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turning POINTS

Miriam: shaping spaces for diversity and inclusion

Miriam leads an initiative known as “Lighter’s Foundation”, which started its activities in 2018, in both Arusha and Dar es salaam, providing basic-needs-support to street children, orphans and elders

Miriam attended the first training cycle of EASUN’s Greenhouse for Young Social Justice Innovators in 2021, which was held in Moshi, Tanzania. She says: “The Greenhouse experience was an invaluable moment of growth and maturation for me as a transformative leader. Immediately after the training we decided to give different tasks to different people. I made sure that everyone was involved.”

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In Focus

Reflective learning for transformed gender relations

Tanzania CSO’s growing in practice through networking

EASUN’s FOLD training in Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe



Miriam: shaping spaces for diversity and inclusion cont'd...

In December 2022, the Foundation held a charity in Dar es salaam, where the new inclusive approach gave all team members a sense of being responsible for the initiative. According to Miriam, “they expressed feelings of excitement, appreciation, and being inspired, based on their experiences of feeling empowered as leaders interacting in spaces shaped for participation. Feelings of being included also stimulated innovativeness and creativity of team members.”

Soaring resilience

For Miriam, enhanced quality of participation in the work of Lighter’s Foundation enabled her to support change more meaningfully, especially by increasingly acting as a convener of the knowledge, creativity, views and effort existing in all relevant systems, including those who receive services from Lighter’s



□ caption

House. Her increased ability to apply active listening skills has been of great help. The intensity of Miriam’s success was enabled by conscious self-work, which brought her to a point where she was able to apply advanced levels of resilience in both her leadership and work. She says: “previously, I would expect people to do what they are supposed to do without being told twice. I was inflexible and found it difficult to deal with people of different characters, or with different ideas from mine.”

Miriam expresses deep awareness regarding new leadership styles that she now applies. She is particularly celebrating her new abilities to work with listening skills, supported empathy. She says, about her new situation, “before I respond, I first open myself to the points of view being expressed by others. In that moment, I feel liberated by letting go of any desire to give judgement. I am energized whenever I perceive that people are feeling cared for and supported because of the way I am listening to them.”

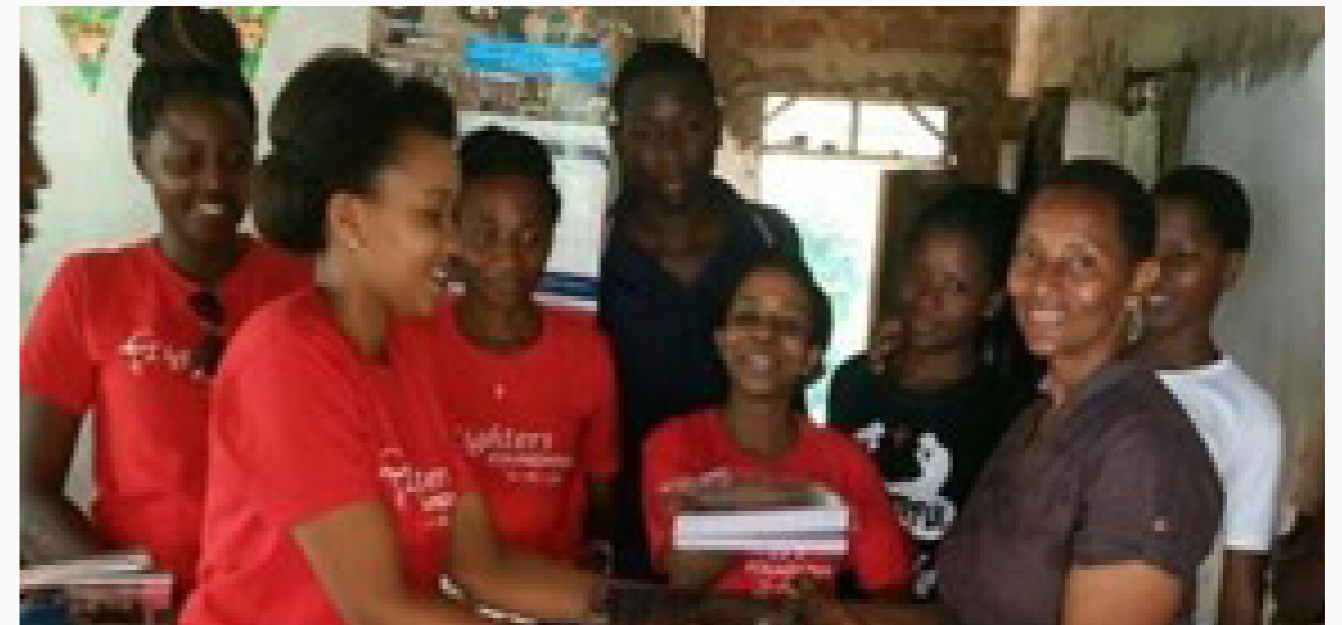
As already noted above, the biggest new learning that Miriam recalls from EASUN’s training through the Greenhouse initiative

