Respondent 4 (R4)

**Onderhoudvoerder:** Nioma Venter (NV)

**Tyd:** 36:07

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| R4 | I am respondent 4. I have been part of the strategic team of Little Seeds since the end of 2017 and involved with Badisa since earlier 2017 until the collaboration with Diaconia around Little Seeds began in May 2019. |
| NV | So the first question is about the period when Diaconia and Badisa started talking to each other about the possibility of what we now know became Little Seeds.  It is like two worlds that met. The idea of an integrated approach is to work together towards a shared vision and strategy. We told each other that from the beginning. What was your experience in the coming together of Diaconia and Badisa as partners in VKO in this regard? |
| R4 | To me it was a no brainer, that the two interventions should be synchronized.  As it was, we were in effect working against each other and  we wouldn't have gotten anywhere anyway. On the one hand there was the silos, but furthermore, the suspicion and passive aggressiveness between the organisation and the church, made it almost impossible. It was fumed, never with appreciation, but always with suspicion and negativity.  I don't know what the experience was on Diaconia's side, about that.  And I think that for more than a year of aggressive possessiveness, passive aggressiveness, it just hit an incredibly difficult point.  You will also remember how difficult that first conversations were when we agreed that it must be one ministry, one intervention, but where it should be placed was so difficult. Eventually we had to involve representatives of the church leadership to join our deliberations about something that should be a no-brainer. And even then, the suspicion remained an issue within the strategic team. For quite a few months it was less about the words than the approach itself. |
| NV | What do you mean with the words? |
| R4 | The language. We always refer to the language, the difference between the church and the organisation. |
| NV | It was less about that for you? |
| R4 | Less about that yes.  For me it was rather about the institutional challenges - around silos. And power and control. I know it sound harsh. |
| NV | No-no |
| R4 | But Diaconia... These have been Diaconia initiatives, these are the church projects, this is ours. And Badisa - that's our projects. And each wanted to cling to its own because it also gives me something to do. |
| NV | Yes |
| R4 | Or something to boast about, or something to get sponsorships for. |
|  | *Resources to access.* |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | So for me it was much more about that, than language.  I have been thinking a lot now why is it so difficult for churches and organization to work together. Yes, it's about approaches, because we think differently.  We should not even think, yes we speak different language.  But this is what we realize, at the heart of it is.  I am too afraid of loosing my power over resources, over access, over people.  That's what keeps me sane, that's what gives me reason to keep doing what I'm doing.  Whereas the, the stuff that frustrated me the most no one sees that if you strive for a joint vision together, then you mind, or explore people's inherent benevolence, and give them something to strive towards. But this is a voluntary exploration. It is so creative, this opening up of things. The potential to do something stunningly different is so great and that to me was, and still is, the essence of it all. |
| NV | What exactly is it that you see ‘has been opened’? The two systems? Is that what you see as an creative move? |
| R4 | Yes |
| NV | It was a progressive move? |
| R4 | Because it's only when you go past that silo and realize the thing is beyond me and beyond what I can control. I have with someone’s... Oh with Braam's presentation did I start, conceptualizing in my head: to have a cloud-like vision. Especially within this uncertainty we are now sitting with.  Can I just…  If you really think back on what gave Little Seeds the impetus to start.  After we had the BMC process, those processes, that change management stuff -  I don't know if we achieved an awful lot, but it was also fine.  The semi-logical factual clinical approach they had was right.  I don't think the players were ready for that.  But what really gave us the impetus, was Covid.  Because Covid actually consolidated us, all around, we had one enemy – read: vision.  We had only one way to deal with it – read: consolidation and integration.  So those two years have been good for us...  And it was very difficult for the Little Seeds team.  They did not know how to approach the regulations at all, in that difficult uncertain time.  And I sat for two days, with all their regulations, read everything.  And cross referenced, and then told them what the bottom was. And when they had that bottom line, they were able to consolidate with one vision. So, I keep on saying, Covid helped us. No more and crisis, but an amazing opportunity.  *Coming back to cloud like visioning.* |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  | Research can accommodate perceptions. So let me just say this. It seems that theologians, when they say something, they assume it will happen. They do not process it. They do not enable. |
| NV | I hear you |
| R4 | They do not guide. I am not trying to belittle them, but... |
| NV | I hear you |
| R4 | Yes |
| R4 | He preaches, and that is not wrong. I know it is his work. But unfortunatelly it does not work like that. The question is, how will it be implemented? Who is going to do it? When is it going to happen? How will we know it happened?  How are we going to identify who really has the greatest needs?  How do we take those people through a development process to open their minds to the change that needs to take place? That could be a process in itself that needs to be managed?  Badisa is in the game of compliance and of processes and of systems.  Which we cannot afford now either, because the whole landscape in our country has changed. So how do we reconcile this, the vagueness and the too specific?  And then to say, how do we make the thing work in creative ways.  And with my systems thinking, I said; okay we don't need to know the exact outcome in 20 years. We do not have to put everything in blocks and squares yet.  We only need *cloud like visioning*.  We just have to have a vague idea, where we want to go more or less and how.  So, what do we want to achieve in 20 years? How will you identify areas of greatest needs? How will you approach the development process with those people? That in itself could be a goal – to understand and execute a process. |
