Respondent 7 (R7)

**Onderhoudvoerder:** Nioma Venter (NV)

**Tyd:** 23:48

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| NV | Respondent 7, I am part of the strategic team of Little Seeds.  Was involved with Badisa since 2003, until the collaboration with Diaconia around Little Seeds began in 2019.  Okay so I sent you the three questions in advance, and we're going to talk within the framework of these three questions.  The first question concerns the move we have made, or are attempting to make, towards an integrated approach with a shared vision and a shared strategy.  And we are now looking at four years, actually five years, we started the discussions about it in 2018. We look back five years and we have, in the process, gained our experience on this effort between Badisa and Diaconia to work together as partners in ECD. So, your experience in the last five years. Lets reflect on the experience we had wWhen these two worlds met. |
| R7 | It was actually more than five years. The negotiations with Diaconia started in 2015 already, when it was still known as ‘Armoede & Sorg’. |
| NV | You are quite right! |
| R7 | So my experiece is somewhat longer |
| NV | I understand |
| R7 | Now, the 2015 part to probably 2017 was pretty awful. My experience from that time was, high-high conflict situations. And the relations were, were very bad.  I think it was the approaches and the personalities of the parties involved at that stage.  And I think it was so bad that we actually left it after two years.  And really only picked up again in 2018.  There were now other people in the conversation. Those of us who were part of the longer history, came into the new conversation with a lot of mistrust.  So the one big thing, which I think has only really gotten better for me in the last year, Is the trust in each other, and of each other's intent, intention with this. That, and the understanding that there are room for us all to make a contribution. |
| NV | Let us reflect on that for a moment. Do I understand you correctly that in your experience the course suffered from the relationships that did not work? |
| R7 | It was harmed, yes. |
| NV | More than harmed. It came to an dead end. |
| R7 | Ja |
| NV | Nothing happened for two years. |
| R7 | ja |
| NV | And even when the process was revived, distrust prevailed. |
| R7 | Ja |
| NV | And then, actually in the last year, you experience that there has been improvement. So what you say is really, really important. Because we are talking about a long time, big investment in terms of relationships that had to be made. |
| R7 | There had been distrust in each other's motives and I think there had been perceptions. |
| NV | Of each other? |
| R7 | Of each other and of the work.  Just like they had perceptions about the organization. And I think it took quite a long time to change the perceptions. And then within changing perceptions, finally then also to see but one can only work together. And we can trust each other.  And I think it's with a lot of processes and a lot of the stuff that we end up dealing with. If that…. |
| NV | Basis? |
| R7 | If that base is not there, and the relationships get hurt, then...  You can with the best intentions in the world, because we all know ECD is important.  And one of us alone is not going to be able to get the big job done.  But, and for me it felt a lot like that, that we had to fight for the organization's existence in this… |
| NV | In the relationship |
| R7 | In the relationship yes. And it had been very bad.  What made it different, and why do I think we have progressed?  Well I think, I think the relationships changed then. |
| NV | So that's an important point, I think, that you highlight.  And it is very valuable that you get it articulated so well.  These are also two systems that, if you now think in terms of, let's say the subject disciplines, theology and social work. That integration and your experience of it? |
| R7 | These are two different worlds, with touching levels.  I think what was difficult for both is the... the looser way in which the Church can do good from.  Here are the possibilities, let's mobilize the congregation, and you get the people and they start doing the thing.  On the other side, the organization's side, again the processes, but then the highly regulated context of the legislation.  And the highly regulated, with which...yes, what the organization then has to work with within this context. And I think our experience, and my own as well, we have become so used to, for example, government funding. Look, you have to report on the very last letter. And that stuff was very, very regulated.  While in the church, and it was especially so for me in 2015, it looked like, you know, here money comes in and money goes out. There are not these things, these systems and… |
| NV | *Accountability*? |
| R7 | *Accountability* and the systems we are forced to comply to, yes |
| NV | Ja |
| R7 | So the different way of working, it makes it more difficult to cooperate.  Or that you don't know your... the project, you must clearly know in which phases who does what. And I think that's the stuff we started sorting out, to what it is now.  Then the role that the Church, and... now plays in preparing communities.  And to mobilize and get the readiness and the people to start with it.  But when it has progressed far enough, where the children's law is kind of good…  Or when the staff starts getting involved, or when money starts getting involved.  That the organization can then bring in those systems and things.  And in that respect I think it's an incredible partnership, or an incredible... |
| NV | Potential? |
| R7 | Potential, opportunity to really bring the goods together and make a big difference. |
| NV | Which reminds me that the word integrate comes from a word that means ‘to make whole’. |
| R7 | *To make whole* |
| NV  NV | So when you say there is potential then it actually means there is something on both sides that, if it…  ..if it was not there  When it comes together, then it creates a greater whole.  Which brings us to the second question  What is that specific contribution that you think the Church can make.  And what do you think the….  And you actually already touched on that, but let's think about it a little further.  You talked about the, let's... almost say, the spontaneity with which the church works can innovate. On the other hand you said Badisa has the governance, the structure and things in place that are needed.  Can we go a little further on that? |
| R7 | I think there is a lot, if the things are now nicely put together and integrated.  And you have synergy, then we know that one plus one equals more than two. |
| NV | Ja |