is active listening, which she characterizes as creating spaces where more people can contribute what they have. She says,

“I succeeded in doing this by often holding back my own views and what I already know.” Holding back is a quality that supports active listening. For Miriam, that often means deliberately holding her silence, to create intervals that allow others to occupy the space and find their voice. She has discovered that “holding back” is indeed a transformative skill and leadership style that leverages trust, energy and participation of others. As she puts it herself, “it has supported me to let go of a restrictive judgmental posture and the desire to dominate in situations of collaborative work, or shared learning.”

Going forward

Miriam expresses awareness that self-work will require her ongoing attention to various existing and emerging issues related to her personal development. For instance, she is still working to consolidate her positive progress on empathy, especially the question of being less judgmental. She says, “I am more aware now that whenever I judge others, a large component of it is probably mere projection. Empathy, for me, is a particularly important leadership skill for which I must invest further self-development effort. This commitment is informed by my new realization that being judgmental lowers my power to solve problems, or lead others to do the same.”



Marinsia, Casto Kayombo and the Greenhouse

Participation emerges when you lead with empathy

Marynsia is a newly trained facilitator of learning at Success Hands Tz Initiative. She works with mothers of babies from 5 months old, as well as children and youth up to 17 years of age.

In 2021, Marynsia attended the first training cycle of EASUN’s Project Greenhouse for Young Social Justice Innovators, in Moshi, Tanzania. In a follow conversation with EASUN, Marinsia expressed her new experiences after the training. “What has worked especially well for me as a leader is that I now exercise my listening with active awareness of my thoughts and how I am feeling in the situation I am facilitating or supporting”, says Marinsia, and adds: “Such self-awareness has strengthened my openness to critical self-reflection. I now question my own existing assumptions and perspectives while engaging with others. That has strengthened my capacity to channel my will in a way that creates spaces where both young and elderly, men and women, with diverse needs and backgrounds, feel invited to participate with a sense of belonging and inclusion.” Marynsia unpacked her new leadership experiences further when she said: “I have increased my awareness and acceptance that I do not know everything. I express this by involving others from scratch, engaging them in all the duties that I used to do on my own, including generating concepts around the trainings that we offer them.” She noted that this gives people the confidence to share their own views and solutions in problem-solving situations.

Marinsia’s application of transformative leadership styles has increased the quality of participation and sense of self-worth by youth and mothers involved in activities that she facilitates at Success Hands Tz. She says additionally, “I now listen to the solutions they offer, which has enhanced their experiences of being genuinely included.” □

“One of my action plans was to give members space to contribute what they have. This was informed by a new insight that as a leader I don’t have to make all the decisions.” — Miriam Gambos: participant in EASUN’s Project Greenhouse for Young Social Justice Innovators, 2021.

