified target constituencies, activists and organisations.

Project responsiveness to constituency need

Did the project concept and design respond to the core needs/demands of the constituencies? The ACT Ubumbano platform is seen as highly relevant to all stakeholders. There is a strong sense of ownership among partner organisations, and there were many indications that partner organisations see ACT Ubumbano as a support to the work they do. The reflective spaces and conversations challenge individuals and organisations to think about how they engage at community level, and whether they are really listening to the voices of people on the ground. This approach has been a fundamental driver of all Solidarity Hub and learning spaces convened by ACT Ubumbano over the period. It appears that ACT Ubumbano has continued to be responsive to emerging community struggles, and this can be seen particularly in the move to provide small grants to facilitate community action and where possible and appropriate, co-facilitate spaces for dialogue. ACT Ubumbano was frequently described positively in terms of its acting in solidarity with emergent struggles.

Has the ACT Ubumbano platform added value to its partners? Activists and partners all mentioned the importance of the connections and linkages made through ACT Ubumbano convenings, as well as the fact that these events had enabled them to learn and improve their practice (for example through peer-learning across organisations and individuals) or community engagement. Over the period ACT Ubumbano was a key facilitator of dialogues with faith leaders around issues of inclusion, the LGBTQI+ community, Gender-Based Violence, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and harmful social and cultural practices. The organisation was recognised as initiating conversations about approaching faith and scriptures differently – bringing a human rights and justice perspective to these deliberations. Partners appreciated the ACT Ubumbano approach that demonstrated respect, integrity, and social awareness. The gender programme supported by Faith2Action, for example, was seen as hugely successful in engaging faith leaders into difficult discussions.

Engagement with the faith sector

How does ACT Ubumbano work together with/ relate to Act Alliance? The ACT Alliance is a coalition of 135 churches and faith-based organisations working together in over 120 countries. ACT Ubumbano is an initiative that emerged directly out of Alliance members discussions in 2016. ACT Ubumbano's three primary donors (the E3 donors) are members of the alliance. ACT Ubumbano works with ACT Alliance partners who are active in Southern Africa, and contributes significantly to the Alliance gender workstream. As an informal network, ACT Ubumbano was not an official member of the alliance. However, the organisation has recently registered as a Non-Profit Organisation in South Africa, and it will now formally join the Alliance.

To what extent, and in which way, is a faith component and religious perspective imbedded in the identity and actions of Act Ubumbano? Faith-based organisations (FBO)s form a significant portion of ACT Ubumbano's partnership base, and the organisation emerges out of a rich tradition of left church activism. Informants

⁸ Project Proposal 2019-2022 (CLP)

⁹ Project Proposal 2019-2022 (CLP)

indicated that there is a lot of appetite within that tradition to talk about economic and social justice. A scan across activities over the period shows an extremely high intersection of faith and social issues: this includes how FBOs, churches and faith leaders address issues of inequality, exclusions and marginalisation, Gender-Based Violence, LGBTQI+ people, and other issues of concern to poor communities. Importantly, while ACT Ubumbano works directly with ACT Alliance organisations, its work is not limited to Christian organisations or leaders – work has included engagement with Muslim, Bahai and other faith leaders and tends to be with faith institutions at a local operational level where ‘we accompany them on a process’. It is clear that ACT Ubumbano’s work in this space is about addressing how faith-based organisations support and hear the marginalised and excluded voices in their congregations.

Coherence

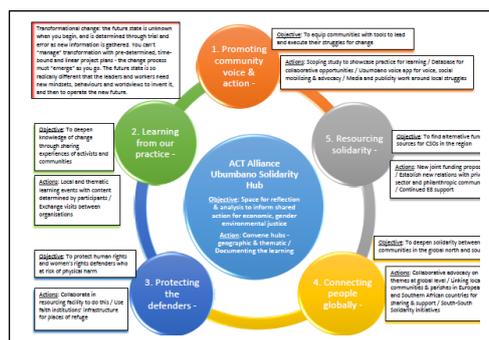
Coherence: Compatibility with other interventions in a country, sector or institution

This evaluation found that ACT Ubumbano’s approach is very well aligned and coherent with the approaches of its donors and with the needs of its identified partners and stakeholders. However, there is a lack of internal coherence in the way this approach is documented and presented. There is an imbalance in favour of gender work and more work is needed on intersectionality.

Strategic coherence

ACT Ubumbano presents its strategy and approach in different ways in a range of documents and platforms. These include:

- The constitution which outlines ACT Ubumbano’s organisational purpose and main objective.
- The Theory of Change, which details four key methodologies, with IF/THEN statements describing the conditions within which effective action can take place
- The ACT Ubumbano Profile, which identifies that community struggles aimed at the transformation of structures of injustice and inequality, in South and Southern Africa require (the implication here is that these would form part of ACT Ubumbano’s programme of action):
 - a development agenda that is south-driven and south-led – that is developed from the reality of communities’ struggles
 - new development financing sources to support civil society and community struggles in South Africa and other middle-income countries
 - stronger alliances building for greater global solidarity south-south and north-south.
- The Programme Design, five elements (six including the Solidarity Hub), each with an objective and identified actions
- Explanations of the three strategic pillars in various documents.
- The gender programme objectives.
- Objectives and indicators in the Funding Agreements.



While it is clear that the same analysis and sentiments underpin all of these presentations, the wording and emphasis is often different. It was argued that these different vehicles are aimed at slightly different audiences or stakeholders. However, presenting a different face to different audiences means ACT Ubumbano becomes an organisation with many faces, which may undermine its perceived integrity and identity. It would be useful if the approach, presentation and wording is aligned across all documents and platforms. The many different presentations of ACT Ubumbano’s approach, goals and objectives suggests that there needs to be a conversation about an overarching strategy emerging from the high level goal and the Theory of Change. This is recognised

by the Board which has had conversations about the need for a strategic plan that brings all the issues and approaches together.

This suggests that it might be useful to bring together the thinking of the advisory Group, the Board, partners and activists to take the Theory of Change to the next level into a broad programme or strategy document that would

- give useful direction while requiring intersectional focus aimed at amplifying visibility and impact
- balance possible programmes/interventions around root causes of inequality with emergent struggles needing support
- incorporate partners' interests
- allow/encourage innovation and creative approaches, including actively seeking out new and more empowering practice.

Integration across the three strategic pillars

Are the three thematic pillars relevant to work with partners? Does the organisation have capacity to work with all three pillars? If not, which should be prioritised? Documents and KIIs identified the three pillars as critical areas of focus in the work towards equality and a just society. Currently gender is the most visible of the pillars for two reasons: because there is a gender advisor there is evidence that her work has had impact; and because this workstream received additional, targeted, funding. This means there is a clear imbalance between the focus on the three pillars. It appears that the other two pillars are allowed to be emergent.

Interviews revealed different views about whether it was necessary to focus equally on each. People on the ground/activists appreciate that its broad focus enables ACT Ubumbano to respond to emergent struggle without predetermining which areas it would focus on. This was definitely seen as an important component of ACT Ubumbano's approach to solidarity. Demand for support has apparently tended towards gender issues – this is not surprising in Southern Africa, where Gender-Based Violence is so prevalent and women participating more than men in community mobilisation initiatives. But this may also be because ACT Ubumbano has had an active gender programme, making it difficult to determine what came first.

On the other hand, people coming from an organisational perspective were generally more concerned that a very broad approach did not provide a clear entry point for support and ACT Ubumbano's identity might become unclear.

It was commonly agreed that more capacity would be required if the other pillars were to receive the same depth of focus as has been achieved under gender – decisions around this issue would be both strategic and funding dependent. For example, ACT Ubumbano works closely with SAFCEI on climate issues (for example, they recommended the city clean ups in Malawi grant), and it might be determined that this is sufficient. It does mean that ACT Ubumbano would not be able to provide the level of coordination, support or climate expert input to partners as is the case with the gender thematic area. If this is what ACT Ubumbano would like to provide for its partners, it would have to pursue funding to support this. While people with separate expertise bring the risk of silo approaches, purposeful programming that keeps the intersectional nature of most struggles at top of mind would mean that specific technical expertise could add value where required. The comparison between the funded gender pillar and ACT Ubumbano's other strategic pillars demonstrates that there will always be an iterative balancing act to be negotiated in any area of focus: donors have their own objectives and contextual imperatives, ACT Ubumbano will have some accountability to its strategic goals and achieving results in the thematic area, partner NGOs will be interested in driving their objectives and goals, and communities will bring their current concerns which may be determined by particular local groups' interests. What could help would be to implement the 2019 evaluation recommendation: 'Develop a framework for each of the thematic pillars based on root causes, with linked documenting and learning system to 'measure the resonance and impact of solidarity initiatives'¹⁰.

