Conducting Participatory Action Research with Apartheid Survivors

Lessons from 'Addressing Socioeconomic Drivers of Violence in Khulumani Communities'

....

Yanelisa Sishuba, Sindiswa Nunu, Nompumelelo Njana, Agnes Ngxukuma, Brian Mphahlele and Jasmina Brankovic

....

Khulumani Support Group W. Cape

CSVR
Centre for the Study of
Violence and Reconciliation

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the Khulumani Support Group members who participated in the project and provided feedback and evaluations during activities, and the staff members of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation who provided input and support. We are grateful to the trainers and facilitators on the project: Christopher Colvin, the Community Development Resource Association and Innovation Shack.

Prelude

In 2015–2016, the apartheid survivors' organisation Khulumani Support Group in the Western Cape (KSGWC) and its partner the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) set out to explore new ways for a victims' group and a nongovernmental organisation to work together on addressing socioeconomic exclusion in the context of political transition. Seeking to deepen their levels of collaboration, to foreground the knowledge and solutions of KSGWC members and to leave KSGWC with concrete outcomes beyond a research publication, the partners decided to use the participatory action research methodology in studying KSGWC members' understandings of how inequality and poverty drive violence in post-apartheid South Africa. They found that social transformation in the present requires redress for abuses in the past. This report outlines the process of designing and implementing the project, from project development and fundraising, to data collection and collaborative writing up of research findings, and finally to strategic planning, tailored trainings and KSGWC's development of a five-year plan and a new advocacy project. It reflects on the challenges and benefits of the participatory approach and offers some 'lessons learnt' for practitioners designing a similar project, particularly when working with members of social movements and victims' groups on complex and sensitive topics.

Introduction

From mid-2015 to the end of 2016, members of the Western Cape branch of Khulumani Support Group (KSGWC) and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) undertook a participatory action research project. They sought to deepen the levels of collaboration in their partnership, and thereby to explore possibilities for a victims' group and a nongovernmental organisation to work in new ways to address socioeconomic inequality and violence in the context of political transition. This report chronicles the process of deciding to partner on the project, the motivations and activities involved, and some lessons learnt.

KSGWC was established in 2000 as a branch of Khulumani Support Group, a membership-based organisation and social movement formed to support apartheid victims in engaging with the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). For nearly two decades, KSGWC has advocated for individual, state and corporate accountability, truth recovery and reparations for past abuses, while fostering self-empowerment, solidarity and healing among victims. CSVR, a multidisciplinary research organisation that seeks to understand and prevent violence, is a long-time partner of KSGWC and the national Khulumani Support Group in efforts to address the legacies of apartheid violations. Identifying widespread socioeconomic exclusion as a legacy of apartheid, and recognising the lack of acknowledgement given to apartheid survivors who enabled the transition to democracy yet continue to struggle with poverty and the violence it breeds in their communities, KSGWC and CSVR decided to partner in research on how KSGWC members understand and address socioeconomic drivers of violence. Aiming to foreground the knowledge and solutions of KSGWC members and to leave KSGWC with concrete outcomes beyond just a research publication, the partners opted to collaborate on every stage of the project by using the participatory action research methodology.[1]

As such, the project, titled 'Addressing Socioeconomic Drivers of Violence in Khulumani Communities,' had two components. One was research, with five KSGWC researchers working with a CSVR researcher on a qualitative study with KSGWC members in Cape Town.[2] The other was 'capacity building,' with the research findings informing a strategic planning process and a series of trainings that led to the development of a five-year plan for KSGWC and a fundraising proposal for a new advocacy project.

This report provides a description and analysis of the activities that made up the project, from project development and fundraising, to data collection and collaborative writing up of research findings, and finally to strategic planning, tailored trainings and KSGWC's development of a five-year plan and a new advocacy project. The report then outlines some lessons learnt through the participatory action research process, including, for example, on the risk of 'NGOisation,' the value of negotiating levels of participation, the utility of regular learning, monitoring and evaluation exercises, the benefits of tailored trainings over general trainings, and the importance of fair funding allocations and participant compensation.[3] These lessons may be of use to practitioners, scholars and others designing a similar project, particularly when working with members of social movements and victims' groups on complex and sensitive topics.

---

[1] See, e.g., Hilary Bradbury, ed., *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2015). For critical perspectives, see, Andrea Cornwall, ed., *The Participation Reader* (London: Zed Books, 2011).

[2] The research findings will be presented in a forthcoming publication.

[3] The report is based on a review of audio recordings and notes from all meetings, facilitator and trainer reflections and participant evaluations from 2013 through 2016.

Project Process and Activities

This section summarises the project activities in the order they occurred, including the motivations, challenges, unexpected developments and immediate lessons of the process.

Groundwork

The groundwork for the project began nearly two years before the project's official start. In mid-2013, the CSVR researcher held individual meetings with members of the national and Western Cape executive committees, proposing in broad terms that CSVR and KSGWC collaborate on a participatory research project on socioeconomic drivers of violence. Having previously participated largely in extractive research, the members said they were interested in the participatory aspects of the project — how it could build skills and knowledge in the organisation and contribute to empowerment — although one raised concerns about the project taking KSGWC in a new direction and not being sufficiently linked to its past activism. After internal discussions, the Western Cape executive provisionally agreed to the proposal and arranged to meet with the CSVR researcher in early 2014 to collaborate on conceptualising the project.

Ahead of this meeting, the CSVR researcher conducted individual interviews with the executive members, choosing a life history method so as to examine how the members understood apartheid-era and post-apartheid socioeconomic exclusion and violence, to demonstrate to the members through their own narratives the continuities between past and present exclusion and violence and their relevance to KSGWC's activism, and to identify a set of issues that could serve as the basis for deciding the focus of the new project. A secondary aim was to highlight the differences among the issues the interviewees identified in order to demonstrate the value of research to understanding KSGWC members' concerns and of using an evidence-based approach to activism. The 11 issues, which were written up as bullet points, helped structure the discussions around the focus and design of the project.

The CSVR researcher entered these discussions with the proposal that KSGWC be involved in conducting research and that CSVR not be involved in follow-ups to the project unless invited by KSGWC. The utility of research to a social movement such as KSGWC was not explicitly discussed in these early meetings, as the executive came with the assumption that research would be useful to KSGWC. Given Khulumani Support Group's innovative interventions and its prominence as the national survivors' group in a 'model' transitional justice context, the KSGWC executive had worked with many academic and practitioner researchers over the years. They noted that research raised the profile of institutions and individuals conducting it, and opened doors to funding and other resources.[4] They also noted that, in addition to building members' skills, research can be useful for developing more focused advocacy and direct interventions in communities where KSGWC has a significant presence, and discussed the possibility of sharing the research with these communities and the wider public through videos and short pieces in local newspapers.[5] The participatory action research methodology that the executive and the CSVR researcher eventually agreed to employ required that the research findings be the basis for a new agenda for KSGWC and for a project that KSGWC would implement independently, which itself demonstrated the practical uses of research.