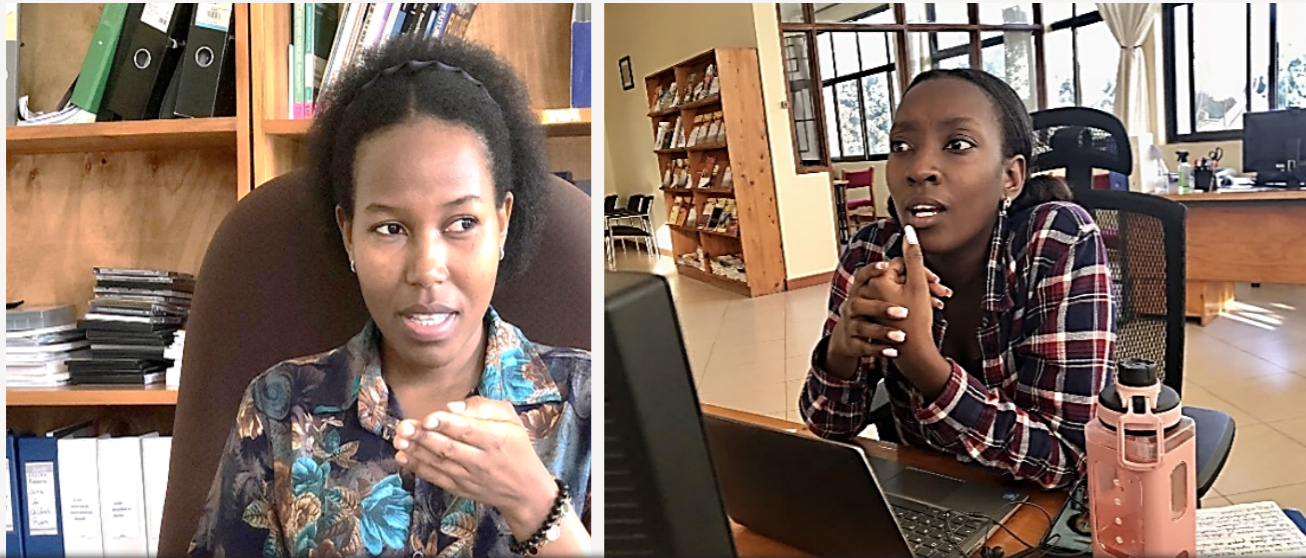
New leadership path for young women

Their achievements through one-year engagement with EASUN's leadership development program for young women leaders

Two young women from Tanzania enrolled in EASUN's transformational leadership development work through its Internship Program for Young Women leaders. In June 2022, Mandwa Mhela (27) successfully completed one year of attachment within the program. Abela Mkandala (27) joined in April 2022. Through intense training and coaching, the two young women acquired and applied skills and techniques in facilitating transformative learning, change and development in organizations, as well mentoring and coaching individuals.

Stories shared by Mandwa include taking the lead in facilitating five sessions in module two of EASUN's FOLD training in June 2022. The experience fundamentally shifted her posture as a leader—as she notes herself:

I developed a new posture that allows me to learn in the process of facilitating others, instead of being held back by baggage. The quality of my presence shifted more toward mindfulness. I now work consciously with different processes that are invariably active in situations I facilitate, i.e., my own process, process of the client situation, and process in the environment. I have increased my resilience as a leader—working with calmness and empathy.



Within EASUN, the two young women competently participated in or led activities such as fundraising, contracting with clients, and activity planning. They facilitated OD interventions, and civil society institutional development workshops. They showcased their enhanced capacities for team leadership in various EASUN initiatives and activities, including organizational learning processes.

Mandwa consolidated shifts in her leadership practice during her last two months at EASUN (May – June 2022). In addition to training events, she co-facilitated two OD interventions in organizational client situations. She recalls facilitating two team building exercises that: 1) increased team members self-awareness to become more intentional about using positive qualities they bring to team situations; 2) improved communication in ways that strengthen relationships among team members. The latter exercise generated skills in information sharing for achieving common purpose in team situations.

Grounded in a sense of values

Increased confidence generated Mandwa's ability to be more open as a leader and change facilitator. "In the OD interventions I was able to listen actively to the client", she says, "which included giving inputs to increase awareness and create positive shifts in the situation. I no longer make lightning diagnoses that would simply take clients into resistance, i.e., transferring responsibility to me, the leader."