¹⁰ 2019 evaluation

There were also different opinions as to the extent of the intersectional engagement across the pillars. The intersections between the three pillars could be found, but there is not clear evidence of making this happen in dialogues, and the connections are emergent and dependent on circumstance. However, it is good to note that the demand for a more cross pillar dialogues is coming directly from ACT Ubumbano stakeholders: ‘The prevalence of gender-based violence in communities means that this is the story of many who participate in ACT Ubumbano processes. However, there is also an increasing awareness of the intersectionality of struggles, with requests for more engagement on climate justice and gender, and youth activists wanting more space for convening’.¹¹ This indicates that there is a need to be more conscious about highlighting the intersectional issues to enable participants in dialogue events to get closer to understanding root causes of injustice, exclusion, inequality, marginalisation, and to facilitate connections across and between struggles. This may have the potential to broaden and deepen the effectiveness of local movements.

Coordination across members and target groups

Does ACT Ubumbano look for opportunities to enable better coordination, learning and optimal use of resources across different members and target groups? All convening events have promoted dialogue, questioning of assumptions, learning from each other, sharing experiences and challenges, which indicates that ACT Ubumbano has promoted solidarity through ideas. The Solidarity Hub dialogues include discussion on what kinds of practices have worked and what could be done better or differently, and all informants indicated that this engagement had opened their thinking to new ideas and approaches. The learning hubs were cited as particularly good events to link with other people across different struggles. ACT Ubumbano has helped to build the ACT Alliance’s gender focus on the sub-continent: ‘We chair the ACT Alliance Gender Community of Practice in Africa, and have contributed to the rollout of its Gender Justice Policy on the continent, with plans for a sub-regional process in development.’¹²

Effectiveness

Effectiveness: The extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

This evaluation found that ACT Ubumbano has been effective in implementing its stated mandate and objectives, even in the face of the Covid 19 pandemic. ACT Ubumbano is building a body of knowledge and understanding about how to connect and support local struggles, as well as actively confronting issues of power and power relations. The Theory of Change is a good framework for action and potentially for monitoring outcomes and impact. The conversation around how to stand effectively in solidarity is ongoing and there are a range of strategic questions to be addressed in terms of balancing ACT Ubumbano’s leadership and supportive role, and these are being explored through implementation. ACT Ubumbano’s convening role and reflective practice are valued by stakeholders, and it works actively to create learning spaces, accessible advocacy and learning documentation to support a diversity of struggles. Innovative vehicles to support emergent struggles such as VoiceApp and small grants are still ‘under construction’ with a number of aspects requiring resolution.

Theory of Change and main methodology

What is ACT Ubumbano’s theory of change? The ACT Ubumbano website, and stakeholders assert the See-Judge-Act as the primary methodology that informs ACT Ubumbano’s work. ACT Ubumbano’s Theory of Change presents four additional key methodologies, which if implemented, should lead to the change desired. This change is described as: ‘Increased community agency, where organised communities are empowered to claim

¹¹ E3 Narrative Report December 2020

¹² E3 Narrative Report December 2020

and defend their rights and lead their own struggles (in an inclusive way)'; and 'Joined-up impact that is not limited by thematic silos and connects community actions and voice with national, regional and global policy advocacy to challenge social injustice and contribute to the transformation of structures of injustice and inequality.' The TOC presents four methodologies or approaches with IF/THEN statements describing the conditions within which effective action can take place :

- Individual and community-led action to tackle poverty:
- Reflection, Power & Actions
- Power & solidarity
- Voice and Advocacy

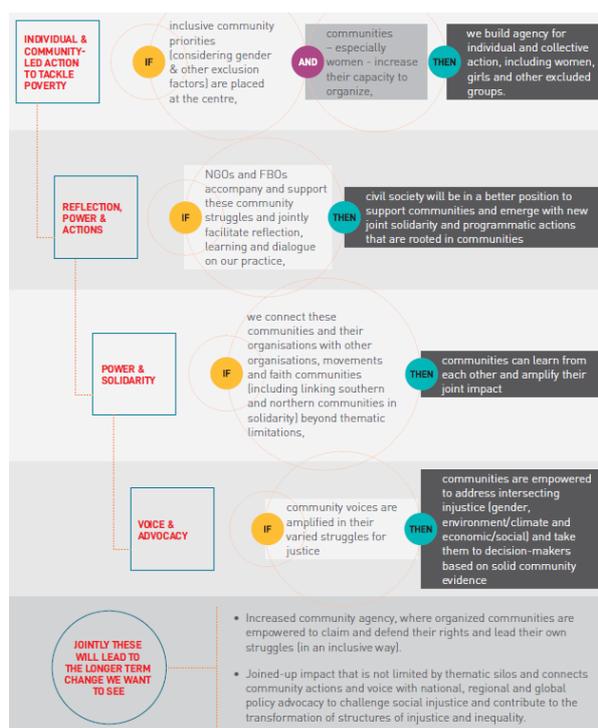
The TOC provides a clear and specific pathway to change. It is also crafted in such a way that it provides the framework for a monitoring system.

Being in solidarity

A central reason for ACT Ubumbano's establishment was to explore how organisations from the north and south could better stand in solidarity with one another. The conversation about what this looks like permeates much of the organisation's documentation, and was a central theme in the interview discussions for this evaluation. ACT Ubumbano has initiated conversations about approaching faith and the scriptures differently, bringing a human rights and justice perspective to these deliberations, and enabling participants to 'take away a more thoughtful and questioning approach to their faith', including how to best support struggles in ways those affected, or potential perpetrators, want to address the issue. However, for most activists and organisations the key issues are those of injustice and inequality and how these play out in society and impact people daily, increasing suffering and marginalisation.

ACT Ubumbano has responded to a need of partner organisations and activists who work with communities by providing the space to reflect and build understanding and language to engage others around human rights practices, equality and solidarity. In the reflective spaces, the primary concept appears to be how to do solidarity better, and how to address power imbalance, internal prejudice, and leading assumptions, as well as confronting some harmful cultural practices that might be supported by more traditional faith leaders. As a result there is a great deal of openness to engaging in the reflective conversations ACT Ubumbano initiates, as well as exploring how to better act in solidarity with struggles as described by communities.

This evaluation found that the exploration of the nature of solidarity was ongoing: 'It is very important for solidarity to identify what you are not, which is difficult in the face of a deluge of need'. The need to allow community voice to dominate was fiercely defended, although it was acknowledged that this kind of responsiveness meant that it was not possible to keep to a predetermined set of priorities. This clearly has implications for understanding cumulative impact, and this should be addressed through the 'what is monitored, and how do we aggregate achievements?' discussion. This is supported by the view that it is important for ACT Ubumbano to determine the best forms of intervention it can support so that it can identify exactly what it wants to have impact on in any support process or programme. A very clear description is presented in the Learning Note #2: 'Working in solidarity requires a high level of discipline from CSOs to not take centre stage and represent the struggles of others. The discipline extends to maintaining the integrity of the relationship, doing the hard things that make them accountable and in turn holds others accountable for their actions. Solidarity organisations should follow the lead of the activists, fighting the temptation to speak on their behalf



and always acting with integrity – calling out issues when these arise and being willing to be called out themselves.’¹³

Some stakeholders raised the issue of safety and security and indicated that there was a need to consider what solidarity looks like when people’s lives are at risk – this is a growing problem in Southern Africa with increasing political instability, ongoing Gender-Based Violence, and humanitarian crises in a number of countries, as well as increased desperation and corruption in the context of the extended pandemic. This is already a focus for conversations in relation to sexual harassment. However, this could be a broader sub-focus in convening events as was suggested in the last evaluation which suggested that ACT Ubumbano should take a ‘Proactive response to repression – moving beyond protecting the defenders to developing a defensive strategy’¹⁴.