---

[4] See, Zukiswa Puwana and Rita Kesselring, "Persistent Injuries, the Law and Politics: The South African Victims' Support Group Khulumani and Its Struggle for Redress," in *Advocating Transitional Justice in Africa: The Role of Civil Society*, ed. Jasmina Brankovic and Hugo van der Merwe (New York: Springer, forthcoming).

[5] Video making and writing were eventually identified as training topics in the project concept note.

Project Development

The KSGWC executive decided that, instead of the leadership choosing the research topics and the project activities, the participatory approach called for them to consult with the KSGWC membership in designing the project. The executive's fieldworker met with the area committees in Cape Town in 2014 to discuss the project and the participatory approach, and to consult with them on the content and activities, which members should participate in the project activities in order to maximise the benefit to KSGWC, and which members should be the five KSGWC researchers on the project. The executive also indicated that they telephonically consulted with the active area committees outside of Cape Town, namely in the towns of Worcester, Paarl and Beaufort West.

KSGWC agreed that the project should include representatives from every area committee in the province, with the understanding that these representatives would feed the lessons and outcomes from the activities to the members in their areas and bring the members' concerns and ideas back into the project. This consultation helped address some of the concerns raised by the executive to the CSVR researcher, namely how to ensure that as many KSGWC members as possible would both benefit from the project and have a stake in its implementation and the development of a new agenda, with the aim of revitalising the branch, recruiting new members and addressing potential divisions and confusion among members based on access to a new project and funding. Going through the organisational structures was intended to strengthen these structures and ensure greater transparency between the leadership and the members.

The consultation helped clarify that the topic of the project, or the exact issues it would address, could not be decided ahead of time, but that the participatory approach required the project design to be exploratory and emergent, coming out of a series of processes. KSGWC and the CSVR researcher agreed that the project would start with a planning meeting attended by representatives of all the provincial area committees. The outcomes of the planning meeting would guide the development of research questions, which would lead to research findings that would in turn guide the strategic planning process. The strategic planning would inform the development of a new agenda and project proposal, as well as the types of trainings KSGWC would require to implement the new agenda. Thus, the partners designed a strong skeleton for the project, allowing for collaborative processes to flesh out the content over time.

In line with Khulumani Support Group's research protocol document that guides how the organisation engages with external researchers,[6] as well as in the spirit of acknowledging all participants' contribution inherent in the project's methodology, the executive and the CSVR researcher agreed that participants would receive a modest daily honorarium and transport funds for attending activities. The partners discussed the ethical considerations of providing an honorarium and agreed that the project's participatory approach and regular engagement with members minimised the risk of undue influence and misrepresentation. Like the CSVR researcher, the five KSGWC researchers would receive a salary based on a day rate, as well as transport funds and airtime for their mobile phones in order to cover the costs of organising and attending meetings and activities.

The partners discussed extending the project beyond KSGWC members and working with other organisations and individuals in the areas where KSGWC is active, as well as with additional civil society and government stakeholders, but the executive elected for the partnership to remain between CSVR and KSGWC in order to avoid previous experiences with new collaborators hijacking projects or fomenting divisions around funds within KSGWC.

---

[6] Tshepo Madlingozi, "On Transitional Justice Entrepreneurs and the Production of Victims," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 2(2) (2010): 208–28.

Sequence of project activities

Development of independent project

Fundraising proposal writing

Researcher report-back to area committees

Groundwork and relationship building

Interviews with leadership to structure discussions on project focus and design

Negotiation of equal partnership and other project terms

Tailored trainings

Project development in collaboration with area committees

Organisational strategic planning based on findings

Agreement with like-minded and flexible donors

Collaborative writing up of research findings

Memorandum of understanding between partners

Data analysis

Start of regular learning, monitoring and evaluation exercises

Monthly research meetings for debriefing and developmental evaluation

Data collection

Ethical clearance for research

Collaborative research design

Project planning meeting with representatives of all area committees

Research training for project researchers and additional participants

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20

Fundraising

The CSVR researcher wrote a detailed concept note presenting the project objectives and design, including a provisional timeline of activities and a budget developed with the KSGWC acting chairperson. The executive members provided feedback on the proposal and the budget, although they later highlighted that they should have analysed the budget more closely as questions regarding funding allocations emerged later in the project. Due to the limited time available to the KSGWC treasurer and other capacity concerns, the executive requested that KSGWC be an equal partner in the project but that CSVR be the primary grantee and administrator, particularly in terms of finances, with the CSVR researcher as the project manager.

Recognising the need for donors who would be flexible in terms of deliverables and open to an exploratory project involving participatory action research, the CSVR researcher met with and submitted the concept note to a handful of donors known for supporting projects involving socioeconomic rights, social movements and innovative methodologies in South Africa. Members of the KSGWC executive followed up with their own meetings with donors. The project received support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which funded the research component, and the Foundation for Human Rights, which funded the capacity-building component.

Memorandum of Understanding

KSGWC and CSVR signed a memorandum of understanding which stipulated that the partners would collaborate on every stage of the project, that all project materials would be their equal property and copyrighted to both, and that all future use of these materials would

acknowledge the contribution of both partners. They agreed that the CSVR researcher would compile and store all of the materials gathered during the data collection phase, including consent forms, audio recordings and transcripts, and give copies to KSGWC at the end of the project. The

memorandum stated the responsibilities of the partners based on the skills and capacity available to each, with CSVR taking on a project management and administration role, as well as donor liaising and much of the publication writing, while KSGWC took on participant selection, activity organisation and meeting facilitation.

Since the provincial branches are semi-autonomous from the Khulumani Support Group national office, the executive decided to sign the memorandum with CSVR directly, instead of through the national office, although they committed to aligning the project activities and outcomes with the national vision and mission.

Research Training

The project began in mid-2015 with a two-day research training, which was given by an academic and qualitative research expert with a long-standing relationship with KSGWC. The familiarity between the trainer and the majority of the participants heightened the sense that the project was a collaboration (rather than a CSVR project) and helped reduce participants' anxiety around their capacity to conduct research. The training introduced core concepts and methods in social science research to the KSGWC members selected as researchers by KSGWC. It also assisted the KSGWC researchers in identifying a few provisional research questions to take into their monthly research meetings with the CSVR researcher, where they were expanded and refined.