In addition to applying new skills and techniques, Mandwa and Abela are now expressing innovative ideas about transformative leadership as a values-based practice. Both have been particularly keen to highlight their enhanced capacities in conscious use-of-self as a prerequisite for transformative leadership to take root, characterized by a clear sense of values:

"The quality of my presence has shifted toward mindfulness as I provide leadership for others... I have increased my resilience as a leader able to work with calmness and empathy (equanimity) –Mandwa Mhela.

"I now understand what it takes to be a facilitator—I have strengthened my self-awareness and, consequently, enhanced my ability for conscious use-of-self. As a leader, I now carry a posture that enables others to discover what works best for them." –Abela Mkandala.

Acting on internalized leader-values*

Abela's first engagement with EASUN was through FOLD training, which she was required to attend as a participant, in EASUN's leadership development program for young women. However, the real encounter for her, beyond compliance with programmatic requirements, was with a training content that transformed her methodology in situations of leadership. What stood out for her in the first module of FOLD was the approach to facilitating learning, and what it said to her about leadership. Says Abela: "The whole concept and tools for reflective learning were new to me. You would learn without feeling like you are being taught. That helped me discover that I need to change my facilitation and leadership practices if I wish to be an effective influencer of change in other people."

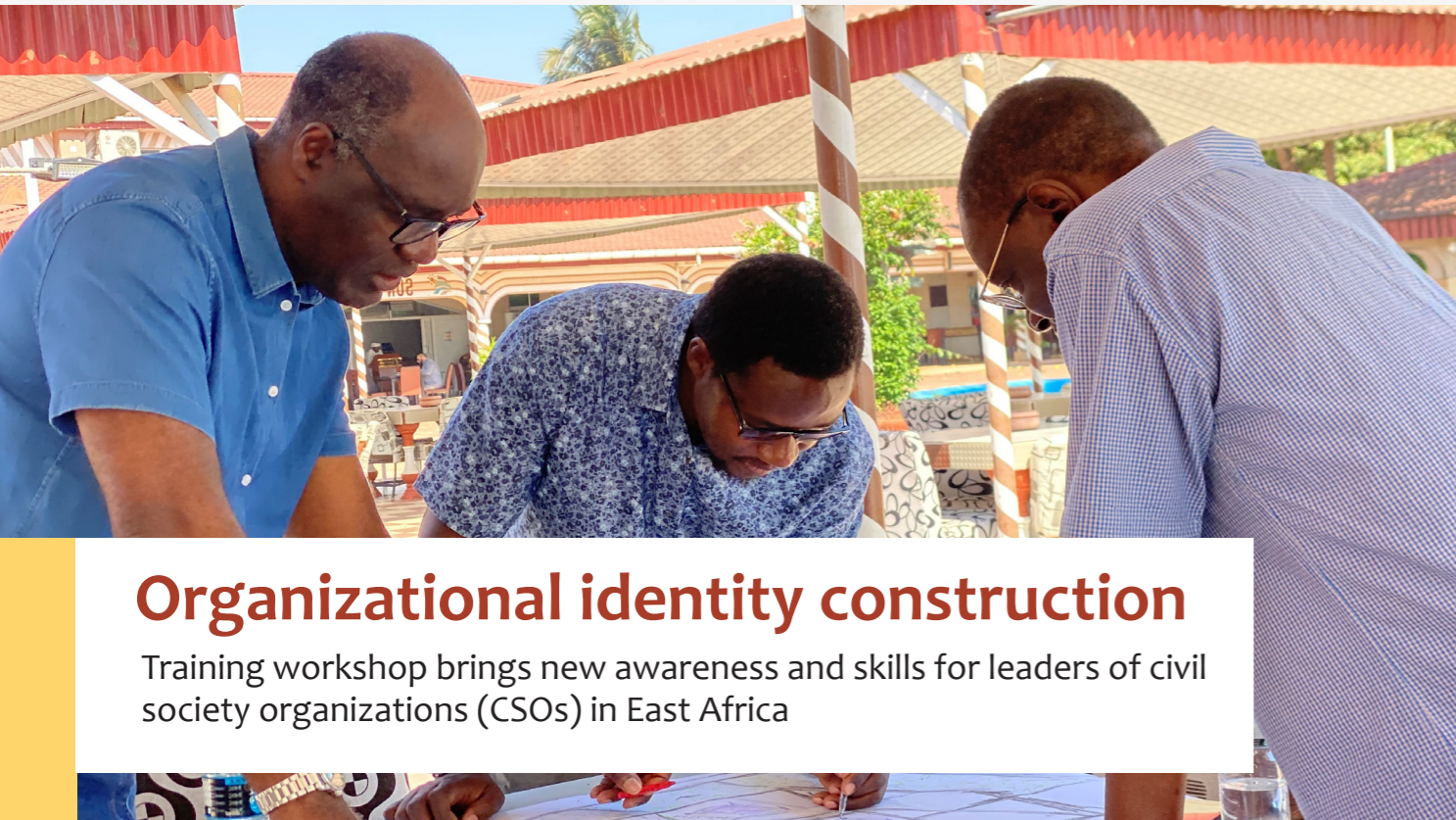
Abela explains how coaching within EASUN further equipped her with what it takes to be a facilitator. Self-development sessions strengthened her self-awareness, which enhanced her abilities in conscious use-of-self. She discovered what her style as a leader ought to be: "Leadership", she says, "is not like being on a control panel, but to carry a posture that enables others to discover what works best for them." Before joining the internship program for young women leaders, Abela had done some civic education work with Youth groups in Tanga District, Tanzania. Tasks involved talking to young people about the importance of being present in local government activities, e.g., attending village or town meetings and voicing their opinions. "My approach", says



