

Ukusa's Future: Funding relative to the historically disadvantaged

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Introduction

The benchmark for funders of nongovernment organizations in South Africa to a very great extent should be the alleviation of poverty. UKUSA provides opportunities through the arts for historically disadvantaged and poverty-stricken people which they would never realize otherwise, and we aim to continue doing so.

To this end our Mission Statement reads: UKUSA is a developmental community performing-arts non-governmental organization. One goal is to build self-esteem among the marginalized, the poor and the forgotten - to reduce poverty. To this end we offer the best possible tuition in music, dance and drama which will develop skills for self actualization, continuing education, and career development. Our programme is based on the principle that sustainable development and the flourishing of culture are interdependent. Another goal is to promote and develop respect for diverging cultural perspectives. People sixteen years and upwards are welcome. They, in turn, share their skills with younger people in their own communities by initiating new Youth Projects. Finally we are a bridging course for tertiary institutions.

Ukusa's funders: Who & Why

In 1987 I was contacted twice by a gentleman from the Community Arts Workshop in Durban. He proposed that I establish a music programme in Durban which would be financed by Shell Corporation. I refused because during this apartheid era the offices of Shell Corporation were being blown up by anti apartheid groups in Europe. Again in 1988 I was approached for the same reason. This time I was asked to meet with people from Johannesburg to discuss the idea of either starting a music programme in conjunction with the Johannesburg group or starting a programme on my own. Following discussion, I began to entertain the idea of organizing a music programme in Durban. One concern was that if I refused again someone else may impose their western ideas of music making. Furthermore the Music Department of the University of Natal was a good venue as it was safe and had equipment.

Because money from Shell Corporation was not accepted by political activists, I was required to present my plan to the Culture and Working Life Project involved with Community Organizations at the university. After meeting for two days this Committee came back to me and asked me to find another funder. I told them that I did not look for this funder. This funder found me. Well then, they said, start a worthwhile programme and give us a report next year. That was fourteen years ago.

My acceptance of this challenge was pragmatic. My wish was that the newly established music/arts programme would not be administered by one who prescribed for, but rather by one who worked with students to arrive at the content and form of classes.

During this time Shell sponsored the popular TV programme, Shell Road to Fame, on which they spent many thousands of Rands each week. They needed an even more legitimate or credible image in South Africa; thus they were willing to fund this new educational music programme. They were only willing, however, to spend R100 000.00 annually.

In 1993 SHELL warned that funding would be reduced by half, i.e. to R50,000 in two or three years. Their letter read: "we believe that as we are also responsible for the Eastern Cape, we need to consider sponsoring an Arts and Culture programme there in the future too". Shell's 1994

letter read that they decided to "cut back funding for the project to free up funds for similar initiatives in another Province under our jurisdiction." They added that they had "no hesitation in recommending our project to another prospective funder etc." To my knowledge Shell funded no other Arts and Culture Programme in South Africa. Shell simply no longer needed the positive publicity of the sort that UKUSA provided for them in the local newspapers during the apartheid era; thus, their funding eventually stopped.

To supplement Shell funding in 1993, South African banks and industries were approached. The average offer from only a few was about R15 000 annually. Each organization required a different type of report according to their particular specifications.

In 1994 GENESIS FOUNDATION was successfully tapped through a chance meeting with a friend. They agreed to provide R50,000 annually for three years. They considered this to be seed money to help us "get on our feet."

In 1996 Shell gave us R40 000 as their final grant towards our budget of R120,000+. The difference was made up by the Genesis Foundation, which was funded by a wealthy Swiss businessman who is interested in Africa and the arts, and by other smaller contributions.

Also in 1996, UKUSA, linked up with the Swedish International Development Association (SIDA). SIDA agreed to fund us partially for three years if we set up a Board of Trustees, drew up a constitution, had books audited etc. We willingly complied.

In 1997 - SIDA promised R131 000 but gave only R 114 000; thus we were short of funds as our budget for that year was R151 000. An excerpt from one of my letters to the Southern African Representative of the Solon/Genesis Foundation during this topsy-turvy financial year reads:

"As the year draws to a close I realize that my application for funding for this year was naive, if that is the correct word. For the last two years we requested R50,000 from Genesis for the running of Ukusa as was needed. This year I wanted to be transparent and say that we only needed R20,000 since we EXPECTED to receive R131 000 from SIDA and our budget is R151000. The result was that your organization then saw our request as a "topping up," and this was not intended. Had UKUSA simply requested R50 000 again and been granted this amount, we would break even in 1997. The fact is that SIDA gave us only R114 000, so we are short.

I was chided by SIDA last year for not spending the full amount they gave us. Now I am very glad that there is money from last year to make up the difference; thus, we are still able to pay the teachers...."