Gender focus

To what extent is a gender focus embedded in ACT Ubumbano’s daily practice and the design, delivery and review of its coordination and support activities with members and target communities and constituencies?

The ACT Ubumbano gender programme is the most visible and well-funded. The two-year Faith2Action grant provided focused and directed funding for this workstream. The advocacy campaign activities were influential in a number of ways and informants mentioned how these engagements had challenged entrenched ideas within the faith community about Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender-Based Violence and issues of inclusion for the LGBTQ+ community. This programme contributed directly to engagements in Zimbabwe and Swaziland. The donor acknowledged ACT Ubumbano as a key factor in the success of its programme in the region. ACT Ubumbano was described as having great respect for diversity while being able to challenge entrenched views across a range of faiths and sectors: ‘they can translate human rights language into the religious voice’. This donor/recipient partnership has evolved into a real partnership where ACT Ubumbano’s expertise and innovative and effective approach is key to joint fundraising in a Pan-African consultation on women’s rights for Christian groups project and has been used to advise the EU commission on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and religious groups.

As a result of the gender focus and work over the period there is increasing interest in ACT Ubumbano’s Gender Justice and SRHR work. This can also be seen in the number of small grant applications that focus on gender/GBV.

However, there were some concerns about whether the systemic barriers to gender justice were always fully addressed. One critique was that much of the gender work is actually activities focused around women – economic opportunities for example. There was insufficient evidence of mobilisation and collaboration with men (as a social group). However, systemic issues are certainly addressed in the focus on influencing faith leadership to consider how women and girls and groups such as LGBTQ+ are marginalised and experience discrimination through their existing doctrines and structures. It is probably sufficient at this point that gender issues are engaged at a range of levels, as long as the conversations include some focus on the structural determinants of gender inequality. As a conscious learning organisation it is likely that the dialogue around gender will expand and evolve.

Learning spaces

ACT Ubumbano’s approach to convenings is that these are reflective spaces that facilitate dialogue, listening and learning. The intention is that participants reflect on how they work and consider new ideas and approaches for their contexts. These spaces also encourage participants to confront power in their own and others’ practices, and explore the idea of solidarity and what that means for action to address injustice and inequality in the current context. While the spaces are open for all issues to be raised, the majority of the planned events have been around identified themes.

¹³ <https://www.actubumbano.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Learning-Note-2-Abahlali-Base-Mjondolo-and-Church-Land-Project.pdf>

¹⁴ 2019 evaluation

Solidarity Hubs have been the large convenings, with up to 70 participants attending until 2019. The hubs are focal points for interaction, learning and dialogue amongst local and international partners and allies seeking to engage in deepening solidarity, knowledge and practice in the field. This reflection informs new and existing programmatic action in and with local communities, and there is a conscious attempt to build solidarity across the global south and north. The hubs have focused variously on youth, gender and climate, and land - this intentional focus was deemed necessary to enable the ' process to actively identify where and how support is needed in different areas of struggle'.

In 2020, as it was not possible to hold the planned Solidarity Hub, seven online Learning Hubs were held. These events took a different format, bringing together smaller groups of participants to manage the Zoom environment and enable maximum participation. The learning hubs were also themed, based on specific needs identified by activist and community partners, and ACT Ubumbano provided data and airtime to participants as needed. Partner organisations¹⁵ with particular expertise provided input and facilitation of the sessions which included dialogues on what solidarity in the time of Covid-19 involved, case studies of successful struggles such as the DAG/Pine Road Community approach to housing relocation in Cape Town, the call for a Basic Income Grant, and how to expunge criminal records that impede people's ability to participate in society fully, and engage effectively in economic activity.

There is good evidence that in person and on-line convenings and learning events have enabled connections between people in different geographical areas, and have resulted in expanded ideas for action. For example, some of the people who were involved in the learning hubs applied for small grants, learning hub participants have reported back on actions embarked on as a result of the learning, people involved in struggles related to mining and environmental consequences in the Danhauser community were connected to people in Limpopo facing similar problems. Stakeholders also reported examples of sharing learning and experience between activists in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

The ACT Ubumbano staff have played an important role in enabling the reflective spaces that form a critical part of the organisation's practice. They were described as being open to discussions on any topic and taking a clear approach of active listening and learning. This is backed up by evidence of ongoing conversations among the staff and with members of the advisory group about how to better present grassroots struggles.

Advocacy and Communications

Stakeholders believe ACT Ubumbano has role to play in amplifying voices from the struggle into forums not accessible to people on the ground. This is an opportunity for a particular kind of solidarity – advocating for northern donors who have the power to be heard in various forums. This kind of advocacy must be carefully managed to ensure that it is accompanied by actual voice of those in struggle, not done for them.

Monthly newsletters are well written and attractively presented, containing a combination of VoiceApp stories from communities, videos, news briefings, partner profiles and notices and information about partner events. In terms of its on-line presence ACT Ubumbano is vibrant and current. The website is attractive and easy to navigate and is filled with information in the form of newsletters, briefs, video clips, reports, and graphics. It is notable that a lot of effort is put into making written communication short and punchy: the Learning Notes for example, which reflect the learning hub discussions, present concise arguments and include a set of thought provoking questions for readers. The involvement of faith-based organisations is very evident in the work presented and in the voices in the video uploads. A number of activists suggested that ACT Ubumbano work could be looking for engagement on a wider range of on-line platforms. All of the media is in English, and the extent of use, circulation, response is not known.

¹⁵ These included Church Land Programme, PACSA, CREATE-CBR, Abahlali baseMjondolo, IAM, SPII, Freedoms SA, DAG.

Voice App

Despite the name, this initiative is primarily about activist engagement and empowerment. The programme was described as 'future looking', in that it seeks to build and contribute to connecting activists and ordinary people into a network of information sharing and knowledge building through the use of storytelling and technology. The process aims to build activist skills and confidence building, enabling them to mobilise others into WhatsApp groups, encourage participants to write their stories, and then publicise these voices on the App and more broadly. Activists acknowledged the App, saying it is useful to keep them informed, and enables people to share messages of support and solidarity. This can in some cases create momentum online for particular struggles. Some respondents were unclear why the VoiceApp was used for engagement, instead of other social media platforms. However, it was pointed out that sharing stories under real names has safety implications.

It was acknowledged that while there has been good support for the training sessions, the follow up work required from partners and activist participants has been weak. The reasons probably include lack of confidence and habit among activists to engage in writing activity, and this may also apply to NGO staff tasked with supporting the networking and engagement process. This is being addressed in part through capturing of voice notes and short videos. However, the primary weakness in the programme is the absence of any follow up support processes for group coordinators who have been through the training – that is, seeing the project work as process rather than occasional training events. An opportunity is lost here to foster a ripple effect as the enthusiasm and initial skills acquired in the training does not grow to engage others, building a culture of storytelling and making people's struggles real through descriptions for potential supporters and solidarity action. Proper building of these platforms would require focused and consistent support for those coordinating WhatsApp groups, motivation and confidence building for those observing and writing stories from local situations and struggles, as well as ensuring that stories become visible on a wide range of platforms, and ensuring that these stories start to be heard by decision makers/those who could stand in solidarity/those placed to provide support or help. Interviews also revealed that people in rural areas may often struggle with connectivity to networks, making the access to the app a challenge.