Abela, "was more about extending the desire of the teacher for them to attend the activities, which did not generate any developmental experience for the youth themselves, e.g., motivating them to embrace the new experience and surface insights from the opportunity." Feedback from the young people was mostly delivered as formal report-back. Continues Abela: "When it was all done, the teacher left the class, and the young people were free to go back to

what they were doing before. The old norms would return, with the risk of growing resistance because of the likely feeling that the change being pursued was no longer worthwhile." At that time in Tanga, and in other situations, Abela practiced facilitation as "making people do according to what I was trying to teach them." Participation in the internship program for young women leaders has fundamentally changed all that for Abela. She now highlights

*"Development is based on the premise that all giving is a form of community investment, the return on which is the knowledge that those values which the organization, the community, and the donor... share are being acted on." Kay Sprinkel Grace (2005) Beyond Fund-raising: New Strategies for Non-profit Innovation and Investment. Hoboken: WILEY, p. 11



Organizational identity construction

Training workshop brings new awareness and skills for leaders of civil society organizations (CSOs) in East Africa

EASUN's training workshop on CSO Identity Construction was held in Moshi, Tanzania, from 7th to 9th June 2023. The 3-day workshop brought together 16 CSO leaders from Tanzania and Kenya. Identity construction is among several activities regularly organized by EASUN for the institutional development of civil society organizations, toward governance practices that are responsive to inclusive needs of people in organizations and communities.

The workshop created an opportunity for CSOs to collectively examine issues that affect the development and impact of the sector from the point of view of their growth. Key aspects of the workshop included:

- Understanding patterns of managing organizational identity.
- Understanding organizational learning and its role in strengthening an organization's ability to manage its identity.
- Creating polarity maps to help participants see the full picture of issues related to CSO identity management.

Previous experience with identity management

The first day involved exploration of how CSOs are currently managing their identities. In groups, participants shared relevant incidents from their organizations, then created role-plays around the incidents shared. Plenary discussions of the role plays enabled the participants to see key things that are involved in organizational identity and the factors in complex organizational situations and changing environments influence identity evolution.