The training was attended by the five KSGWC researchers and the CSVR researcher, as well as four KSGWC members from different Cape Town area committees and one member each from the Worcester and Beaufort West area committees, whom KSGWC selected on the basis of their interest in research and their writing and organisational skills. While several attendees had participated in research, only two had conducted research, as fieldworkers implementing a survey for an academic study, so the training was pitched to provide a foundation in the logic of research design, defining a clear research question, the relationship between the research question and research design and methods, various forms of data collection with a focus on participatory methods, and writing a research proposal.

In a written reflection on the process, the trainer noted that the participants were actively involved and appeared to grasp the basics of research. One issue was that in identifying potential research questions, the participants tended to discuss various social problems and answer their own questions, focusing on what they know as opposed what they do not know and seek to understand. The training also elicited discussion among the participants of the risk of emotional distress during the research, for both participants and researchers, and potential ways to address this risk. Another issue was the importance of having realistic ideas about the impact and benefits of research in itself.[7]

The training concluded with a learning, monitoring and evaluation (LME) exercise where participants first broke into pairs and wrote what they had learnt through the training and what they felt was missing, and then individually wrote or drew how they felt at the end of the training. The exercise was intended to promote reflection and sharing in the group, provide a brief assessment of the training and demonstrate the benefits of such reflection for future KSGWC projects. While participants noted that the training was short, they also responded that they felt hopeful, open-minded and challenged, with one participant writing, "To me when I'm come here I'm feeling a disappointed person. I think this place is not a place like me because I'm not a well-educated person. By the time I start to do this training I'm feel comfortable. Now I'm clear how to ask the question to the victims. So I'm feeling happy to interview the youth and the adults." Examples of lessons learnt were the importance of a plan before conducting research, how to build rapport and handle interviewees' emotions, and that interviews can be informal conversations rather than structured interviews or surveys.[8] The KSGWC researchers and the CSVR researcher discussed taking their research and observation skills into all subsequent project activities, starting with the planning meeting.

---

7   Christopher J. Colvin, "Report on Research Methods Workshop for Khulumani Western Cape Researchers," internal document, on file with authors. The report includes an instructive outline of the two-day training, with detailed guidelines.
8   "Research Training Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation Summary," internal document, on file with authors.

Planning Meeting

After the research training, the project held a one-day planning meeting with the broader KSGWC membership. It was attended by the five KSGWC researchers, the CSVR researcher, 20 Khulumani members representing all the area committees in Cape Town (including the executive), four members from Worcester and one from Beaufort West. The meeting was facilitated by the KSGWC acting chairperson, who alternated between isiXhosa and English to ensure that all participants could follow the proceedings.

After introductions and an ice-breaker exercise, the CSVR researcher presented the project. This presentation, based on a flipchart poster with the estimated dates of project activities, highlighted the equal partnership between KSGWC and CSVR, explained the collaborative conceptualisation and development of the project, and clarified the sources of the funding and how it would be used in order to avoid confusion and potential divisions among members. This was followed by a lengthy group discussion in which the KSGWC researchers and the CSVR researcher answered members' questions about the project design and clarified that the planning meeting participants would help identify the issues that would be the basis for the research. After noting 20 issues that had emerged from the executive members' interviews, the area committee consultations, the partner meetings and the discussion in the planning meeting itself,[9] the CSVR researcher, with the participants' agreement, consolidated these into three main interrelated issues that would guide the research in communities where KSGWC has a strong presence, namely ongoing socioeconomic exclusion, the prevalence of crime and violence, and intergenerational conflict in KSGWC families and communities.

In order to demonstrate how the new project emerged from past KSGWC activities, to put the meeting participants on the same page and to build camaraderie among members of different area committees, the facilitator broke the participants into groups to create 'River of Life' flipchart drawings capturing the history of KSGWC, including major achievements, challenges and partnerships and collaborations. Each group included members who joined in KSGWC's early days and newer members, in order to facilitate knowledge exchange. The group work also allowed participants to make sure they had a similar understanding of the new project, as switching between isiXhosa and English during the presentation had created some uncertainty. A KSGWC researcher participated in each of the groups, with the aim of both guiding the proceedings and observing them for debriefing later.

The presentation of the 'Rivers of Life' by each group organically led into an open discussion of KSGWC's challenges, directions in which the new project would take the organisation and linkages between KSGWC's past activities and the new project. For example, participants acknowledged that KSGWC is a woman-led organisation; that KSGWC had already begun addressing socioeconomic exclusion through income-generation projects in addition to reparations advocacy; and that KSGWC's trainings and efforts to increase members' access to information from public and private sector sources were empowering. In identifying linkages between past and future projects, participants noted that the new project would strengthen KSGWC's efforts to address exclusion, increase KSGWC's understanding of challenges members face so that they can design better interventions, assist with KSGWC's public visibility and sustainability, help KSGWC recruit new members and include young people in its programmes, and highlight the links between redress for the past and social justice in the present.

In a reflection written after the planning meeting, the facilitator noted, "The issues raised resonated with what all the members are dealing with in their communities, so there was total buy-in to the project to

---

[9] These included, for example, lack of redress for apartheid-era violations, increase in inequality and poverty post-apartheid, lack of jobs, prevalence of substance abuse, loss of culture and divisions between parents and their children.

an extent that members wanted to add more to issues on the table."[10] Indeed, in an LME form the participants filled out at the end of the meeting, which asked them to rate their (dis)satisfaction and whether the meeting had left them with any new ideas or questions, the participants all noted that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the meeting. Many wrote that they had "learnt a lot" and the majority suggested that the project and KSGWC in general prioritise youth involvement.[11] One participant praised the project methodology, stating, "So interested on the research programme, tired of people who comes taking films and hear the story of survivors and won't see them again. It was a helpful and understanding section to take Khulumani forward."[12] Concerns were raised about what role the Worcester and Beaufort West members could play in the project and the development of a new provincial agenda, and about internal challenges in the Paarl area committee that prevented it from sending a representative to the planning meeting. While the meeting prompted the KSGWC executive to discuss increasing engagement with area committees outside Cape Town and working to reactivate area committees in other towns, the concerns eventually led to the area committees outside Cape Town being less involved in the project, as will be discussed below.

Research Design

After the planning meeting, the KSGWC researchers and the CSVR researcher began holding monthly research meetings until the end of the project. These meetings had multiple aims: to monitor the project, to evaluate and adjust the outcomes, to debrief on new developments and personal experiences, and to share observations from other activities related to the project, such as national and provincial executive meetings, community street committee meetings, activities with partners and stakeholders, and so forth.

