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Saweto Civic Association  
Workshop - 14th July 1984  
Workshop II

No 16

# Soweto Civic Association

Workshop - 14th July, 1984  
Workshop II.

We want to learn  
how to build  
strong  
brands.





WORKSHOP OF THE SOWETO CIVIC ASSOCIATION HELD 14th  
JULY, 1984 WORKSHOP II

Aims of this workshop

- Members wanted to learn how to build strong branches of the Soweto Civic Association, and
- how to set goals and plan a program of action at branch level.

Session I

At the first workshop, members were given a field assignment. We agreed to give a report back at the second workshop. All the branches did not do the assignment, but those who did, gave a report.  
This is a summary of the report back

a. Kilimambani

Problems:

- Members do not know where and how to have their problems addressed and the civic has a poor image.
- the problems are common to all areas and it rests within one office in Soweto - the Administration Board. This is where the people cannot get anything done. They come to this office as individuals to complain, this scares them.

b. Malcedi

The Malcedi members felt that they needed to do a survey. They drew up a survey which they took door-to-door and visited 7 homes.

They asked the following questions in the survey: house no., the name of the householder; number of people living in the house; number of people employed; what the rent was.

Then they asked the residents what the problems were in the area and listed 4 - electricity, transport, problems with the community councillors and street lights. In addition to this, they asked the residents what other problems they have.

The next question that they asked was: what do you think we must do about these problems?

This is what the Malcedi members found:

- that the people are concerned about the high rents; electricity; transport; street lights and the people seem to be saying that the community councillors cannot do anything for them;
- that the people have a vague picture of what the civic is about;
- that there is a passive support for the civic in this area;
- and, that talking to our people is very important.



The Naledi members had an assessment discussion after they completed the survey. This is what they said:

- . they were confronted with questions of 'who are you?' and 'why do you ask me such questions?'. They felt that it was important to be able to answer these questions when going door-to-door;
- . as the members who went door-to-door were mainly youth, they also raised questions about how the people see young people doing civic work;
- . they also felt that they were inexperienced in doing a survey
- . they also felt that they should not have approached the people on so many issues. But, that one issue should have been used to make contact
- . the survey method is a useful way of making contact with the people and getting a chance to talk to them.

What were their gains?

- . they recruited two members for the civic
  - . and they were able to identify a real need and that is for an advice office.
- c. Orlando West
- Members found that rents are high; that sales tax and the tax laws are of concern to the people. Members did not complete the field assignment.

d. Orlando East

There are only 4 active members in this area. They planned a meeting after the first workshop to discuss how to organise in the area.

They selected one block to start with and each member undertook to do one street door-to-door. But on the Saturday afternoon when they went out, only two members came.

The first member reported that 12 houses were visited, there are 3 families to one house. 8 people agreed to join the civic and they said that they wanted to come to a civic meeting. At one house, this member was allowed to address all the people at the shebeen!

This member had also read in the newspapers that rents will be increasing by R5 and water by R2,50. This was then used as a way of getting entry and talking to the people.

The majority of the people did not know about the civic, but were eager to join. They also identified with the civic leaders such as dr. Motlana.

At some of the houses, the people had problems with their children, and she referred them to a welfare organisation. The people also wanted to know if the civic had a funeral policy.

- .. Two weeks have passed since these house visits and no follow-up work was done.



The second member from Orlando East reported that he is known in the area and visited 12 houses. All the people joined the civic. They also wanted to know when there will be a civic meeting. They said to him, "be quick, we are suffering".

Some people said that the Community Councillors promised to bring the rent down. "We want that man arrested and taken to court for lying to us".

These were some suggestions at the end of the report back:

- . most areas have a problem with a small workforce. It was suggested that other branches can come and help in an area which needs help;
- . there was a second suggestion that the civic should identify one area at a time. That all branches then go to say, Diepkloof to help organise. And that we should build in this way. After this, we can also assess to see if it is a good way of working.

## Session II

We selected three areas in Soweto. We broke up into 3 groups and each group had to discuss the following questions. We had to base the discussion on Orlando East, Orlando West and Naledi.

- The questions were:
- \*1 How can we take action in Orlando East/ Orlando West/Naledi?
  - \*2 Will our branch be able to take up this issue?
  - \*3 What is wrong with the way our branches work?
  - \*4 How would we like our branches to work?

## Report Back

### Summary - Question 1

- . the workforce is too small, we need to call branches to help with person power problem;
- . we can hold meetings on a street level - house meetings and invite the people on that street. We should then chose a street representative at these house meetings. These representatives will then serve on a committee for the whole area. An executive could be elected from the street representatives committee. And this executive will in turn have representation at inter-branch meetings together with additional members from the street representatives committee.
- . In Naledi, the people campaigned and built a bridge as many children were killed on the streets. Street committees were formed then. The people raised money and they built the bridge themselves. Today, there are no committees. Members felt that they should revive these committees and that they should capitalise on the campaign to build the bridge. This is important, as 'we could point to a very concrete gain that we achieved through working together'.