Small grants

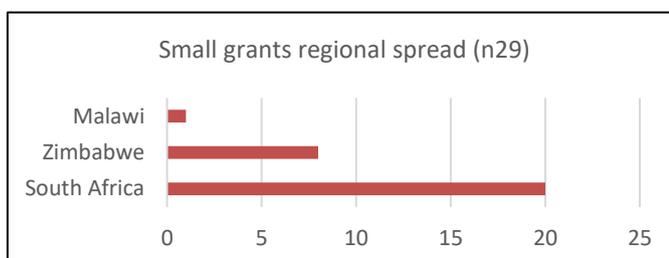
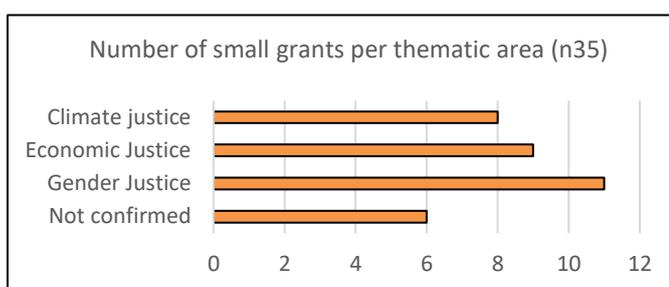
Act Ubumbano has consistently said that it does not want to be a grant-making organisation. However, partner organisation and activists on the ground see a shrinking space and capacity for organisations and communities to make their voices heard. The broad withdrawal of funding from South Africa over the past few years – given its categorization as a Middle-Income Country – has further limited support for community organisation at the local level. The Covid pandemic of 2020 made this reality even more stark and ACT Ubumbano recognised that solidarity actions needed to be more practical if local people were to be able to take their particular struggle a step further.

During 2020 small grants were made to some organisations in the form of 'contracts' with the fiscal host Church Land Programme. These amounts ranged between R10 000 and R50 000 and were focused on enabling specific advocacy activities that the organisations requested after direct engagement with ACT Ubumbano. Internally ACT Ubumbano continued to debate whether and how to provide support that was meaningful to local struggles, facing the dilemma of the inherent power dynamic that grant-making brought. In response to the increasing need, in early 2021 ACT Ubumbano put out its first formal call for proposals for small grants. Work in mid-2021 is very much on this process. All can be fitted into one or more of the three strategic pillars, and the spread currently shows focus on all three pillars. In April 2021 a total of R543 160 had been allocated in small grants to 32 out of a total of 42 proposals submitted.

There is recognition that this move to becoming a grant-maker introduces a tension between the ambition to act in solidarity with equality, and the inherent power imbalance involved in holding the purse strings. This tension is compounded by ACT Ubumbano needing to account to its donors about the validity of these small grants – which imposes compliance requirements downwards to the grantees. In a reflection session in March, the staff identified a set of key issues and questions surrounding the process of grant-making. Centrally, there

was the need to make fair decisions which acknowledge power, and ensuring transparency and accountability (because there is money involved), and the recognition that ‘such processes require a lot of hand-holding, particularly if done in the thoughtful and nurturing way’, which has implications for staffing. Specific questions arose out of this reflection that indicate the conversation is far from over, and will continue to be held through the next phases of grant-making.

Although the grants are made in direct response to need identified at local level, given that there is an accompanying support process, as well as a need for accountability, the situation suggests that an analysis of the grants would provide useful learning.



The impact of Covid 19

In 2020 ‘the impact of Covid-19 and the limitations that were imposed on community organising and convening of spaces was massive. Despite adapting and using online spaces to connect activists, 2020 saw a reduction in spending and implementation of the workplan adopted at the start of the year’.¹⁶

The Covid 19 pandemic has forever changed the world. Within a few months in 2020 organisations had to find new ways to implement programmes and engage with constituencies. Centrally, the pandemic has required more and more engagements to be online. For ACT Ubumbano this has presented opportunities to include more people – often those who might not otherwise have attended engagements. On the other hand it is widely acknowledged that virtual fatigue is a real phenomenon and ACT Ubumbano might ‘need to explore other ways to have these important conversations. ‘Community organising and mobilising is a challenge when there can be no physical connections with activists and community workers.’¹⁷

However, it was clear that ACT Ubumbano’s efforts to stay connected were fruitful: ‘They have not lost the momentum despite COVID-19. Even when we haven’t met in person, the support continues to be felt and seen’. ‘The move to online reflection spaces has drawn a wide range of participants who otherwise would not be reached.’¹⁸ For example, a greater number of faith leaders were able to participate in various conversations.

ACT Ubumbano has also supported a range of partner work that has arisen out of the challenges and conditions of the pandemic, some of this emerging from webinars¹⁹ hosted by the EJM and ESSET, and others from learning hub engagements.

However, continuously working under the conditions imposed by the pandemic has taken its toll in a number of ways. Networks and social cohesion enabled by in person meetings continues to be disrupted. Partners and activists increasingly report a higher incidence of mental health issues – as is the case in society more broadly – and the downsides of online working are still being uncovered. The science tells us that southern countries will be living with ongoing negative effects of the mutating virus for a long while, which indicates that ACT Ubumbano will have to continuously look for creative ways to engage and support its partners.

¹⁶ E3 Narrative Report Dec 2020

¹⁷ E3 Narrative Report Dec 2020

¹⁸ E3 Narrative Report December 2020

¹⁹ These covered the informal economy, the care economy, gendered impacts of Covid 19, and food security

Efficiency

Efficiency: A measure of how economically resources or inputs are converted to results

This evaluation found that ACT Ubumbano is relatively efficient in terms of the way it uses resources in the implementation of its mandate. Because the organisation is relatively young, and because it has recently been constituted formally as an NPO, systems and processes, as well as strategic and optimal use of resources are still to be refined and structured in the best possible way to facilitate operations. ACT Ubumbano is clearly a learning organisation, and it is expected that these processes will be dynamic, and based on lessons learned along the way. The ambitions of ACT Ubumbano are currently larger than the secretariat's capacity, and it will be important to ensure that there is sufficient support to enable the senior staff to work at the appropriate level.

Formal status and documents

ACT Ubumbano is now registered as an NPO in South Africa. It has moved out from under the auspices of the CLP as the fiscal host to run its own affairs. There appear to be different feelings about what this means: there is some concern that the original purpose as a convening platform might begin to be lost; in other cases the feeling that this is a natural progression that will enable ACT Ubumbano to work practically to support network members. It was stated very strongly that ACT Ubumbano should never compete for funds from the aid pool that its network members access, and this appears to be a key commitment within ACT Ubumbano governance and management structures.

Does ACT Ubumbano have relevant steering documents in place to facilitate effective working towards desired results? ACT Ubumbano has a constitution that was signed by the first board (past advisory committee). The constitution sets out the organisation's purpose and objectives. They completed their mandate which was to set up a new board. The new board's role and functions include ultimate oversight and fiduciary responsibility, but the constitution does not set out the specific skills it needs to reside in the members. It is a board of activists, and members see their role as providing guidance in terms of identifying priority struggles and 'connecting the dots across the range of struggles'. In the absence of specific guidance for the Board in the constitution,, particularly guidance around governance, conflicts of interest, and the role of oversight committees, it might be useful to consider a Board Charter or Board Terms Of Reference. The Board has a finance committee which provides fiduciary oversight. It would be important in this coming period for the Board to identify key oversight committees that would support overall smooth governance and alignment with founding principles and mandate: some examples might be Programming or Grantmaking.

There are also other documents that set out ACT Ubumbano's operational approach and methodologies. As indicated above these present objectives and approaches in a range of ways, but all reflect a common core underpinning ideology.

Regional footprint

What is the regional footprint of ACT Ubumbano? Is there a strategy to develop the regional approach and relate to SADC? ACT Ubumbano works across Southern Africa. Its presence is primarily in South Africa with limited presence in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia. The de facto concentration of ACT Ubumbano partners is in South Africa, with quite a heavy focus in KZN (the constitution stipulates 85% SA focus). Within South Africa there is a definite slant in presence with a high concentration of partners and linked activists from KwaZulu Natal province – probably due in part to the fact that this is where ACT Ubumbano's original hosting organisation, Church Land Programme, is based. The expansion into Zimbabwe and Mozambique has been via activists and organisations within the ACT Alliance as well as the faith-based community.

The interviews revealed slightly confused messages about whether and how to look at the region. On the one hand, there is a strong focus on the need to respond to emergent struggles wherever they may be. On the other

hand, some people felt it was important to spread the small grants over a wider geographical area. The focus on responding to community level struggles and enabling and allowing community voice means that the organisation does not have ambitions to directly engage with or influence national or regional structures such as SADC – support might be provided if consolidated community voices wish to do this in the future. However, the intention appears to be that regional issues will be brought on board but ‘that depends on who is around the table’. One approach might be through regional organisations or movements as opposed to trying to link with a representative sample of organisations from across the region.

