

Self-Mastery and Leading: GIZ Coaching Strengthens South African Civil Society in the Fight Against Corruption

Voices from the Field: AC Story of the Quarter

A sure way of achieving burn-out is to work for an NGO, because there will always be one more person to save or one more cause to fight, it is said. This can be particularly true for anti-corruption work where there is always bound to be (at least) one more corruption case calling you into action. To make things worse civil society organisations rarely invest in leadership development. People keep their heads down and fight the next battle. So GIZ in South Africa on behalf of BMZ came up with an idea of a coaching programme for civil society leaders active in the field of anti-corruption.

by **Kris Dobie**, participant of the GIZ leadership programme in South Africa. Interviewed by the Anticorruption and Integrity Newsletter, the coach, **Marianne Camerer**, provides THE TRAINER'S VOICE.

The reason for the initiative is quite pragmatic. South Africa has a reasonably active National Anti-corruption Forum (NACF), bringing together the public sector, private sector, and civil society. It has been a continuous hallmark of civil society's participation that it is un-coordinated. Acknowledging the need for a stronger, more focussed civil society, the GIZ Public Service Reform Programme (PSRP) did two things. First, it convened key actors, and second, it strengthened the leadership capacity of the people who drive civil society.

THE TRAINER'S VOICE

“While co-founding Global Integrity in the US in 2005 and completing my Ph.D. I benefited from a coach. Having someone independent to talk to can create the thinking-space to set goals and strategically figure out what actually needs to happen both personally and professionally. This was enormously helpful. When I came back to South Africa in 2007 I observed that many peers in the NGO sector were exhausted: they were extremely busy, but what were they actually achieving? That experience brought me into leadership development.”

Marianne Camerer

As a participant I was given the rare opportunity to pick my head up from the day to day forging ahead, to re-assess where I am going, how I plan to get there, and to get some skills to help me on my way. The six-month journey started with a focus on 'self-mastery'. If you don't know what's important to you, how can you know on what to spend your energies? If you can't manage yourself, how would you lead? We worked with a host of thinking models, but also very practical skills related to time management. After 'self-mastery' comes 'leading others'.



South African Civil Society leaders get together at the GIZ coaching, with Marianne Camerer (fourth from left) and Kris Dobie (third from the right)

THE TRAINER'S VOICE

“Coaching is about creating a thinking space and awareness about what it is leaders are actually doing, or achieving (or not) and how they are spending precious resources. It is an opportunity for them to reflect on their personal values, the roles that they play and how these align with the mission of their organizations. The coaching process reminds leaders of their goals and vision and stimulates them to start thinking big again, giving them permission to dream, so that it is not just about worrying how to pay the office rent but also to remember why they choose to work in this particular sector. Through the coaching process participants are held accountable for the goals that they set for themselves and their organizations.”

Marianne Camerer

By having an idea of where you are aiming to go, you can set yourself 'proximate objectives'. It means that you are not fighting all of corruption at once, but rather identifying specific projects and working towards achieving those. A much more attainable goal, and much more effective!

THE TRAINER'S VOICE

“There is a need for basic skills that NGO leaders usually do not acquire as they move from being activists into having to manage organizations: time management, strategic planning, collaborative problem solving, empowerment, and delegation. Some participants of the pilot had never set an explicit goal before: if a goal is not written down and does not have a deadline, it is simply not going to happen.”

Marianne Camerer

The focus here was on interpersonal skills (such as empowerment & delegation, mentoring & coaching, and having difficult conversations) and strategic thinking and influencing. Probably the most valuable take away from the course has been the structured thinking models. It is one thing to mull over what to do next, and quite another to engage in structured strategic planning.

The programme was not a 'training programme' though. The facilitators strongly believe that training alone will not change behaviours. You have to practice newly learnt skills in real life by applying it to our everyday workplace challenges. The more you use the skills, the better you get. This is where the coaching component comes in: Each participant had seven one-on-one coaching sessions over the six-month period. During these sessions goals were set and participants determined strategies for achieving those. The coach merely guided by applying some of the techniques discussed in the prior workshops.

Participants said the coaching gave them courage to do things they had not previously thought possible of themselves. One, who had recently been given significant additional people management responsibilities, said she would have struggled to cope without these skills. The CEO of one organisation credited the programme with renewed focus and a more ordered way of doing things.

I found myself at a place in my work where the strategic thinking skills came in very handy. I used a mid-project strategic review with my project team, and one of the team members found it so useful that she applied it to one of her projects. But strategic thinking also has benefits which are more on the existential side.

Lastly there is the learning from colleagues working in other organisations. We now know what the others do, and how we can support each other's initiatives. We know the strengths of various organisations, and can form synergies to harness these. But importantly, we know each other. Some barriers have been broken down and doors opened. And though we can't say that we've suddenly built a coherent civil society, we've built some trusting relationships that might take us there.

THE TRAINER'S VOICE

„Corruption in South Africa has become entrenched and affects many people. This is true for corruption experienced by ordinary citizens on the ground as well as on the grand scale of corrupt acts of undue influence and state capture. If there is neither integrity nor ethical leadership but rather a political culture that at worst accepts corruption as the norm, and at best turns a blind eye to it, then our democracy is not going to flourish. We may have formal oversight mechanisms in place and hard-won democratic institutions, but they are being strained and abused. Organized citizens need to step up and voice their concerns. There is a crucial need for anti-corruption organizations to be empowered to step up in terms of fighting the fight.”

Marianne Camerer



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Participants share their experience at the leadership programme initiated by GIZ on behalf of BMZ for South African civil society in 2012

About the Trainer:



Marianne Camerer is the co-founder and international director of the international anti-corruption NGO Global Integrity. She is passionate about leadership development and works with private, corporate and civil society clients to achieve their highest potential within their sphere of influence. During

2012 together with Leadership Solutions she piloted the leadership development and coaching programme for NGO leaders in South Africa who work on anti-corruption and governance related issues. Funded by GIZ, the programme built on a needs assessment conducted in 2011.

About the Author:



Kris Dobie is Manager for Organisational Ethics Development at the Ethics Institute of South Africa (EthicsSA). EthicsSA is a non-profit organisation that works on promoting ethics management practices and good governance. They do so in partnership with

the public sector, private sector and the professions, by serving as a resource through thought leadership, research, training, support, assessment and certification activities.

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