The research team began by using the issues concretised in the planning meeting and the preliminary questions developed in the research training to decide on the main research question and a set of secondary research questions, with the CSVR researcher playing primarily a facilitation role. The team shifted their perspective and discussed what change KSGWC would like to see and what new knowledge and kind of data they would need to help them achieve it. These research goals, along with continual reference to flipchart notes from the research training, helped focus the discussion, and the KSGWC researchers collaboratively developed the main research question: "What are the similarities and differences between how older and younger members of Khulumani (Western Cape) communities understand the links between socioeconomic exclusion and violence?" The intergenerational focus demonstrates the extent to which the groundwork and various planning processes within KSGWC influenced the project.

In order to make sure that all the researchers had the same understanding of this question, the CSVR researcher suggested translating it into isiXhosa. It emerged that the KSGWC researchers understood concepts in the question differently, with some understanding violence to refer mainly to crime-related violence, for example during break-ins, and with one researcher translating 'socioeconomic exclusion' as 'poor service delivery,' demonstrating a bias towards state responsibility and engagement.

'Socioeconomic exclusion' was changed to 'poverty and inequality' in isiXhosa, which the research team thought better reflected what they wanted to find out and would be easier to communicate to KSGWC members. After this, the research team collaboratively developed eight secondary research questions that brought in issues such as the

---

[10] Zukiswa Puwana, "Project Planning Meeting Report," internal document, on file with authors.
[11] "Project Planning Meeting Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation Summary," internal document, on file with authors.
[12] Ibid.

relationship between apartheid-era and post-apartheid experiences, KSGWC members' positionality as victims/survivors, members' resources and strategies in coping with exclusion and violence, intergenerational relationships, differences among informal and formal settlements, and the role of gender.[13]

Again with reference to flipchart notes from the research training, the KSGWC researchers decided to focus on members under three area committees in Khayelitsha in Cape Town, both because these areas currently have the most active membership and because focusing on areas close to where the KSGWC researchers resided was more realistic in terms of financial resources and physical capacity. The team also decided that in order to answer the main research question, participants should be KSGWC members, with the selection reflecting that the majority are women over 50 years of age, as well as young people aged between 16 and 25 who are part of KSGWC families and as 'born-frees' were born after the transition to democracy. The KSGWC researchers agreed that the three area committees should select the specific participants in meetings before the research began, in order to ensure participation and transparency and to strengthen organisational structures. They discussed expanding the data collection beyond KSGWC, and holding open community meetings in the three areas to recruit local residents both into the project and into KSGWC, if they were apartheid-era victims who are not yet members. Again due to resource and capacity constraints, and in order to focus the research, the team decided that all participants would be KSGWC members and family.

After reviewing the data collection methods outlined in the research training and new methods presented by the CSVR researcher, the KSGWC researchers advocated for individual interviews and focus groups, primarily because they had themselves been interviewed and felt that they had the firmest grasp on these methods as first-time researchers. The team agreed that the complexity of the research questions and social problems they addressed required a qualitative approach. They decided to conduct semi-structured and open-ended interviews, using the research questions to develop 14 interview questions tailored to the KSGWC members and the youth.[14]

Following extensive discussion of research ethics and the requirements of the memorandum of understanding between KSGWC and CSVR, the team agreed to follow the same process after each interview or activity:

1) log the date and description of the activity in the back of a notebook bought for each researcher for this purpose;
2) write field notes in the same notebook within one day of the activity, noting ideas emerging from the activity and making sure the date and description match those in the log;
3) before an interview, explain the project and honorarium, requesting that the participants sign a consent form and giving them a telephone number to call with questions;
4) record each interview with a voice recorder;[15]
5) conduct the interview for at least an hour in a private, quiet place the interviewee says he or she feels comfortable;
6) be unbiased during the interview and consider that the interviewee might be intimidated;
7) explain that the interviewee may be asked to participate in follow-up interviews or activities without an honorarium; and
8) bring the log, field notes, audio recordings, consent forms, honorarium receipts and any leftover honorarium money to each research meeting to be compiled and stored, in addition to any other materials that are relevant.[16]

The researchers also agreed to collect additional materials relevant to the project, such as newspaper cuttings, and to continually play the role of researcher by observing everyday life and all activities relevant to the project, capturing their reflections in field notes. The research was granted clearance by a CSVR ethics committee, and the data collection phase was ready to begin.

---

13 "Research Questions and Interview Process," internal document, on file with authors.
14 Ibid.
15 The project budget provided for three voice recorders, which KSGWC kept after the project for future work.
16 "Research Questions and Interview Process."

Data Collection

Over four months at the end of 2015, the five KSGWC researchers conducted a total of 79 individual semi-structured interviews and two semi-structured focus group interviews. With the CSVR researcher, they also held two focus groups using the 'Tree of Life' exercise as an elicitation tool, comparing understandings of how poverty and inequality (roots) lead to violence (branches) among older and younger research participants, with the aim of identifying differences in understandings between the two groups. Having budgeted for transcription, the team had 65% of the individual interviews and all of the focus groups translated from isiXhosa to English and transcribed. Almost all of the remaining interviews were documented through detailed notes taken by the KSGWC researchers.

The research team debriefed on the research process in the monthly meetings, often meeting twice or three times a month during this period to discuss findings, impressions, challenges and adjustments to interview questions and approaches, mainly through informal discussion and at intervals through formal LME exercises designed by the CSVR researcher.

Several instructive issues emerged during data collection. First, the KSGWC researchers had differences in how they understood the data collection plan, which highlighted alliances within the research team and divisions stemming from earlier interactions through KSGWC. This led to tension, heated exchanges and indications of quitting the project, but the monthly meetings provided space and opportunity for the issue to be resolved through the interventions of the other researchers and the mediation of the CSVR researcher. In addition to underlining the importance of anticipating internal conflict and of having a detailed and mutually understood research plan at the beginning of data collection, the issue demonstrated the value of investing in relationship- and trust-building before such a project, of regular meetings throughout, and of consciously discussing team dynamics as part of monitoring the project.

Second, one of the researchers had to withdraw from the project because it took up more time than she had given her other commitments. While KSGWC was able to replace her with another researcher who attended the research training (an unexpected benefit of including other KSGWC members in the training), this highlighted the importance of clarifying exactly what a project will require from participants, which can be difficult with participatory action research and the approach KSGWC and CSVR used in their project.

Third, the researchers, four of whom were over the age of 50, found that they often felt at risk while traveling to and from interview appointments, and in a few cases while interviewing youth who had engaged in criminal activities or appeared to be under the influence of drugs during interviews. They addressed this risk by debriefing about their experiences during the monthly meetings, arranging for interviews to be conducted in locations they felt were familiar and safe but also comfortable for interviewees, asking a local KSGWC member to take them around unfamiliar areas, and working in pairs or groups of three.