Secretariat structure, mandate and capacity

Does the Secretariat work in alignment with its mandate? Does it have relevant capacity, experience and competence? The Secretariat appears to be working very well within the prescripts of ACT Ubumbano’s mandate and founding principles. It comprises three staff and an external financial manager. This evaluation considered the work programme, the particular approach to solidarity work and the kind of expertise and time this might require, against the staff complement. The three staff appear to be extremely able with skills commensurate with their roles, and very committed and passionate about ACT Ubumbano’s solidarity mandate. This evaluation found that there were some issues that were immediately apparent in each of the key posts.

The Coordinator holds the role of overall programme and administration management. With the formalisation of ACT Ubumbano as an NPO, this role also includes Human Resources and compliance management. The coordination role is key to ACT Ubumbano’s strategic positioning and the implementation of the See-Judge-Act approach across the programme elements. This role also requires playing a leadership and guidance role in dialogues and convening. In keeping with ACT Ubumbano’s commitment to continuously engaging with the nature of solidarity and the question of how to do power differently, this role requires focus, reflection and visioning. It is not compatible with transactional administration.

The Programme Officer was employed specifically to focus on gender, but the role has expanded and she now covers all three strategic pillars. The Programme Officer’s gender role established a particular volume and approach to the work. Her skills are gender focused enabling process facilitation, expert advice to network partners, coordination and leading gender-focused initiatives and engaging in gender-focused forums at local, national and international levels. This, together with the Faith2Action funding means that this pillar has been very visible over the period. The benefits are that there are definite results evident and ACT Ubumbano is recognised as a resource and source of expertise in the faith/gender nexus. The other pillars are less visible and there is not the expertise, time or confidence within ACT Ubumbano to be able to provide the same service. Enabling the three pillars within the ACT Ubumbano solidarity approach requires considerable time and energy to be given to reflection and time-heavy stakeholder engagement. It seems unrealistic for one person to have equal headspace for all three pillars.

Administration and logistics is a 60%-time post and this has also expanded – initial functions were to support the Solidarity Hub, this expanded to include support to the Faith2Action gender work, and now the role also covers small grant management. This work appears to be well managed within the time currently. However, if the grant-making programme expands it may be necessary to consider this as a separate role with a built in support function to support grantees.

While people appreciated that the staff is a team that is well placed in their passion and capabilities, some noted that it was difficult for them to be everything to everyone with the limited time and resources

ACT Ubumbano does not provide direct support to partners in terms of programming, advocacy and institutional funding/ fundraising as asked in the evaluation questions – however, staff occasionally may provide advice on these issues, including where possible connecting people and organisations. ACT Ubumbano has engaged in funding proposal consortium partnerships with a few partners such as Benchmarks and ZIMCODD.

Reporting to stakeholders

How is ACT Ubumbano reporting results to its stakeholders? This evaluation considered documents submitted as part of standard reporting to donors, as well as information from key informants.

Reports to the donors talk directly to the objectives and indicators in the funding agreements. These reports reflect the spread of work undertaken by the staff and partners, and it appears that a good percentage of planned activities and interventions took place. The narratives build on the work reported in 2018. The specific challenges that emerged as a result of Covid 19 in 2020 are clearly articulated and reflect specific actions taken to address the changed conditions. Financial reporting is much less detailed – it shows budget, expenditure and variance against the headline line items, with very little detail below this. The Audited statements also do not provide Expenditure details, and this would be a useful addition to facilitate informed oversight.

Detailed reporting and accountability processes are not yet fully in place. The Board should have sight of and input into reports before these are submitted to donors. There was some concern about the detail and level of transparency around financial reporting. The framework for reporting back to partner organisations was not mentioned, but the Board should ideally also have input into how and when this takes place in the interests of accountability, but also in terms of strategic focus and goals. These issues could be addressed to ensure clarity and transparent requirements via a Board/Board Committee Charter or Terms of Reference.

Opinions varied but in general it appears there is little formal or purposive reporting on results to partner organisations/network members. The perception was that there was far greater accountability to the E3 donors.

Regarding small grant recipients, It is too early to tell. The initial process described includes engagement by staff which is focused on supporting and learning. Reporting and accountability at this level is from grantees to ACT Ubumbano, and from there on upwards to donors. This suggests that it is necessary to discuss what kinds of information would be useful to grantees – that would not overwhelm but that might empower and help to locate their struggles within a wider context.

Use of resources

How have resources been used? Were activities implemented cost-efficient? This evaluation found that resources appear to have been used relatively effectively, and definitely for the purposes intended, although a detailed cost effectiveness analysis was not done given the time constraints and the extent of information accessed. 2019 and 2020 saw some underspending and some money reverted to donors – mostly attributable to funds not spent on Solidarity Hub travel and accommodation in 2020. This did not compromise effectiveness, as seven virtual learning hubs were held, reaching a similar number of people as was targeted for a Solidarity Hub, at greatly reduced cost.

A review of the organisational budget indicated that salaries are one of the largest expenditure items. This is understandable as the bulk of work in ACT Ubumbano is managing processes and convening spaces.

The issue of use of consultants was raised in a number of interviews, with a concern that this expense might be better allocated to more staff who could fulfil the functions currently purchased. Over the period 18 consultants have been used for services in finance, IT and web presence support, writing and design of publications, impact research, training and facilitation of convening processes, and taking minutes/transcribing. Consultants used are equally divided between men and women, and these services are used for facilitation and training, documentation, writing and administrative functions. Some consultant use is definitely cost effective in terms of not carrying overheads costs, and being able to buy in very targeted expertise. Facilitation of reflection processes particularly, could more often be the responsibility of staff rather than consultants – except where it is critical that staff are part of the reflection and dialogue processes.

Given the small staff it is understandable that a range of services are outsourced – such as IT and finance. Facilitation is often better done by external providers as this enables staff to participate in and contribute substance to engagement processes. However, there are a range of activities that constitute part of ACT Ubumbano's core work, and there might be an argument to bring this in-house in order to build institutional

expertise. The research function is labour intensive and specialised – in particular the process of active reflection utilising the See Judge Act methodology is a lot of the work done, which suggests that this function might better be placed in-house and include a component of managing a smaller set of external providers. In addition, MEL, documentation, learning, some internal research and writing, managing external research and writing, publications management – are all big parts of ACT Ubumbano work – internal expertise as well as institutional memory should be built.

Monitoring of achievements

Were project indicators and objectives achieved / within agreed timeframes? As indicated above under reporting, it appears that most of ACT Ubumbano’s indicators and objectives – as required in funding agreements – have been achieved, and where these were not achieved, reasonable explanations were provided. ACT Ubumbano appears to monitor outputs and outcomes and progress per donor requirement rather than comprehensively for the organisation. This monitoring is done via feedback and update sessions with partner organisations where progress against agreed plans is discussed. These outputs are also reported to the Board, which considers the achievements against the workplan.

Some initial work on an organisational ACT Ubumbano Monitoring and Evaluation framework was done over the 2019/20 period but there was no clarity about where this process was at the time of this evaluation. Staff acknowledged that tracking across all activities was not done systematically.

Given the responsive nature of much of ACT Ubumbano’s work, and its role as a convenor and a connector, monitoring and measuring results will be a difficult task. However, it is a critically important one. Aggregating a big picture of ACT Ubumbano’s achievements across the regions, across the strategic pillars, and understanding the role of partner organisations is important intelligence for future planning, but is also important in terms of demonstrating the efficacy of the ACT Ubumbano model of solidarity. Two parallel processes are taking place currently: one where the evolution of the ACT Ubumbano methodology of solidarity is being documented; an outcomes harvesting project will highlight the changes experienced as a result of ACT Ubumbano’s work. The latter is particularly important to provide a rationale for future support to both ACT Ubumbano and to its partner organisations. However, to understand its effectiveness and impact, ACT Ubumbano needs to explore a range of ways to monitor the outcomes described in the theory of change – this will be difficult, but it will help to provide evidence of the extent to which ACT Ubumbano’s approaches are effective over time.