The SOLON/GENESIS Foundation eventually stopped their funding repeating, like other funders, that they planned to support organizations for only a few years until they are able to get on their feet.

In 1998 SIDA, working through the School of Music at Göteborg in Sweden, said that UKUSA would be fully funded through 1998, 1999 & 2000 after which SIDA would gradually withdraw funds. By 2001 there will be no more SIDA funding, we were told.

The usual, which the funders we encountered said to us, was that it was time we funded ourselves - it was time we stood on our own feet financially. Our response to SIDA, as it was to Genesis and to Shell ten years ago is the same. UKUSA does not wish to become simply another music school by raising our fees in order to become financially self-supporting. Our aim is to continue to provide opportunities and skills which normally are beyond the reach of people LIVING IN POVERTY. In 1998 the socioeconomic background of our 219 students was 196 underprivileged students. Listen to the stories of a few such Ukusa students.

Stories of Ukusa's students

Bheki J Mthembu: One day at the Workshop sweet sounds came floating by, and I followed them. Another day I heard even sweeter sounds at a second shopping centre, and again I followed them. Both times B.J. was playing his sax. He plays his saxophone from the time he gets up until he goes to bed. " I play all day long," he told me.

He began studying at UKUSA about 10 years ago. When he came he had no instrument, so his teacher offered his horn to B.J.and showed him how to play. B.J. continued to use borrowed instruments, but after a few months, he was able to buy a second-hand horn. Since then he has owned three horns - each one a little better than the last. When he finished busking one evening, he was attacked by eight young men with knives and his horn was stolen. We financed the purchase of a new horn. Because he had no work, he was forced to sell this horn to a pawn shop for money to buy food. He phoned me in desperation because he knew the shop was about to sell his horn. We retrieved his instrument for him and his struggle continues. (Ukusanews: 1993 Aug. p.3)

Sandile Madziba: He wrote: I was inspired by my uncle who used to visit me with his guitar. Although he could not play very well at the time, I could hear how his chords were deep, rich and very smart. I live in the Umbumbulu area. I travel approximately 50 km to UKUSA, which takes about one and a half hours.

I come every Saturday because I love music. I never had a fair chance to learn music at school, especially with regard to reading and writing and playing instruments. Another thing is that I am coming from a disadvantaged family background, so they could not push me to be what I wanted to be a musician. ... My reason for coming to Ukusa is to learn to play music. (Ukusanews: 2001Oct. p.5)

Joseph Dlamini wrote about Bucca Xaba. "If I hadn't been with UKUSA and did not have a Ukusa Certificate, I would not have got the job." Those are Bucca Xaba's words, a dynamic former Ukusa student. Being unemployed for many years did not discourage this young man from Ntuzuma..... Bucco is now stationed at the Voortrekker Army Base in Pretoria, playing in the Army Band and entertaining dignitaries. He hopes that all UKUSA students use this vital opportunity well. (Ukusanews: 1998 Oct. p.3)

Raymond Shange: For want of his saxophone this wonderful socially concerned and active UKUSA student was murdered one Saturday night in a township returning from a gig. He played in the Music Minors. Excerpts from our daily newspapers in 1995 read:

"Orphans of the political war at Inanda are being assisted by a band that is determined to help with community upliftment....About 40 orphans live at the Inqabayokuqasha Orphan Home in Inanda....All the children were used to violence and many of them had seen their own parents killed.

The band, the Music Miners, saw the plight of the orphans on TV and decided to do something for them. "We felt that we couldn't just sit by and watch these poor children living in these conditions - the orphanage lacks so many things and needs so much help. "We held a concert to help her, and we challenge other bands to start helping other people in need. When we first went to the orphanage, I was almost in tears because of the poverty." The Music Minors Band members have gone from door to door in the townships collecting money for the children. (Ukusanews: 1995 April, p.4 from The Daily News, January 3 and The Argus, January 5)

One of his many other activities was that he used his salary bonus to help buy a piano to provide music lessons for children in the township. (Ukusanews:

Tholi Khanyi: Tholi's praise poem to UKUSA, translated from Zulu:
Phambili* Ukusa Arts Programme!