| NV | Do you mean with all this that it is one thing to have ideas, but all these ideas need practical solutions or processes to execute? |
| R4 | Exactly! It is good ideas, but we ‘cloud’ it for now and work with what we can do now! It is oraait to dream and know more or less where we are going. In th mean time we get to know each other, learn to understand each other, find concensus on certain ideals and dreams, both give up the need for power and control, and create spaces for creative collaboration. Never linear; always organic. |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | Never in exact blocks. |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | Learn to understand and trust each other. We have made great progress in that regard! It required dedication and commitment, journeying together.  It is time to move forward now. Now that we trust, we must talk buy-in! All stakeholders should Buy-in to Little Seeds. And if we commit to collaboration, we should give one message outward as well. If there are difficulties, bring it to the team so that we can work it out. |
| NV | So we should not claim to work integrated, but in effect we are still working in silos within Little Seeds. |
| R4 | Absoluut |
| NV | The other thing I heard you say is that everyone have to be willing to give up something. |
| R4 | Absoluut |
| NV | Let’s do an appreciative reflection. We have Badisa and we have Diaconia. We have church and we have social work organisation. What would you consider the contribution of each partner? |
| R4 | I think the Badisa contribution is a *no brainer.* Badisa offers order and rhythm, logic and systems. I realise it caused frustration which could very easily be mistaken as ‘control’, but it was nothing like that. It was about the context of the land that we live in which is a context of legislation, the need to comply, and good governance.  *Ethics in good governance as well.* And with that I do not say that Diaconia did not comply or whatever. But all these balls had to be balanced all the time, in whatever we do. If we like it or not, there is a Child Legislation and a constitution, and a labour law. If we do not comply to any of these, we are in trouble. So it is not about Badisa always wanting to tick the boxes, it is about compliance. As a matter of fact, I think Badisa improved in a more susceptible attitude. To be more receiving of a softer approach. The ‘harder’ and the softer approaches in the merger worked creatively together. We hear diverse voices in the process.  I feel very strongly about this: You can only be creative if you are willing to embrace diversity.  And listen and have respect for someone else's opinion.  You don't have to bring that opinion into what you end up doing.  But if you just give the acknowledgment, or your openness to hearing an opinion, because it's going to tickle your thoughts.  Or at least, at the very least, give a piece of sensitivity.  Also remember, what I feel very strongly about is that sustainability.  If you take those three things and analyse the relationship in this way, something else emerges in this relationship. Sustainability is about money, or about the resources. Financial sustainability, but it is also about good governance. |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | You need people for sustainability.  Those people are regulated by labour legislation.  Those people must be trained.  There must be a development plan for those people.  There must be monitoring of those people.  There must be a supervisor, a go to person - at the very least, to do trouble shooting  But the third thing is, there must be a need for the service  I can have al the money in the world and the best systems to do it, good governance system, or organization systems, but if the need is not ECD, or not HIV-Aids, then it is pointless to try to convince people or provide a service, they laugh at you.  Because it is not their need.  And I think this merging of these two brought these things together.  There are still fragments, from the merging that does not take place nicely.  Because in the line, in the ring just around Little Seeds, that hasn't been understood yet.  Because then you get outliers who are only looking for money.  And not realizing that your donors will also want to ask, what is your plan to do this.  Where do you want to do what?  You can't just shoot for money, or you know you can't just for organization…  I don't have enough supervisors and middle managers, or...  You know it's so interdependent, manoeuvrability all the time.  Between these three elements of sustainability. |
| NV | So what I hear you saying is that Badisa brings exellent and good governance to the merge and that it contributes to sustainability. |
| R4 | *Governance,* yes, and also in terms of the relevance of a service. |
| NV | Yes. And if you think of Diaconia? You mentioned something of a ‘softer approach’? |
| R4 | Yes. But especially that you create access to communities. This is an important contribution. Badisa does not necessarily have access at this stage.  Because Badisa's geographical areas, if you delineate them at village level, are very limited. Now we have access to where the Church has access. |
| NV | Diaconia indeed have access to most DRC and URC congregations and therefor communities. |
| R4 | Yes, access to opportunities on local level. And you have influence to convince people to willingly become part, voluntarily become part of greater vision. |
| NV | Which contributes to sustainability? |
| R4 | Absolutely. And more in contact with needs on local level. And with assets within comunities. |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | Because the municipal manager sits in the church on Sunday.  Or the business man, or the lawyer, or...  It is part of the congregation, not necessarily the NG or the VGK, but the congregation  The faith network in that community |
| NV | The church brings people togehter and connects people with networks? |