Impact

Impact: Positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

This evaluation found that ACT Ubumbano has had varying degrees of direct and indirect impact within the spaces where it engages. In particular, it has sparked ongoing thinking about gender issues within the faith-based community. It has enabled community-based initiatives through its small grants, and provides ongoing spaces for dialogue and reflection for a range of organisations. It also begins to give substance to the E3 donors’ ambitions to deal differently with north/south power relations. ACT Ubumbano has also constructively facilitated conversations around power and power dynamics. While ACT Ubumbano seeks to remain responsive to emergent struggles and community voices and does not want to lead in this area, the organisation – through its actions – plays a leadership role in enabling reflective practice.

Facilitating change and achieving results

Has the platform enabled/facilitated/helped partner organisations/ individuals achieve the change their work aims to achieve? What are the most important results of the organisation? ACT Ubumbano is a relatively new organisation that is testing new ways of working and engaging in solidarity in an effort to effect change. Change

takes time, but the reflective space ACT Ubumbano has offered has ‘brought clarity to practitioners on the one side and communities on the other...surely this must lead to impact?’. ACT Ubumbano’s approach is much more about process and reflection, rather than direct engagement with other organisations’ programme of action.

There is good evidence of how ACT Ubumbano convenings have connected individuals with other activists, individuals and organisations. Results from these connections have included increased own learning and awareness, improved ability to connect with other like-minded people or those involved in similar struggles, increased interest in publicising stories of local struggles and issues, improved ability to communicate issues and influence or lobby decision makers. ACT Ubumbano spaces were described as making communities braver to speak about their situations in the knowledge that their issues would be heard, and that attempts would be made to connect them directly to assistance. It was asserted that the various scoping and convening processes had revealed and connected with more marginalised or difficult to reach communities – specific evidence was not provided. However, ACT Ubumbano acknowledges slow uptake of opportunities for connecting work between organisations at local level: ‘Even though there has been a steady increase in local level actions, there is still very slow uptake of opportunity for more connecting work between organisations, particularly at directly local level. This is probably down to competing work interests, the need to survive and trust issues between partners’.²⁰

The gender programme revealed many examples of how ACT Ubumbano has contributed to change. ACT Ubumbano is viewed as a key partner in sharing lived experiences of people and has been invited to participate in key sessions to support decision making processes. In one example, ACT Ubumbano – through its partnership with Faith2Action network – ‘has informed German government officials about the role of religion in advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights’.²¹ Other examples include: The Blantyre Synod is reviewing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights policy; in Malawi a church has changed its policy on how to work with the LGBTQI+ community; ACT Ubumbano is providing support to ACT Alliance organisations in the region to develop gender policies.

The meeting between the LGBTQI+ community and faith leaders from across the SADC region appears to have had lasting impact. Some examples of this include that individuals ‘learned the language to use around gender identity’, and while it was described as a space of immense discomfort, it was characterised by growing understanding and learning and emerging ideas of how to address these issues in congregations. There were different opinions about the facilitators – some thought that they held the safe space well, and others that they did not have a sufficiently clear understanding of gender.

Where ACT Ubumbano has linked directly to specific outcomes is through the small grants programme, which targets activities which have an identified outcome or result. It was recognised that the ACT Ubumbano’s responsive approach to emergent struggles created some tension with the need to think strategically about how to achieve change or impact in the different thematic areas. However, this was also regarded as a productive tension that deepened the thinking around the nature of solidarity. Despite this very positive view, there is a question around how a relatively reactive approach can address key elements of systemic injustice. It was argued that social justice work needs the scale and volume offered by social justice movements and mobilisation, and that there is work to be done in connecting movements and players broadly – this suggests that work has to focus both on the macro (movements) and the micro (grants) levels.

Impact on power dynamics

How are emerging understandings of power relations addressed and the learnings incorporated into ongoing support, learning and engagement activities? Have these emergent views enabled constituencies to better advocate and amplify their voices around key issues of concern? One of the key issues driving ACT Ubumbano work is the need to engage with structural inequality and power relations. ACT Ubumbano’s work addresses this

²⁰ E3 Narrative Report Dec 2020

²¹ E3 Narrative Report Dec 2020

at a range of levels: it is a question in all of the convening and learning events; it is part of the dialogue with donors; it is a concern in relation to how the organisation relates to recipients of small grants.

The three main ACT Ubumbano donors are already engaged in their own exploration of the north/south power imbalance, and this has enabled fruitful conversations with their Southern African partner. This has involved frank discussions about the approach to funding and the roles, responsibilities and mutual expectations between the parties. In particular, the discussion has focused on how some elements of northern funding approaches do not take account of realities on the ground. ACT Ubumbano seems very committed to pursuing this dialogue to the extent that it will be unlikely to engage with 'donors who are willing to let go of that power... who want to dictate'.

Partners are clearly alive to the questions of power imbalances and how this impacts the ability of the voice of grassroots people to be heard – they confirmed that ACT Ubumbano convenings have been important spaces for reflection on this as well as on how to improve and better support local struggles.

ACT Ubumbano does have to contend with the fact that it holds a particular positional power – as a grant-maker, as a convenor, as a connector, as a team of skilled individuals. This issue is part of an ongoing internal conversation. For example, in March in a facilitated session, the team reflected on the nature of power and the challenges inherent in becoming a grant-maker: 'How do we make it so that the desire to be more engaging is not blocked by the pressures to be efficient'.²² Discussions have also considered how the organisation might be able to seek qualitative impact through the grants in the face of huge need across a wide range of struggles. This reflects the difficult dynamic of the space ACT Ubumbano has chosen – to support community based action and voice, to be mindful that NGOs might not represent these voices completely or accurately, and to resist the temptation to engage in national or regional spaces on behalf of communities. Does this leave ACT Ubumbano entirely in the responsive or reactive space? How does it navigate the balance between leading from behind and staying true to honouring authentic community voice.

Sustainability

Sustainability: The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits.

This evaluation found that ACT Ubumbano's convenings and dialogues have contributed to new learning and thinking among partners and that participants go on to consider how they implement solidarity actions. While there is a relatively good sense of what works in terms of ACT Ubumbano's approach, there are some ACT Ubumbano processes or projects (such as the VoiceApp) that need further work to improve reach and ongoing benefit to users. There is also work to be done around how direct support processes take recipient groups a step forward in their struggles.

Defining sustainability

Does ACT Ubumbano contribute to sustainable results relevant to its members? The best measure of sustainability for ACT Ubumbano would be to understand the extent to which it has contributed to its partner organisations and activists in their struggles towards the change that is described in the Theory of Change. This means that part of the organisation's ongoing learning and knowledge production, monitoring of key outcomes and results across its work is necessary to build a comprehensive picture of effect. It is clear that partners and activists currently do view ACT Ubumbano as somewhere where solidarity support of various kinds is available. This relative success brings its own risks and difficulties. The organisation remains committed to creating spaces for focused reflection on how to best stand in solidarity with local struggles. On the other hand there was a feeling that some areas of work might need more focused strategic programming – in particular in relation to

²² Reflection note March 2021

making connections between organisations/struggles in different areas, or possibly identifying geographic areas of focus in particular thematic areas. 'Anecdotal feedback on the monthly newsletters indicates that organisations and activists find referrals to new sources of resources, campaigns, opportunities a useful aid in their work. This needs to be documented more closely'.²³ Certainly this is necessary if ACT Ubumbano is to understand whether, where and how its various methodologies are making a difference. In addition to providing convening and learning spaces, it might be worth considering establishing a mentorship programme, where more experienced activists are available to younger people for advice, discussions and sharing of historical experience – this could be run relatively informally.

Another issue around sustainability is the ability of partner activists and organisations to continue their work. For organisations, funding is likely to shrink further in the future as the economic impacts of Covid-19 continue to be felt. Activists are often unemployed, and their focus can quickly shift to basic survival needs. These individuals – particularly those from very remote or marginal areas – may struggle to access sufficient resources such as data or transport to facilitate the most basic organising and mobilising. They may also be at risk from those who oppose their ideas, gender identity or activities.

To what extent is ACT Ubumbano financially sustainable? As long as there are donors who share the worldview that north/south power imbalances need to be addressed, it is likely that ACT Ubumbano will be able to continue with its work, as there are many individuals who share ACT Ubumbano's world view.