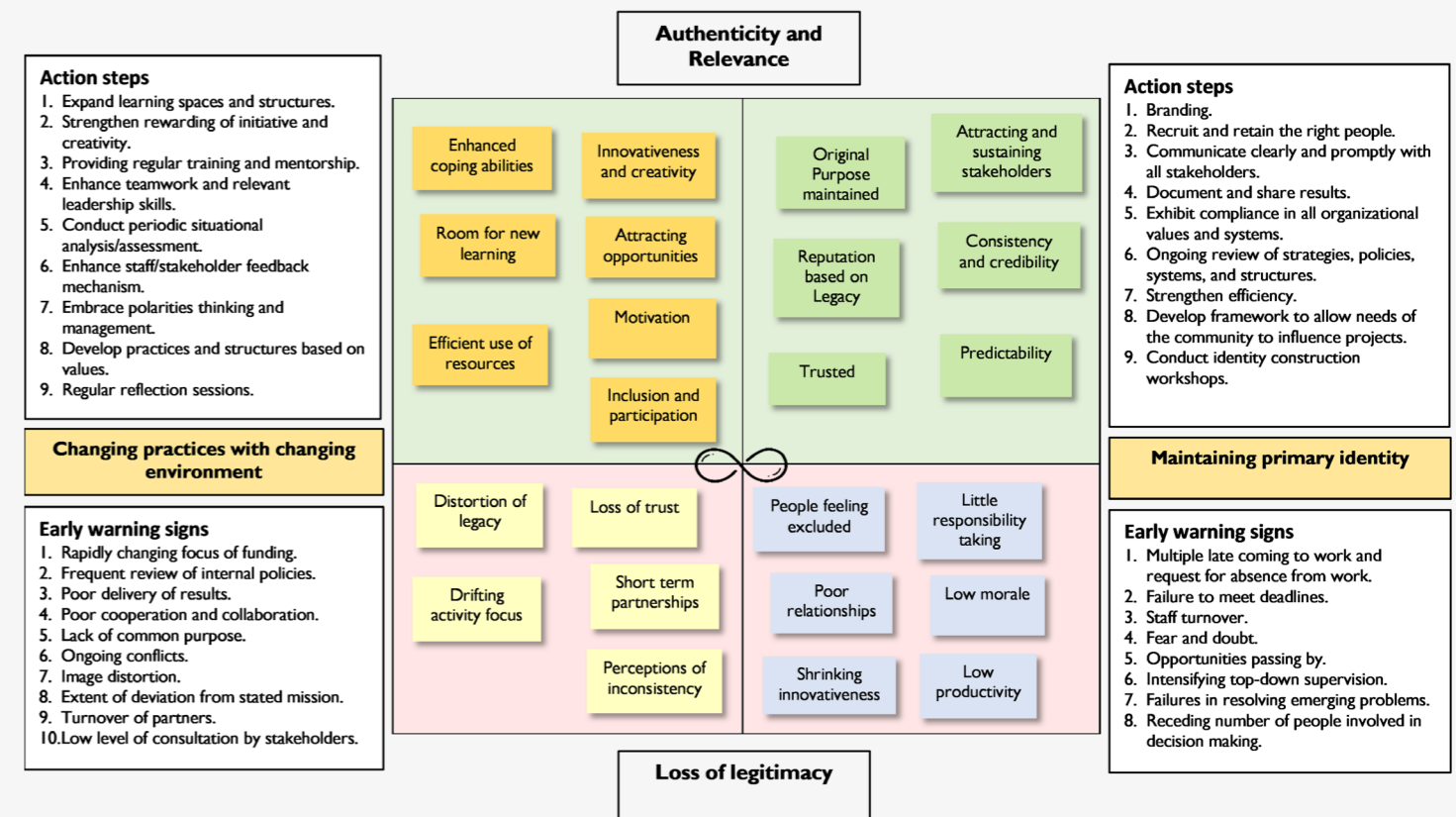
The role-plays surfaced challenges that CSOs currently face with identity management. Insights generated by the analysis and reflection included; 1) the need for shared understanding of organizational identities; 2) identity construction is on-going and requires time commitment; 3) shared understanding builds confidence for identity construction; 4) identity construction requires critical reflection on issues such as compliance and its consequences, e.g., on claimed values, and what to let go of, for meaningful adaptability.