A fourth, and particularly important, issue was that the project methodology required the KSGWC researchers to learn on the job and build up interviewing and research skills as the project progressed. Early challenges included that the interviews were far too short (as short as 10 minutes) and that the researchers felt that the interviewees all said the same things. In addition, although the team had decided to use the interview questions to loosely structure the interviews, the KSGWC researchers initially used them as survey questions, asking them in order, taking notes on the initial response and then moving on to the next question.

Through debriefing in the monthly meetings and providing support to each other, the researchers quickly adapted to thinking of the interviews as informal

conversations and of the questions as guidelines, and strengthened their existing skills of building rapport with interviewees and delving deeper into their responses with follow-up questions. While this meant that the initial interviews are superficial, the process was a form of training in itself (as intended) and the large number of interviews at the end made up for the limitations of the first few interviews.

Fifth, in the middle of the data collection phase, the KSGWC researchers complained that they were spending more time on organising participants, taking transport to other areas, conducting interviews and attending meetings than covered by the salary budget. The same pertained to the budget for transportation and mobile phone airtime. KSGWC and CSVR underestimated how time-consuming and costly data collection would be for the KSGWC researchers. This may have contributed to the sixth issue, which is that the practice of writing field notes and collecting additional materials dropped off over time, as the KSGWC researchers felt overwhelmed by conducting and taking notes on the interviews. These interview notes and the transcripts proved to be rich in data, but the learning opportunity of writing field notes and engaging in other research practices was missed in this project.

In describing the data collection to KSGWC members in a report-back and to the CSVR researcher in a team debriefing and LME, the KSGWC researchers noted that hearing members' stories of exclusion, violence and trauma under apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa was painful and brought up their own difficult experiences. One researcher commented that "the research hits back on the researchers," because "we know these things, we eat them, we walk on them, we live them."[17] They stated, however, that the experience of becoming and being taken seriously as a researcher was empowering and built up their confidence in their existing skills and knowledge. One researcher reflected that she could feel herself using her new observation skills and asking questions to ascertain the thinking behind others' actions in her family life and in defusing tense situations among neighbours and in community structures. Another researcher reflected that she now looked for the root causes and hidden meanings of events in her everyday life in a new way.

In December 2015, the CSVR researcher analysed the KSGWC researchers' interview notes, drawing out tens of themes centred around 14 general topics and coding them according to interviewee and the interviewee's demographics. These themes were the focus of an initial write-up of research findings and served as the basis of the strategic planning meeting scheduled for the following year.

Strategic Planning

In early 2016, CSVR and KSGWC organised a two-day retreat for KSGWC members to focus on strategic planning away from all other responsibilities. Facilitated by the KSGWC chairperson, the meeting was attended by the research team, 13 representatives of area committees in Cape Town (including the executive), three members from Worcester and one from Paarl.[18] In response to KSGWC's interest in involving youth in its programmes, the participants included several young family members of KSGWC members. The aim of the strategic planning was to develop a new five-year plan for the province and, based on this, to begin designing a KSGWC project independent from CSVR that would build on the participatory action research. The facilitator used the VMOSA (Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies and Action Plan) approach.[19] She also used Khulumani Support Group's strategic plan as the basis for the KSGWC process, in order to connect the province's activities with those of the national organisation.

The meeting began with a review of the 2015 planning meeting, its 'River of Life' drawings and thus the history of KSGWC, which led into a report-back by the KSGWC researchers on their experiences and lessons from the research and by the CSVR researcher on the preliminary research findings. The group then reviewed Khulumani Support Group's vision and mission, breaking into groups to reflect on their relevance to KSGWC and how better to pursue them in light of the findings. They discussed five long-term goals identified by Khulumani Support Group, and prioritised three of these goals to work towards in the Western Cape: social justice, social reconciliation and the economic inclusion of victims and their families. After taking a significant amount of time to discuss how to identify objectives that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and (well-)timed) and specific to KSGWC as a victim/survivor organisation, the facilitator broke the participants into groups to develop objectives. The presentation of the groups' ideas highlighted the members' focus on activities and strategies as opposed to objectives, and led to a long discussion of the usefulness of objectives. Using the three long-term goals as frames, the participants developed four objectives that would form the basis of a five-year plan, and agreed to hold an additional one-day strategic planning meeting in order to finalise the VMOSA process.[20]

Clearly, the strategic planning agenda was overly ambitious, but the process also demonstrated how time-consuming a properly participatory planning meeting can be. At the end, the participants broke into groups of five and wrote responses on an LME form asking what new ideas or questions they had, what they now saw as KSGWC's priority and the extent to which they were (dis)satisfied.

18 The Beaufort West branch had become defunct by this time as the member who had attended previous project activities moved to another province.

19 See, Community Tool Box, "What is VMOSA?" http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/structure/strategic-planning/vmosa/main (accessed 6 February 2017).

20 Yanelisa Sishuba, "Report on Khulumani Support Group Western Cape 2016 Strategic Planning Process," internal document, on file with authors.

The participants rated the process highly, noting that KSGWC should use the VMOSA approach for its next planning process, that it was a form of training and skill building, that the meeting was "eye opening," and that the objectives and early plans developed there were urgent and must be implemented.[21] They did not mention, however, that the meeting agenda had to be halted on the second day in order to address rumours and complaints about where the funding for the project was coming from and whether the members' reparations funds were being spent on the project. The participants appeared satisfied with having been given the space to ask questions and air grievances, which demonstrated the importance of transparency, continual clarification of project motivations and processes, and space for reflection and feedback.

Having been asked to return to their area committees and the executive to expand on the objectives, the participants met again for the one-day follow-up strategic planning, also facilitated by the KSGWC chairperson, where they shared their ideas and finalised a set of five objectives. The group then discussed and wrote up a list of resources to draw on in implementing the objectives, including partners and networks, as well as obstacles to the agenda.[22] They agreed that the new agenda called for an advocacy programme that linked KSGWC's past activism with the new objectives they had developed. The participants also decided that the representatives of each area committee, with the support of the executive and the KSGWC researchers, would take the VMOSA process to their committees and identify objectives and strategies at the area committee level that are linked to the provincial ones but enable members to work at the local level as well. With this decision, the participants together acknowledged that the strategic planning process was in itself a form of training in how to do such planning. In a free-writing LME exercise at the end of the meeting, participants highlighted the need for fundraising to address KSGWC's obstacles and go forward with the new plans.[23]

The VMOSA process was completed in the second half of the year, when CSVR contracted the Community Development Resource Association (CDRA), CSVR collaborators and experts in facilitation and training with community-based organisations, to assist KSGWC with developing a project action plan and to provide KSGWC with training to help them implement this project. CDRA Director Nomvula Dlamini met several times with the executive to refine the KSGWC objectives and facilitate the development of a new advocacy programme.[24] The executive adopted a set of six objectives for 2016–2021, which focus on the intergenerational transmission of poverty and trauma, reconciliation between divided groups of KSGWC members, and improved access to employment, education, healthcare and housing.[25] The strategic planning highlighted the gaps that could be addressed by tailored trainings.