So what then?

There were some respondents who raised the question about what happened after ACT Ubumbano's engagements and convenings – that is 'What happens next? What then? What is the next level?' There is an argument that ACT Ubumbano processes are not meant to have a product, that the organisation is exploring new ways of standing in solidarity, and that this is an evolving space. The idea is to continue to respond to needs as they arise, and to initiate conversations – organisations, activists and communities can then continue their work as they see fit. However, in this there is the danger of remaining in a purely reactive space. This argument is not clear to some stakeholders and partners and needs to be part of ongoing dialogues. Some of the responsibility of convening reflective processes must be to prompt questions that help participants frame more effective actions going forward. This relates to the difficult dynamic of ACT Ubumbano as convenor but also as leader based on its growing body of knowledge and 'birds eye view' of struggles across a range of areas.

This same argument might be made in relation to the small grant support – these interventions have a support component, and does this lead those supported to ask: 'What can/should we do next – what is the next step or next level in our struggle?'

In relation to the dialogues and engagements in the gender programme – Faith2Action programme, for example, – what happens after the intervention? How does ACT Ubumbano enable or support participants to build on what they have learned – or at very least ensure that participants have clearly identified next steps or actions where they apply the learnings. ACT Ubumbano stressed that there is a tension between holding constructive critical self-reflection spaces – which may not immediately result in action – and the need to demonstrate progress. It is clear, however, that these spaces aim to enable participants to consider past actions and approaches, with a view to understanding what might work more effectively in future. There was good evidence from the interviews that partner organisations were doing this, and the connections made between activists show that the learning hubs, for example, have sparked connections and action. In this way ACT Ubumbano is using these spaces to create the means by which activists and organisations can question or prod the 'system' and its institutions of power and oppression in a targeted way. What was not clear what how purposive this element of the convenings has been. A next questions/next actions element would provide the framework for how ACT Ubumbano tracks and measures its impact – both in terms of the depth and breadth of learning and

²³ E3 Narrative Report Dec 2020

number of activists /organisations engaged, as well as understanding how ACT Ubumbano interventions spur successful struggle actions.

Conclusions

What were the major factors influencing the (non) achievement of the objectives? ACT Ubumbano appears to have worked hard to implement its work within the spirit of the Kopanong principles. It seeks in all actions and engagements to explore how solidarity with local struggles is best undertaken. In short, there is a good congruence of ideology and action – the integrity of the ACT Ubumbano approach comes through in the way it interacts with stakeholders. There is consistent application of the convening approach and reflection spaces which are recognised as a necessary and very useful part of solidarity action. There is perhaps less focus about what happens as a result of the discussions. We know that the reflective process, the solidarity hubs and the learning hubs have resulted in further action by some people – this remains anecdotal. A useful learning exercise would be to understand how much interventions contribute to improved practice, incremental or substantive change, and what kinds of follow up supportive action may be needed. Are there changed approaches or ways of working, are new avenues for solidarity explored, are new challenges made, are connections between struggles increased, is the voice of struggle amplified and where? This would emphasise process rather than event.

ACT Ubumbano resonates with the fact that faith is a way of life with most South Africans, where it is infused deeply with local culture and tradition. This means faith leaders have huge reach – far beyond any activists: activists can support faith leaders but the faith leaders are the lever because of the positional power and social capital they hold – their influence is huge – this is addressing systemic issues ie the pillars of institutionalised religion and the way this has been institutionalised in society into structures of oppression

ACT Ubumbano is a new organisation and it is trying out a range of approaches based on a clear and thoughtful ideological position. It is constrained by relatively limited resources, and from 2020 onwards, by the conditions and limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. ACT Ubumbano will always have to deal with the tension between leading and responding in solidarity, and the tension between responsiveness and impact. While there are a range of issues that this evaluation has identified as needing attention, all of these have emerged as part of the overall approach that includes innovation and a considerable appetite for risk. This evaluation considers, therefore, that the issues identified are part of ACT Ubumbano’s broader learning journey.

Recommendations

Improving governance

Effective governance is greatly enhanced if the organisation has a clear set of guidelines in place that spell out the expected roles, responsibilities, limits and parameters of governing structures and committees and the skills for those tasked in these roles. The following recommendations would provide this guiding framework, and enable both incumbents and those new to oversight responsibilities to function effectively.

- **A board charter** could specify the roles, responsibilities, and time and critical skills requirements for Board members.
- This should be supported initially by a process to **identify critical board competencies** among incumbent members, as well as a frank discussion about what kinds of people would be best suited in future so that these can be sought, to build the board group that is best suited to the organisation. Key competencies that the Board should have include
 - Vision & Strategy –people who can envision the kind of future ACT Ubumbano seeks
 - Finance
 - People management and learning
 - Thematic area expertise

- **Board functioning training** might be useful – this would best be held shortly after new members are elected – together with a conversation about how these roles and functions should be handled for an organisation like ACT Ubumbano.
- **Identification of key Board sub committees** which can provide focused support and advice to staff. Some sub committees that might be useful: Solidarity; Intersectionality.

The following issues were raised for consideration during interviews:

- There is room for a feedback structure to partners
- Should there be a Board member who specifically represents partner interests?

Strategy consolidation

There are a range of ways in which ACT Ubumbano’s strategic focus could be improved in support of its founding principles.

- Use the **Theory of Change as a framework for strategic direction**, and align all other strategic documents with the TOC.
- Using the TOC as a starting point, **hold a consultative process to develop a medium-term strategy**. This could include consultations with specific interest groups, consultation on outcomes with representatives, consolidation of ideas. The strategy would include goals, pillars, programme areas, and methodologies. This process should help to resolve partners expectations versus what ACT Ubumbano is able to deliver practically. For example, the strategy should provide guidance on
 - A broad **stakeholder map** – who might be strategic partners in addition to existing network partners
 - What ACT Ubumbano’s **unique offering** is in the solidarity space – what does it offer that is different from other organisations, how does it contribute to movement building. Also importantly, is ACT Ubumbano intending to work equally across the three pillars – this has staffing implications.
 - How solidarity work **gets to the most marginalised**, balancing possible programmes/ interventions around root causes of inequality with emergent struggles needing support – and how to manage expectations
 - Identify **strategic levers** that enable ACT Ubumbano’s work: some examples include faith leaders, traditional leaders, traditional healers – their influence is broad and deeply rooted in local communities and culture. ACT Ubumbano to be responsible for engagements and consultations at these levels.
- Recognising that ACT Ubumbano has a leadership role, what are the specific leadership elements (approaches and individual attributes) that will contribute to ACT Ubumbano’s goal? This needs to be tested with activists, partners and their community constituencies. Some elements to offer could include:
 - Using the documenting and learning component more strategically: provide the broader knowledge base and big picture of struggle against which communities can view their own struggles.
 - Purposive processes of capacity enhancement
 - The connector role
 - Community mobilisation/organisation – before it is lost, encouraging engagements between older activists and young people to share the ‘how to’ experience
- Small grants seem likely to continue as an element of ACT Ubumbano programming. The approach for small grants needs to be incorporated into the strategy. In particular, the following questions are relevant:
 - how do these grants link to ACT Ubumbano’s other programming work,
 - what are the filtering mechanisms and rationale for support.