Identity construction through polarities management

The second day of workshop started with a look at identity construction through the concept of polarities. Several models were introduced to help participants become conversant with the concept of polarity. From a brief presentation on "power-use effectiveness" model, for instance, they recognized that the tension between using power to control vs to enhance can never be resolved by choosing one side or the other. Managing the polarity and paradox inherent in it requires a creative dance between the two sides, enabled by keen awareness of advantages of each, and the downsides of leaning too much on any one side. The input and participants' reflections on "power use effectiveness model", prepared them to engage with the issue of organizational identity construction, both by individual CSOs and the whole institutional sector.

Participants were then asked to pick and work with one of the roleplays from day 1 of the workshop, in which they had observed what the organization was struggling with in relation to identity questions. They picked a roleplay that was underlining the practice of building ownership of communities served through project activities. The roleplay became a practical case that also influenced their formulation of a polarity to work with in the subsequent process of learning identity construction. The polarity they identified had two seemingly opposing sides, around the struggle between change and stability: 1) constructing an identity and clinging to it, which has implications on the ability to cope; 2) adaptability or compliance with changing demands in the environment, which carries the risk of evaporating the values that give meaning to the existence and purpose of an organization.

At the core of the identity construction process itself, the CSO leaders identified strategies that would enable them to maximize the advantages of each side of the polarity. They also developed early warning signs that would signal to them when they are leaning too heavily on either one of the polarities. At the end of the session, participants shared their insights around the complexity of managing organizational identity, for instance: "this process enabled us to see more in the story of the organization (in the role-play) than we did before." (See map above produced by participants in the workshop). □



Become a transformative leader and change facilitator

Apply now to attend EASUN's FOLD training in 2023

FOLD training will make you a professional facilitator of learning and change in complex organizational and community situations (see stories inside). Contact EASUN now for information and application materials for 2023 modules. The training is available for heads of organizations and senior programme staff of Civil Society Organizations in Eastern Africa.

Write to : info@easuncentre.org

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five ways to be a transformative leader...

1 Create spaces for other's to grow

2 Listen without judging

3 Mobilize community participation

4 Enhance confidence in others

5 Facilitate responsibility taking



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How CSO leaders experienced the training

"I feel **energized**. I see new possibilities opened up. Going through the case-study, I was... getting some answers from the process. It has given me a new perspective and tools, and also generated new questions for me."—Amani Mhinda, Programme Manager, Open Society Foundation. Nairobi, Kenya.

"My question has **shifted**. I came to the training with a heavy burden, looking at the theme of the workshop— 'CSO Identity Construction'. I struggled with the mindset and posture of maintenance. My question was, 'how can we maintain the identity of our organization?' Now I am talking about "managing polarity", i.e., both maintenance of identity and adaptability of the organization. My questions have been answered with the tools, new concepts and mindset shifts that I have attained. I have something concrete to take home and share with my organization."—Jacqueline Nicodemus INADES Formation, Dodoma.

"I feel **challenged**, looking back at where I come from and the organization I work with and the polarities that exist in it, i.e., a network that deals with lots of varied interests. Another challenge: Process."

—Malesi Shivanji, CEO, KEWASNET. Nairobi, Kenya.

On top of the world: "I feel enlightened, like a new person, in terms of understanding organizations and the role of leadership in managing polarities existing in an organizational situation."

—Asmini Gombo Success Hands Tz. Dar salaam.

"I feel **Inspired**. The identity construction Tool is a problem solving, learning and motivation tool. It has raised new questions for me in terms of how I can use it in my organizational situation and communities we support."—Golden Mgonzo, ED, Shalom Children, Arusha.

Coming!!

Next issue of Turning Points (June 2023) will highlight stories of change by youth participating in Project Greenhouse.

EASUN appreciates sustained funding from

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