21   "Strategic Planning Meeting Participant Evaluations," internal documents, on file with authors.
22   Sishuba, "Report."
23   "Follow-up Strategic Planning Meeting Participant Evaluations," internal documents, on file with authors.
24   Nomvula Dlamini, "Khulumani Support Group Western Cape Advocacy Programme 2017," internal document, on file with authors.
25   "Khulumani Support Group Western Cape 2016: Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies," internal document, on file with authors.

Trainings

In discussion with the CSVR researcher and CDRA, which provided the trainings, mainly in isiXhosa, the executive decided on which trainings they needed to take their new agenda forward. The Foundation for Human Rights, which funded the trainings, was flexible enough to give permission for the topics of some of the trainings to be changed from what was in the concept note, as they no longer met KSGWC's needs. The trainings occurred across four months and each built on the previous one, focusing on:

1) advocacy and project planning;
2) writing;
3) fundraising; and
4) project management.

They were attended by the KSGWC researchers and 12 representatives of Cape Town area committees, including several young people and on three occasions the KSGWC chairperson. Due to issues internal to KSGWC, members of the Worcester and Paarl area committees were either unable or unwilling to attend these trainings after participating in the strategic planning. While this allowed more Cape Town members to participate in the trainings, the KSGWC executive acknowledged that this development was a drawback for the new agenda and noted that they would need to travel to the towns to address the issues in the following year.

The first training laid out the fundamentals of advocacy, including definitions, motivations, strategies and stakeholders. With reference to the vision, mission, objectives and strategies developed in previous activities, the participants broke up into groups to identify the focus of the KSGWC advocacy programme, and through an open discussion decided to link their past reparations advocacy to a new agenda of addressing socioeconomic exclusion by pressuring government and working with stakeholders to revisit the findings and recommendations of the TRC in order to effect redress through the enforcement of socioeconomic rights. This training occurred amid CDRA's meetings with the executive and contributed to the development of KSGWC's advocacy programme.[26]

The second training, on writing, included free writing as a regular practice, coping with the 'inner critic' to build confidence, building an argument by writing a well-structured paragraph in groups, providing feedback on others' writing and making a writing project more manageable by breaking it up into steps. The trainer noted that the participants had different levels of writing ability and that some participants felt comfortable writing only in isiXhosa. She supported the notion of group writing as a way to address confidence issues and incorporate multiple perspectives in the production of KSGWC publications.[27]

The third training introduced the fundraising cycle and covered how to identify prospective donors, the importance of a deep understanding of one's organisations and project, how to solicit funding and engage with donors, different funding mechanisms and strategies, and elements of a fundraising proposal. During the fundraising training, participants noted that KSGWC needed to strengthen their governance structures and leadership, clarify roles in the organisation, establish a fundraising team, involve youth in governance and activities, identify which skills are needed in the organisation, and how to develop an action plan.[28]

These topics formed part of the fourth training, on project management, the goals of which were to share basic knowledge on project management and the project cycle, and to build skills on the various steps of project initiation, planning, implementation, monitoring and closure.[29]

In informal conversations with training attendees and in evaluations during the monthly research meetings, the participants emphasised that KSGWC's role in deciding which trainings they needed, how the trainings built on each other and on the strategic planning process, and the fact that they were tailored to and pitched to the level of KSGWC members meant that they were some of the most useful and empowering trainings they had received, as well as one of the strongest elements of the project. The trainings served to give participants a stake in KSGWC and the new agenda they had agreed to implement.

26 Dlamini, "Advocacy Programme."
27 Marianne Brittijn, "Writing Training Report," internal document, on file with authors.
28 Mabel Fonutchi and Nomvula Dlamini, "Fundraising Training Report," internal document, on file with authors. The report includes an instructive outline of the two-day training, with useful information on fundraising.
29 Mabel Fonutchi and Nomvula Dlamini, "Project Management Training Report," internal document, on file with authors.

Collaborative Writing

All of the publications emerging from this project are examples of collaborative writing, to different degrees. The most collaborative of the publications is an opinion piece published in the *Cape Times*, which shares the main findings of the research and calls for "support in urging the government to provide adequate education, health care and housing for survivors of gross human rights violations, in line with the TRC's recommendations and the rights provided for in the constitution," arguing that South Africa needs "redress for the inequality entrenched by the apartheid system, in addition to apartheid-era violence, in order to see social transformation in the future."[30] The KSGWC researchers wrote this piece across three half-days, with the CSVR researcher serving as facilitator.

The process began with a group reflection on the writing training earlier in the month, with the researchers commenting that it had improved their confidence and one noting that while she previously believed she could not write in English she found that "big" words organically came to her in the process of free writing during the training.[31] The team then did two free-writing exercises intended to bring them into the space of concentrating on writing and of reflecting on the project and the research findings. The researchers sat together and each wrote for 10 minutes, first a description of an interviewee and then a reflection on one thing they learnt about how inequality leads to violence. After each exercise, some read aloud what they wrote and others related what they had written verbally. The researchers reacted differently to the process, stating that they felt good about being able to write, or that the process brought up negative feelings and sadness about their and others' situation, or that writing helped

---

30   Brian Mphahlele, Agnes Ngxukuma, Nompumelelo Njana, Sindiswa Nunu and Yanelisa Sishuba, "Apartheid Survivors Need State Assistance to Redress Inequality," *Cape Times*, October 26, 2016.
31   Monthly research meeting, 28 September 2016.

with a poor memory and felt healing. In order to clarify their aims in writing an opinion piece, the researchers then each wrote responses to a prompt – "I am researching _____ in order to find out _____ so that my reader can see the significance of _____" – filling in the blanks and then sharing their conclusions.[32]

This helped set the stage for a side-by-side writing process, in which the KSGWC researchers co-authored each sentence of the 900-word opinion piece by consensus on flipchart paper. Each researcher contributed, demonstrating their respective strengths, for example in newspaper-style English-language writing, in summarising the research findings, in connecting diverse points into an argument, and in adding emotive and moral power to the piece. While this completely collaborative writing process was time-consuming and at times exhausting, the KSGWC researchers commented that it was inspiring and

that it clarified the project in their minds, in addition to bringing the satisfaction of being published by the *Cape Times.* They committed to repeating the process with an isiXhosa-language opinion piece for a newspaper popular in Khayelitsha, noting that the process would take less time now that they were familiar with it. One researcher commented that she now had a sense that she could write about any topic, provided that she had evidence from research on which to base her ideas.