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This project shows that we must take up community projects.

- Other issues which were identified by Orlando West were; GST: equalisation of taxation; rentals and electricity. It was also felt that we need to educate the people about the tax laws because next year they will have many problems with tax forms. Qauks in the community could also exploit this and charge people high fees to do their tax returns.
- Biepkloof also taught people how to read their water metres. Armed with this information, the people could then demand lower tariffs.
- Education and literacy projects were other issues identified. The question was asked as to how parents could become involved in the education of their children eg. monitoring their homework

Summary - Question 2 & Question 3

- \* What is wrong with the way our branches work?
- \* How would we like our branches to work?

These two questions have been combined.

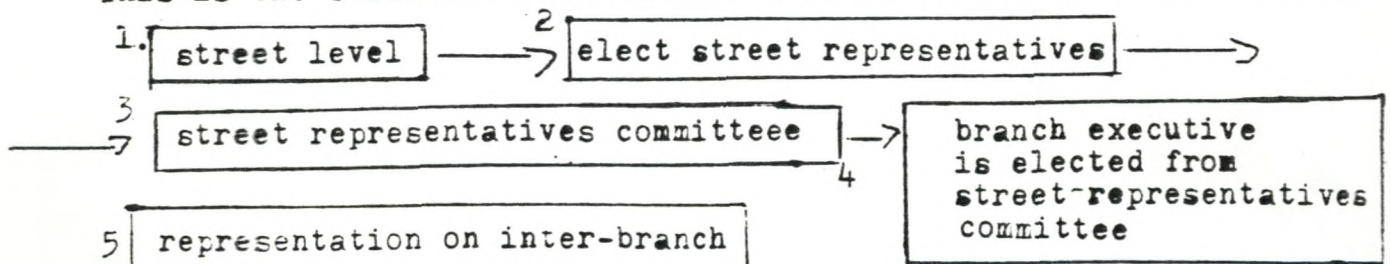
- We need to get more people involved .
- We need to go down to the level of the people and give people responsibilities in the organisation
- speak the language of the people
- we need to restructure our branches and make suggestions to the annual general meeting
- we do not have a formal program and have worked haphazardly, look at our mistakes and iron it out
- try not to emphasise high profile politics
- if you have a problem and you don't know how to deal with it, you should feel free to pass it on to a more experienced person
- we should take up one issue at a time
- branches work in isolation, we need to work together
- we need to work towards an annual general meeting

STRUCTURE

Based on this discussion and the points raised through group discussion, we looked the structure of our branches.

REFER TO APPENDIX A - Theme: Set goals and to plan a program of action at branch level.

This is the structure that members felt we needed at branch level.





We then studied a case of an organisation which was in the Human Awareness booklet. See Appendix B. We broke up into small groups and found that in our branches we make the same mistakes. These are:

- . lack of consistency of committee members
- . that very clear and specific tasks are not assigned to members
- . that we take on too many projects at the same time
- . that in-fighting in our committees prevent us from doing the work
- . that there are no clear goals
- . that many do not know their duties
- . that we do not plan and that many people do not feel responsible to the committee
- . that we take decisions but no one takes the initiative so that the work gets done. There is no follow-up

SESSION III - THEME OF THIS SESSION WAS TO SET GOALS AND TO PLAN A PROGRAM OF ACTION AT BRANCH LEVEL. (ref. appendix A)

This session was also a summary of the day's program and to apply what we learnt. It was also based on group discussion.

AIMS:

1. to build strong branches because strong branches make a strong civic association;
2. to revive branches which are not working

WE CAN DO THIS BY:

- a. taking up projects and campaigns round issues such as: transport; electricity; high rents; high water charges; GST; new tax laws; literacy and education projects which would involve parents in the education of our children.  
The need for advice offices came out strongly in all the group discussions.
- b. by recruiting active members for our branches and by giving members responsibilities. In this way, they will see the civic as their civic.
- c. improving the image of the civic
- d. creating opportunities for branches to work together and to break the isolation between the branches.
- e. having regular meetings. That is, sub-committee meetings; street meetings; general meetings and making sure that our branch is represented at inter-branch meetings. Meetings must not be talk shops, but must be used effectively to plan our work, to set tasks and to share this among the members and to assess our strengths and weaknesses.
- f. setting simple, concrete and achievable goals for our branches. Its no use saying that we are going to hold 50 house-meetings per month if we cannot do this.



5. by identifying the tasks that need to be done to achieve our goals. We must share work between members. In our branch we must know WHO DOES WHAT. We must know WHEN THE JOB MUST BE DONE. We must know HOW THE JOB WILL BE DONE.