| R7 | and then your one plus one will be five, or even more.  So it is, the Church, that I think can influence the... so many people.  Raise awareness, mobilize to be even more involved in different ways.  I think like what we also saw in Covid, then started saying help us with extra food and stuff like that.  So it's a lot of the practical stuff, or the making of toys and the…  It's for the whole message I think and raising awareness of the importance.  In this case specifically ECD.  But I think the importance of our children, and how can we protect our children better… |
| NV | The moral issues |
| R7 | The whole moral thing.  Values and our morality.  And also all these aunts, and congregations, if you can get them to be, what we call, ‘eyes on the community aunts’.  And then from the organization’s side, the technical skills. We contribute the professional roles and responsibilities.  And then as project develops, you need an organizational framework, that the organization can then do that. |
| NV | You said it in so many words earlier in the interview and I hear you say again how important it is that roles are clarified. |
| R7 | Rolls must be cleared, but when the baton is passed, the process should sill include the interest and input of all parties, otherwise you profesionalise the project and the church and the volunteers just stand back, leave it over to the organisation. That also happended in the past. We don’t want a repeat of that. |
| NV | Absoluut |
| R7 | The latest Child gauge, from the Children's Institute, emphasizes the importance of ecosystems and also a whole community approach, you know.  Because it's not just one system that can do this thing. |
| NV | Absoluut |
| R7 | Caring for children can not only be the school's responsibility.  Or it is not only the Church's responsibility  Or just the organization’s.  So if... and the congregations and the organizations are again part of this larger ecosystem that must be built around children.  So that there are enough opportunities for education.  So that there are enough opportunities for nutrition.  So that there can be enough safe places, and that children can really grow and develop.  And parents feel they are supported. |
| NV | I think you are now accentuating a very important base theory.  Actually for the process we are engaged in.  I mean, to say that integration is about developing an ecosystem.  A whole community approach.  It is very valuable. |
| R7 | There are really great research, stuff they've recently done. This year's theme was specifically about the mental health of children. And how things are actually going badly with our children's mental health. Because of Covid and natural disasters and all that stuff. |
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| NV | Ja, absoluut. |
| R7 | The stuff that's happening now.  And you need a whole system approach with your different systems.  And within it, the Church and the organization are two, such great partners. |
| NV | Integration is inevitable in such an approach |
| R7 | It must be done |
| NV | We can’t do without integration |
| R7 | We can’t do without it |
| NV | Ja |
| R7 | And I don't think we're getting it quite right. We have a few examples of places where we do get it right. I use our Stilbaai example, but there a quite a few. |
| NV | Where you can see integration |
| R7 | Integration between your professionals, between your volunteers, professional volunteers, ordinary people who are just there to look after the children.  And doing good things by looking after the children.  While there are other people who give their time as a psychologist and that.  But there you have a complete and community system.  And that's why I think they get it right that much more thab places where we still try to one by one, and on our own try to start stuff. |
| NV | This leads to the third question. I am not sure if I hear hesitation from you?  You are convinced it must happen, but there is a hesitation - if you say we might not get it quite right. And then you think of Stilbaai, and you say there is a pocket of excellence, where we see it happening.  So, the third question in our conversation is about what we learn for the conversation going forward.  You know, how can we learn from the experiences that have been difficult for us in the last seven years, from 2015.  What do we get out of there, what become pointers for us to go forward. |
| R7 | I am not hesitant about the cooperation.  I don't see that in practice, we get it right as we would like to often... |
| NV | Ok |
| R7 | You know, I think the very first thing, it's about who is the jockey.  What is the message and who is the message bearer.  So the message and the message carrier.  And that there is someone, or someones, who must work very, very purposefully to get the parties together and just getting the initial conversations and the relationship established. And the moment the relationship is established, and those people can sit around a table, in a congregation and start sharing the joint vision and have a dream, then....  A dream for Stilbaai, or a dream for Citrusdal.  And we can buy into that, then the other system starts well and so, can…  Then half naturally start to fall into place.  But if we don't that, that first important thing…  And that's the difference for me between a Stilbaai, because they have jockeys there who drive the process...  No matter what happens in between.  These people have an absolute dream, and have a vision.  And if you come in, then you are absorbed into it.  But it is years of investment, and stability in who is the jockeys…  what this stuff… |
| NV | So continuity? |
| R7 | A continuity, there is the word, to keep it going.  So I think in Little Seeds once the leadership team has everything ready, it is terribly important that we identify who are the message bearers and what is the message.  And that message must, without exception, be the same no matter who carries the message. |
| NV | So when we think of the way ahead, what comes to mind? |
| R7 | People |
| NV | People? |
| R7 | I think the biggest challenge is...  Once Little Seeds has its own governing board or board of directors, or whatever they will be called, we will have to make sure that they understand the vision clearly. They have to understand that Little Seeds is not just another professional organisation, dealing with laws and stuff. Which comes back to have the right people around the table.  I don't think we are doing nearly enough to spread the message of ECD and collaboration in this regard.  So I think we have to keep looking at the communication strategy.  I can't imagine that something like money could be a problem.  Maybe another virus but… |
| NV | I this project it is not (only) about money |
| R7 | It is not about money |
| NV | Ja |
| R7 | In the end, it's all about bringing people together and making them understand how important ECD is  And why is ECD important… |
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| NV | And no one person or party can do this on its own |
| R7 | No one can do it on his or her own |
| NV | Ja |
| R7 | Nobody should want to do it on their own |