The research team also produced the report you are reading, on the participatory action research process, and a second publication on the research findings, with the CSVR researcher acting as lead author and receiving feedback from the rest of the team. This form of collaborative writing was planned from the project design phase, acknowledging the team members' different skill sets and the CSVR researcher's experience with report writing.

Fundraising Proposal

Coming out of the writing training and the collaborative writing of the opinion piece, the KSGWC researchers wrote a draft fundraising proposal for KSGWC's new advocacy project. They were joined by the KSGWC chairperson and another KSGWC member who was identified during the fundraising and the project management trainings as well-positioned to be on KSGWC's fundraising team. Through CDRA's networks, CSVR contracted the head of Innovation Shack to train and accompany the group in writing a fundraising proposal over two half-days.

Innovation Shack uses a template developed with fundraising experts that they hold allows organisations to clarify their thinking as they write a proposal and develop a clear, straightforward and impactful proposal through the process. The process consists of collaboratively writing:

1) the problem the organisation and the project are addressing;
2) the solutions they will pursue;
3) the implementation plan for those solutions;
4) the budget required (in broad terms, to be refined once costing completed);
5) the proposal cover page covering the organisation name, the project and the funds requested, along with contact details;
6) a clear and concise executive summary of the project;
7) the background to the organisation and the project motivation;
8) the organisation's sustainability plan; and
9) the type, trustees (if applicable) and bank details of the organisation.

After being written in this order, which is intended to assist in writing an effective proposal, the sections are ordered in the expected manner, beginning with the cover page and ending with the bank details.[33]

The process resulted in a draft proposal for an evidence-based advocacy project on social transformation through redress, aligned with Khulumani Support Group's Asikaqedi campaign.[34] The project involves research on KSGWC members' experiences, lobbying of government, partnering with local government departments, raising public awareness, mobilising communities and initiating intergenerational dialogues. After the lengthy strategic planning meetings, trainings and collaborative opinion piece writing, the KSGWC participants were satisfied with the comparatively brief and highly structured process of writing the proposal, which they did together, sentence by sentence (another instance of collaborative writing). The process included discussion of KSGWC's sustainability plan and additional strategies for raising funds, for example through income-generation projects, which opened up future prospects for the participants. KSGWC committed to finalising the proposal in 2017.

After years of getting by with minimal funds, the prospect of attracting more substantial funding from international or local donors was welcomed by KSGWC, although the KSGWC researchers and other members agreed in group discussions that the project activities must supplement rather than supplant KSGWC's ongoing activism. CDRA and Innovation Shack, as well as another organisation that supports civil society in organisational development and fundraising, Inyathelo, agreed to assist KSGWC in fundraising for the project and its other activities. CDRA proved a useful resource in connecting KSGWC and CSVR with local organisations that provide technical support to civil society groups.

Report-back

At the end of each year of the project, KSGWC reported on the project process and findings to the broader membership. While these report-backs were smaller and more informal than anticipated, and attended only by members based in Cape Town, they served to update area committee representatives on the motivations and progress of the project and maintain members' stake in the process. They also created space to reflect on challenges and, particularly, what had been achieved, which helped maintain the momentum of the project and the new agenda. The end of the project saw members expressing hope and excitement about implementing their plans in the following year.

---

33   Charles Maisel, "Fundraising Proposal Writing Report," internal document, on file with authors.
34   Khulumani Support Group, "What is the Asikaqedi Campaign?" http://www.khulumani.net/reparations/item/1033-what-is-the-asikaqedi-campaign.html (accessed 6 February 2017).

Lessons Learnt

As the description of activities demonstrates, the process of designing and implementing this participatory action research project was rich and involved. The partners foregrounded the knowledge of KSGWC members on socioeconomic drivers of violence, and the project resulted in concrete outcomes for KSGWC beyond a publication on the research findings. It also gave rise to a number of lessons for CSVR and KSGWC, which may be of use to practitioners and scholars designing a similar project. In order to render them more accessible and useful, and to make up for the lengthy descriptions above, these are summarised in brief.

Relationship building: The methodology and the topics addressed here require relationship- and trust-building, from meetings well before the project begins to discuss the partnership, to regular meetings throughout, to follow-up after the project, with the aim of maintaining the relationship. It helps if the partners already have an institutional or personal relationship as a foundation, and if the partners go into the project with clarity that the relationship is an equal one, with each checking the other when required. It also helps to meet individually and as a group with several members of each partner, in order to have a sense of the interests of the larger organisation and to have buy-in and input from a larger group. As one aim of participatory methods is to foreground the knowledge of marginalised groups, the partners should consider discussing the greater power dynamics of their national and local context, for example in relation to class, race, ethnicity, religion and gender, and how these affect their relationship and the project.

Participation, inclusivity and power dynamics: With a participatory action research project, or any project using participatory methods, the partners need to be clear on the options available with the methodology, to negotiate the level of participation they desire and to determine the roles each participant plays. A memorandum of understanding helps concretise the agreement, and in the case of this project specified that all materials emerging from the work would be equally shared and acknowledged by the partners. In addition, all participants need to be clear and realistic about the time commitment such a project will require, as learnt in this project when a KSGWC researcher had to withdraw in light of other commitments.

The power dynamics between the partners, as well as within each partner institution, need to be addressed explicitly from conception to end of project, as participatory methods can mask problematic and unequal relations.[35] KSGWC participants repeatedly noted that, unlike the extractive research most had been part of before, the participatory action research was useful to them in terms of learning about their organisation and communities, teaching new skills and building confidence in their existing capacities, and giving them a sense of being invested in the success of the project and in the new KSGWC agenda developed through the project.

Instead of keeping the relationship between CSVR and the leadership of KSGWC, in this case the partners included KSGWC area committees and their members in decision making, and particularly in participant selection, which contributed to KSGWC members' sense of having a stake in the project. It helped increase trust in the KSGWC leadership, a sense of transparency and consultation within the organisation, the information available KSGWC and CSVR as they designed and implemented the project, and communication among members, area committees, the leadership and the research team. The participation of area committee representatives in all activities, including trainings, extended the benefits of the capacity-building component to a wider membership and brought the area committee's concerns and ideas into the project space.