This means that we are planning together all the time. And, that we are assessing our work all the time. When we assess we ask ourselves the following questions:

- . did we achieve what we set out to do?
- . if yes, why was it a success, and if no, WHY?  
We must be honest with ourselves when we do this.

This helps us to learn from our mistakes and to plan all the time. We must also have the commitment to set right what we have done wrong. We must be prepared to criticise ourselves, but not to destroy each other.

#### Some points about planning

Planning helps us to think ahead. If we plan, we don't have to work in a haphazard way. When we plan, we must identify the steps that we need to take to achieve our goal.

We must also decide when the tasks must be done and what it will cost us.

We did a planning exercise and planned a civic workshop together. We worked out what needed to be done - venue; transport; we decided on a date and time; contacting civic members; the program for the seminar; food and finances. We took decisions. We worked out the tasks and we decided who would do what. We also worked out when the members of the planning committee would meet to follow-up the tasks.

#### ASSESSMENT OF THE WORKSHOP AND PLANNING FOR THE PROGRAM OF THE NEXT WORKSHOP - 7th - 9th Sept. 1984

- . how to plan an annual general meeting
- . administration
- . meeting procedures
- . duties of office bearers
- . conflict in organisations - leadership dynamics
- . training of civic members
- . recruitment of members and how to keep them involved.



APPENDIX A - THEME: Set goals and to plan a program of action at branch level.

Notes on organisational structures

a. What is an organisation?

An organisation is a group of people who work together because they want to change something or because they want something to happen.

An organisation has rules of how to work and it has principles which guide it eg. policies.

b. What are organisational structures?

it is the way in which the organisation is organised.  
it has committees; it meets regularly; it has people who have specific tasks eg. chairperson, treasurer etc.

c. The structures of the organisation make decisions about:

WHO must do WHAT work  
WHEN the work must be done  
HOW the work must be done

d. How can these structures help?

to get work done quickly and well  
everyone knows what each person must do  
good structures help communication. Everyone knows what is happening in the organisation, who to ask for information and who must do what work  
it is easy for new members to find out what is going on, and to become involved in the work quickly  
learn new skills by working for the organisation - it is my organisation  
planning can be done all the time. Without structures, planning only happens when there are problems  
look back on our mistakes, so that we can avoid making the same mistakes over and over again  
we won't eg. have money problems -  
the members CONTROL the organisation.

If structures are bad, one or two people can control the organisation and decide by themselves ~~to~~ what to do. Members must have control, they must work for their organisation and feel that it is their organisation.

WE MUST ALWAYS ASK OURSELVES THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

do we need this particular structure or would another structure suit our needs better. eg. an new branch of the civic may start with a small group, but as the branch grows, a new structure may be needed.  
a structure must be able to change. No organisation is married to anyone structure  
A structure must let everyone have a say  
it must encourage everyone to learn by working for the organisation.  
structures come into being through action. They grow with the organisation. We don't set up big structures first, and then we organise. The two go hand-in-hand.



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# APPENDIX B. - CASE STUDY

## STRUCTURES

When we start a new organisation it is not always easy to know what to do. Sometimes it helps to look at what another organisation did. We can learn what they did that helped them in their work and what made their work harder.

### The Story of the Office Cleaners' Association

The Office Cleaners' Association (OCA) was started in 1982. At the first meeting in Johannesburg 500 members chose a committee of eight people. At the first meeting of the committee the following office bearers were elected.

Chairperson	Mrs Mthembu
Vice Chairperson	Mrs Ngwenya
Secretary	Miss Sekobe
Assistant Secretary	Mr Nkosi
Treasurer	Miss Mbatha

The other three Committee members were Mrs Radebe, Mr Morosi, Mrs Modise.

The Committee decided to have meetings every two weeks. At meetings the committee discussed things like: how to get new members, how to raise money, how to work for better wages and how to start a pension scheme for office cleaners.

At the meetings there were often arguments because people agreed to do something but no one did it.

For example : everyone on the committee thought it was a good idea to have a

meeting in Booyens to tell office cleaners in the area about OCA. Everyone said that the first Thursday of the next month was a good day to have the meeting.

Miss Sekobe even knew a church hall they could use. On the weekend before the meeting, Mrs Mthembu phoned Miss Sekobe to ask if the posters advertising the meeting had been put up. Miss Sekobe said that she thought Mr Nkosi was doing that. It turned out that no one had done a poster so Mrs Mthembu and Miss Sekobe quickly made posters but they were only able to put them up on the Monday and so only five office cleaners in Booyens came to the meeting.

Another problem was that the Committee Members were always fighting with each other instead of working together. Mrs Mthembu was getting very depressed, and even hardworking people like Mrs Radebe were dissatisfied. Mrs Radebe missed three committee meetings because of all the fighting and some members wanted to kick her off the Committee. She said that she would come to the meetings if members stopped fighting and started working.

What is wrong with the way in which the OCA is structured?



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