Programme focus

It is envisaged that the strategy development process would identify any specific changes needed to ACT Ubumbano's programme focus. However, based on the evidence collected, this evaluation can suggest some areas that require attention:

- ACT Ubumbano must **make a strategic decision whether it wants to build the climate and economic justice pillars** – this will determine whether specific funding is pursued to support this work. Options to deepen the climate and economic justice pillars might be
 - focused programme officers, either at senior or more junior level; or
 - buying in this expertise through MOUs with partners who have this expertise in-house.
- ACT Ubumbano could be **convening dialogues around the question 'what does intersectional solidarity look like?'** Driving intersectionality may provide opportunities to amplify voices and enable communities to hold authorities to account on numerous fronts.
- The focused convenings with faith leaders have been successful. Similar focused **engagements with traditional leaders and traditional healers** could harness the huge influence these people wield
- Proactive safety and security – what does solidarity look like in situations of instability and risk?
- The learning hubs that convened smaller groups proved to be useful learning and connection points for participants. The **learning hub method should be continued** alongside the larger Solidarity Hub gatherings.
- ACT Ubumbano partners include activists from a wide range of backgrounds and age groups. ACT Ubumbano has an important role to play in building the next generation of activists. This could be done more consciously by **establishing a mentorship programme**, where more experienced activists are available to younger people for advice, discussions and sharing of historical experience – this could be run relatively informally.
- All signs point to Covid-19 being part of daily life for a long time to come. As part of the support to activists, consider **creating space for conversations about using indigenous knowledge for healing and managing in the pandemic.**

Structure and people

ACT Ubumbano is a very small organisation that has recently adopted the formal structure of an NPO. It is important to strike a balance between formal rules and flexible agile working. This means it is necessary to have a minimum set of simple policies which enable effective functioning, but do not tie staff into time-consuming compliance requirements. The following are a set of recommendations that aim to help this structuring:

- **Align job titles** with the constitution
- Currently the staff have clear agreement about their roles and functions. However, if any more staff come on board it will be necessary to ensure that ACT Ubumbano has a set of **job or role profiles**
- It would be useful to institute a simple **HR policy** that
 - specifies conditions of employment
 - complies with the Basic Conditions of Employment
 - explains organisational decisions regarding staff
 - includes reference to succession planning
- In any organisation, its form should be based on its strategy and the functions that delivery of this strategy requires. In line with ACT Ubumbano's current status and purpose, it will be important to determine how to have capacity for
 - General administration
 - Board management/board secretary function
 - Knowledge management and learning
 - Facilitation capacity
 - Grant management

- Ensure that staff are working at the right level in terms of their job responsibilities and remuneration. For example, reflection and critical thinking is part of the organisational purpose which means that senior staff should focus in these areas rather than general admin tasks.
- In line with strategic decisions about relative levels of focus across the three pillars, ensure that there is sufficient staff capacity for this. Some options to deepen climate/economic justice pillars could be:
 - focused programme officers, senior/mid-level;
 - buy in from partners who have this expertise in-house.

VoiceApp

The VoiceApp project has gained some traction, but is currently not well supported. It is recommended that the potential and strategy for this project is sharpened. For example:

- What is the overall strategy for this project? What is the aim short/medium/long term. How would this be achieved? Recognise that success involves both attitudes and behaviour change.
- Recognising that this project is process, rather than event based:
 - What skills/capacity inside ACT Ubumbano would be needed to build network of support for contributors and group administrators
 - What skills/capacity needed in ACT Ubumbano for coordination, mobilising support networks, expanding the platform, leveraging partners to extend the platform
 - How to build culture and confidence around writing communicating stories with a larger purpose
 - What skills/capacity is needed in partners to be able to provide this kind of support process.

Knowledge management

As a learning organisation, ACT Ubumbano must focus on how it gathers, processes and disseminates knowledge so that it supports its main purpose. Some elements that might be necessary include:

- Understand what research/knowledge/information partners/activists need to support community struggles
- There are opportunities for more grassroots coordination, learning and solidarity through ACT Ubumbano activities eg consider bringing together grant recipients in solidarity/learning reflection events.

Monitoring results

A robust monitoring system would provide evidence of ACT Ubumbano's contribution to efforts of local organisations to effect change. It would also track the kinds of support that is most useful to local organisations and activists, donor partners and other key stakeholders. Some initial recommendations are:

- **Use the TOC as the framework for ACT Ubumbano monitoring.**
- Ensure that indicators and methodologies seek to aggregate achievements – clearly articulate contribution and attribution in describing how outputs and outcomes show progress towards the desired change statement in the TOC.
- Look for clear ways to record and understand what happens as a result of
 - Reflective spaces,
 - Solidarity and learning hubs,
 - Partner events and trainings,
 - Other training of activists, organisations,
 - North/south connections
 - Attempts to build intersectional solidarity

- Analyse the small grants and their outcomes and determine what this suggests for further action/future support/other solidarity actions. ie, HOW do grants RESONATE between the voices that are emerging and create a richer and louder sound? some of the questions that might be posed would be
 - What needs or demands did the grants cover?
 - What similarities or differences were there across the focus, support needs, capacity of grants/grantees?
 - What happened as a result of the activities supported?
 - Were there opportunities to connect struggles, identify intersectional connections, amplify local voices how/ where to?

Finance

While a detailed cost benefit exercise was not conducted for this evaluation, there are some areas of financial practice that might be improved. Some suggestions are:

- Do a cost benefit analysis for administration and basic bookkeeping functions against the consultancy level cost currently being incurred.
- Review the extent of consultant use for facilitation and ensure that participants provide anonymous evaluations of facilitators used to ensure that facilitators do not get in the way of the process. It is always important to consider when external facilitation is a 'must have' or a 'nice to have' for any process. In this area:
 - Explore facilitation by people from partner orgs – possibly pay a fee to the org (it would be less than an external consultant) – this could become part of the partner's work also builds their skills sets. Helps the network to benefit from resources (eg use of IAM to facilitate LGBT process, Methodist church to facilitate faith discussions)
 - Do not use consultants to facilitate Board meetings – this is the role of board chair
- A more detailed expenditure report in the Audited Financial Statements would ensure greater financial transparency, and enable the Board finance committee to make informed decisions
- Within the overall strategy process, consider identifying fundraising priorities, including those that might to support grant-making.

Annex

Documents reviewed

1. ACT Ubumbano Constitution
2. ACT Ubumbano Draft Finance Manual
3. ACT Ubumbano Report to E# Donors December 2020
4. ACT Ubumbano Report to BftW December 2018
5. Performance Review Policy 2019
6. Workplan 2020 Covid Revisions
7. ACT Ubumbano Project Proposal CLP 2019-2022
8. CA-CLP ACT Ubumbano Funding Agreement 2019
9. CoS Funding Agreement 2019
10. BftW Funding Agreement 2019
11. 2020 Budget ACT CoS
12. ACT Ubumbano 2019 Financial Statements
13. ACT Ubumbano 2020 Financial Statements
14. Budget 2019-2022 CLP
15. Budget 2021
16. Financial Report End Dec 2020 – against COVID revised budget
17. ACT Alliance 2018 Sexual Harassment Final Report
18. ACT Ubumbano Extended Gender Task Team 2019
19. ACT Ubumbano to HBF Keeping the Faith Report 2020
20. Consolidated Report Gender and SRHR Activities 2017
21. F2A Because We Can Programme Report 2021
22. Gender and SRHR Concept Final
23. Sexual harassment Booklet
24. SRHR FBO Final Report 2019
25. 4 small grant proposals
26. Notes from the Reflection on ACT Alliance Pilot Process 2016
27. Inequality and the Struggle for Humanity in Southern Africa 2017
28. Kopanong Principles 2017
29. Status Update ACT Pilot Southern Africa 2017
30. Report on ACT Ubumbano Learning Event 2018
31. Scoping Study Report May 2018
32. Solidarity Hub Minutes March 2018
33. Participatory Evaluation Report February 2019
34. Action Points from Gender Platform
35. Annual Report 2020
36. ACT Ubumbano profile
37. Workplan detail and costing 2021
38. Grantmaking Reflection Debriefing March 2021
39. Various ACT Ubumbano Newsletters

People interviewed

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. Roger Domingo | SPP |
| 2. Daniela Gennrich | WWSOSA |
| 3. Dudu Radebe | CREATE |
| 4. Mathias Brucker | F2A |
| 5. Alvin R. Anthony | evaluator 2019 |

6.	Graham Philpott	CLP
7.	Tomas Queface	Consultant
8.	Francesca de Gasparis	SAFCEI
9.	Melanie Judge	Consultant
10.	Ashmeer Joseph	ELCSA
11.	Mandla Hadebe	EJN
12.	Allan Moolman	Consultant
13.	Michael Malinga	Activist
14.	Mmabore Mogashoa	Limpopo
15.	Sostina Takure	ACT Zimbabwe
16.	Zainab Adams	SAFCEI
17.	Thuli Mjwara	IAM
18.	Njabulo Togane	Youth Activist
19.	Veronica Sigamoney	Consultant
20.	Josette Cole	Consultant