NGOisation: Any collaboration between a social movement and a mainstream nongovernmental organisation raises the possibility of the 'NGOisation' of the social movement. Questions were raised in this project regarding the utility of research to a social movement like KSGWC and of drafting a fundraising proposal aimed at international and local donors. The partners

---

35   Cornwall, *The Participation Reader.*

discussed the possibility of NGOisation from the beginning, with the KSGWC executive agreeing that the project and its outcomes would build on KSGWC's activism rather than replace it. The strategic planning process provided space and time for members to discuss their strategies and, in developing the advocacy project, note that they needed to return to their roots by recruiting new members from their communities and self-fund their activities through members, for example. As with levels of participation, the meaning and possibility of NGOisation is something to discuss and negotiate.

Links between past and future: The partners perceived the importance of clarifying the connections between the new project and both KSGWC's and CSVR's past work, so that participants and others in the organisations could understand the relevance of the project to existing strategies and have a stake in the new agendas it elicits. This was the motivation behind the 'River of Life' exercise in the planning meeting and other references to KSGWC's history (which also helped the discussion around NGOisation). In addition, it is part of the motivation for this report, which documents and reflects on the process for KSGWC members and CSVR staff as well.

Learning, monitoring and evaluation: With reference to relationship building and participation, the inclusion of regular reflection through LME exercises that are tailored to each stage of a project can prompt direct or indirect discussion of issues between partners and of other dynamics that may hamper the project. It allows adaptation to unforeseen developments across the project time frame, as well as conscious learning of what works and does not work in projects of this sort. It also demonstrates the utility of regular LME, familiarises participants with different forms of reflection and inculcates LME practices. This project used developmental LME,[36] with the CSVR researcher guiding participants in various exercises, ranging from evaluation forms to individual free-writing in groups to informal discussion in pairs and groups, with note-taking to document the reflections and feed them back to participants if needed at a later stage. Trainers and facilitators were asked to write reports outlining their activities, reflecting on the process and providing suggestions for the way forward. These reports helped each activity to be designed so as to build on the one that came before it. As suggested above, this report is itself a form of LME for KSGWC and CSVR.

Flexibility: The degree of participation agreed upon by CSVR and KSGWC meant that the partners had to be flexible in terms of planning the project, time allotted to activities, who participated and how funds were allocated. Each stage of the project required extensive discussion in order for consensus to be reached, from developing the research focus and questions to organising meetings and trainings, from deciding how to structure trainings and the proposal writing to the process of collaborative writing. Such projects require plenty of time cushions to be placed in the project design. They also require donors who are flexible in terms of time, topic and content. Regular meetings and LME processes assist with identifying obstacles and adapting to the needs emerging from the project.

Tailored trainings: While the fundraising process required the partners to specify the number and topics of the trainings, they entered the project with the understanding that the trainings would be tailored to the needs of the participants. Based on the obstacles and resources identified during the strategic planning, KSGWC decided which trainings members would need in order to implement their five-year plan and the new project. In line with the participatory methodology, the trainings showed that each participant could contribute to KSGWC's organisational development and different aspects of its work, emphasising that actions such as writing reports and fundraising did not have to be performed by experts but could be a group effort. In LME exercises, KSGWC participants noted that the tailored trainings were more useful and memorable than general trainings, and would assist with broader organisational development.

It is important to note that every stage of the project proved to be a form of training and capacity building – from developing the research focus and questions, to the strategic planning, to the collaborative writing of the opinion piece and the fundraising proposal – and that articulating this made participants more attentive to the activities. This awareness also led to KSGWC researchers, for example, applying skills and lessons from the project in their everyday lives.

---

36   See, Michael Quinn Patton, *Developmental Evaluation: Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010).

In addition, each activity built on the one before, and using the flipcharts and other materials that emerged from the previous activity helped place each stage of the project in context for returning and new participants and helped maintain the momentum generated in each activity.

Collaborative writing: The process of collaborative writing in the writing training and the generation of the opinion piece and the draft fundraising proposal was eye-opening for the participants. The benefits, potentially long term, of creating a piece of writing by working side by side are that individual participants can pacify their 'inner critic,' acknowledge their existing skills, perceive each other's strengths, support and constructively critique each other's input and generally work better as a team. These outweigh the drawbacks, which are primarily that the effort is time-consuming and labour-intensive and may not be realistic in a project pressed for time.

Fair and transparent funding allocations: As an acknowledgement of the valuable contribution and knowledge of every participant, the project budgeted for honoraria for KSGWC members attending meetings and trainings, as well as transport funds. The KSGWC researchers, along with other members who played facilitation or knowledge generation roles, were allocated salaries based on a daily rate, in addition to transport funds and mobile phone airtime. The honoraria and salaries were increased in the second year to keep up with inflation. As noted above, the relationship building, repeated engagement and regular check-ins necessary to the project minimised the possible risks of compensating participants. More important, this compensation highlighted that KSGWC members were giving their time to the project and working on it as crucial contributors, as opposed to their being framed as passive beneficiaries.

A lesson from the project is that the budget needs to be developed collaboratively and transparently in order to avoid potential conflict between partners. In addition, the funding needs to be clearly and repeatedly explained in meetings to minimise confusion and divisions among participants. A transparent participant selection process also helps avoid such issues. Finally, while a daily rate makes budgeting easier by linking compensation to activities, a regular monthly salary, and a fair one, may be preferable to participants playing a significant role in the project. This salary needs to be negotiated before the fundraising stage and reviewed each year.

Language barriers: In the case of this project, the majority of participants were isiXhosa-speakers. The CSVR researcher, a few KSGWC participants and some trainers did not speak fluent isiXhosa, which meant that the project had to address language barriers and was often conducted in English, specifically during planning meetings and trainings. The project largely relied on interpretation by the facilitator. It was clear, however, that KSGWC participants were more engaged and productive when the activities were conducted in isiXhosa. At times the CSVR researcher kept out of meetings in order for work to proceed more fluidly, for example with the development of the advocacy programme with CDRA. Again, regular meetings and LME exercises helped keep everyone informed.

Participant well-being: Like much research, participatory action research may pose various risks to participants. In the case of this project, the risks were to KSGWC researchers' physical safety and to the researchers' and participants' emotional well-being in working with narratives of exclusion and violence. A lesson learnt here is that such risks need to be discussed in depth at the project design phase, in addition to addressed in an ethics clearance process, and followed up on in regular meetings and LME exercises.

Report-backs: Annual report-backs to participants, particularly at the end of a project, help maintain buy-in and momentum for action on the findings or new agendas that emerged from the project. Report-backs also acknowledge the value of participants' contribution and of their ongoing engagement with the process. They serve to draw together and tie up the threads of a project, while also creating space for discussion of obstacles, achievements and new directions. In this case, KSGWC researchers and participants shared with the CSVR researcher and each other reflections on their experiences, acknowledged their newfound confidence in their abilities, and committed to implementing the new advocacy programme and five-year plan they developed for the organisation.