| R4 | Absoluut |
| NV | If we look ahead, say five years, what do you consider the biggest challenges and the biggers opportunities for us to make Little Seeds work? |
| R4 | There is so much more that we can do together. For one, we don't have enough patience with each other yet. And of each other's ways of thinking.  We are impatient and irritated with each other, but it is much less than it has been in the past. And the only remedy for this all, is open discussion. |
| NV | So we are talking about a relationship that needs to be nurtured all the time? |
| R4 | Ja ja, absoluut. |
| Furthermore, we need to start exploiting those next circles, outside of the Little Seeds structure. Buy into our way of working.  Because our way of working is very systematic. We work very focused and within a specific strategic direction. Above all, we must have a strategy for the Eastern Cape.  Because without a strategy we will be all over the show again.  From Cala to whatever the other places are, and even in Cala we are not going to do the thing systematically. So, we have to work with a strategy and stick to it, make creative adjustments as the demand is. Managing the situation. I don't think we are quite sure yet exactly where we are going and what we want to do  It needs to be refined, and everyone needs to buy into it.  And once we have that, that's the consolidated message we must preach. From a position of strength….  You know I say it many times, we are confident in how we preserve this thing to work. And then we can say to the next circle outside of us, this is how we're going to do it. You have a chance to give input, of course, because it is the appreciative respect we have for your opinion. Various opinions. |
| NV | The opinion of the church and that of the organisasion? |
| R4 | Even wider, even the opinion of our donors. |
| NV | Those are the circles you mean? |
| R4 | *Yes*, I want to be able to tell the donors: This is how we work and we welcome hour input. |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | But we are also not going to let others determine how we are going to do it. And where we are going to do it. It happens too often, and we know our business. We have our processes, based on sound research and factual knowledge.  Because especially around donors, with which I am seriously struggling at this stage, our current situation is one of scarcity.  Who do I approach for extra help? Beyond our traditional donors, or sponsors or income streams as a group of Badisa, which includes Little Seeds.  Because it cannot be that a donor dictates to me where I should work and how I should work.  And that's the next thing.  I'm not saying this happens in our current Little Seeds context, but we must be so alert that donors don't dictate to us, and we end up following their agenda. |
| NV | They *deviate* you from your strategy? |
| R4 | Jip  For example, in our current scarcity as a Badisa group, how are we going to succeed in expanding Little Seeds? This is one of my very big dilemmas at this point.  At the pace we want it to happen because it still bothers me.  We're not doing it at the pace it needs to happen.  You can raise it as a concern.  We must understand what the dilemmas are, I know I deviate.  We still don't understand what we want to do when and at what pace.  It's not enough that people say it's an organic relationship thing.  Sorry, I know it is.  But I can't let you build relationships for 20 years. |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | Somewhere you have to say I'm giving this relationship building a year.  And then something has to happen or I walk away.  We said it was like a silver bullet.  At this rate, it's going to be a rusty axe |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | So that's one of the things we have to pick up.  But about donors now, if I want to expand ECD, at the rate I want, it seems that there is a large source in the Solidarity movement to exploit. But what ticks the boxes for them? They are looking for a better government and want to turn the country around. But I don't always agree with how they want to do it.  Let me take one example around social workers.  They are more concerned about the soft well-being of the social workers, in social work month.  It's fine, it's good.  Let me take one example around social workers.  They are more concerned about the soft well-being of the social workers, in social work month.  It's fine, it's good.  But what are the hard things that our social workers have to face now? And what is it that they have to do to turn our country around? Those are difficult conversations.  So will they agree? We still have to explore it.  But the biggest thing with Solidarity at this stage is, do we believe in the same things?  I know you can open heaven for me, with assets, with resources beyond money. But do we fundamentally agree with where you are coming from? So, while I believe in a strong civil society, unfortunately it is not enough. And it is difficult to stick to your value system in scarcity. And it is also important for Little Seeds to ask these questions. |
| NV | You consider that a challenge, going forward. |
| R4 | Yes. This is always difficult. From a current reality we are crying out for resources. There are tremendous pressure, but you need to be able to rely on parters. And in formal agreements. But the ethos of an organisasion should also be clear and not compromised in any way. |
| NV | It can not be *compromised?* |
| R4 | It is about *integrity*.  It is a process of *continues battles.*  And it's very easy to want to submit.  Oh well, we do it under the table.  We hide it.  Nobody needs to know.  It is ethically no longer right, and yes, we have successes.  Oh, I don't want to talk about Solidarity now, I want to talk about donor in general. What is their motive?  It's fine for me if they want to fulfil their duties according to the law.  And that is all they are interested in.  They just want to give the money away, that's fine.  Give it to us, we know exactly what to do with it, but don't dictate to me to say, for example, that it should now be spent in the black neighbourhoods of East London, or that should now be spent in Boston, Bellville. |
| NV | Ja |
| R4 | *Then you walk away.* |
| NV | Thank you for you participation. |