The sun has risen The clouds run away
 The sky becomes clear and beautiful
 And there emerges the name
 UKUSA
 I hear about Ukusa
 I see development flowing into our communities
 I hear about Ukusa
 I see Artists realising themselves and their potential
 We say Phambili Ukusa Arts Programme, Phambili
 Phambili for your good work, Phambili!
 Ukusa Arts Programme you are a candle in the dark
 You give light to those who need it
 You are the rain in the desert
 You provide life where it never existed
 You are the artists' Doctor
 You heal the wounds from the past experiences
 We say Phambili Ukusa Arts Programme, Phambili
 Phambili for your good work Phambili
 Ukusa Arts Programme you are a wagon of fame
 You carry the local and internationally proclaimed stars to the future
 The likes of Shiyani Ngcobo
 and many other, we say "go on guys! Enjoy
 your journey to the future, but don't forget to pull us along the way"
 We say "Phambili Ukusa Arts Programme
 Phambili for your good work, Phambili!"
 I hear about Ukusa Administration
 I see two rocks standing firm
 We say, "Go on Professor Betsy Oehrle and Dina Cormick, Go on.
 Don't look back!
 May the One unseen strengthen you more and more in your struggle for the
 Reconstruction of our society and the restoration of its culture.
 KwaZulu-Natal you are a promised land
 Casual-Natal you are blessed for hosting such an organization
 Called Ukusa Arts Programmes
 We say "Phambili Ukusa Arts Programmes, Phambili!
 Phambili for your good work, Phambili"
 "Phambili Ukusa Staff and Students, Phambili!
 Phambili with dedication, Phambili!
 Phambili with enthusiasm and determination, Phambili!
 Phambili with the culture of learning and teaching, Phambili!
 Phambili Ukusa Arts Programmes, Phambili !

*(Phambili=forward)
 (Ukusaneews 2000 #5, p.12)

Sikhosiphi Msongwa: He wrote: "I heard about UKUSA in the early 90's, and I thought that this is a dream come true as music was my passion. Since I was young I used to make my home made guitar by collecting tins and string. From where I live it takes two to three hours travelling by a taxi to reach UKUSA. This was the opportunity of a lifetime for me. I can still remember how exciting my first keyboard class was. I became a good keyboard player. I then decided to have variety, so I dropped keyboard in Grade 4 to play guitar, my favorite.... Ukusa is the best institution especially for us workers because we get to learn on Saturdays. No other place can do this for us. With all I have learned, I can read and write music and play a guitar.....I cannot imagine myself without UKUSA....seeing as I am the only person attending from my area of Inanda. My mission is to teach my community what I've learned, especially the youth.

(Ukusaneews: 2002 May p.4)

The reason our students are sixteen years and older is to empower them to initiate "Community Arts Projects for Youth" in their own communities. Currently we have eight projects in eight different communities reaching +-1000 youth. Two excerpts from the UKUSANEWS :

S'bongile Ngubane wrote: "I organized Singabanoqobi & Samimpilo Women's Groups. These are two sewing groups (and we also sing) which started in July 1996 at Umbhedula. The reason why I started these projects was because I have a vision to help poor people or to help the community. I like to work with them and teach the skills that I have so they can help themselves. We sew for the poor and orphaned children. I thank UKUSA for helping us. Since we started, this is the first time we are receiving funds. About the money, now we can afford to buy material and some cotton. We also make guitar and keyboard covers in black and red. The material is strong - padded and waterproof. We appreciate very much what you have done for us. Thank you very much." (Ukusaneews: 2001 Oct. p.4)

Lamontville Asinamali Music Dance and Drama Project had a Mid-Year Concert for parents and neighbours in the community. "The venue was an open piece of land beside Nimrod Kubheka's home. This was an excellent site as the "stage" could be seen from houses on all the surrounding hills. Thus, when the performance began, not only was there a packed audience of parents and friends seated in front of the stage, but all around we could see people standing outside their houses all watching and listening". (Ukusaneews: 1998 Aug p.10)

In most of the other projects a major focus is AIDS/HIV education. Projects such as these will be supported and developed in the future. To enable project leaders to carry on successfully the main Saturday morning classes must continue. In addition to our usual practical and theoretical classes, project leaders attend classes about business administration, to gain ideas from others and to sort out problems which they encounter and are unable to solve.

Conclusion

In April this year SIDA called a meeting of all their funded groups in South Africa at which they distributed a document: "Evaluation of Sida Support to Culture in South Africa." The first sentence reads:

"The overall goal of Swedish international development cooperation is the reduction of poverty." (Berggren, p.6) Sweden began funding cultural agencies in South Africa in the early 1950s as a way of fighting apartheid. Today their funding of cultural projects is based on "one overall objective: to create opportunities for cultural diversity, creative activities and sustainable development based on human rights". (Berggren, p.6) Their funding will continue, but the question is how.

One path which they suggest is through S.A. government agencies; however, Sweden realizes that "government structures themselves have been dogged by a lack of clarity, if not actual confusion." (Berggren, p.10)

The section of their report, South African Arts & Culture Sectors, analyzed the scope and focus of the Music Sector which includes UKUSA. According to their investigation, they discovered that central to the survival of music was Sida's financial support. "In many cases, the Sida funding constitutes the only available resources to continue, let alone sustain, music education in disadvantaged communities." (Berggren, p.17 quoting CEPD report, p.4)

Johnny Mekoa, head of the Music Academy of Gauteng (MAG), summed up the many views: "Swedish funds brought in hope ... showed us that there was help out there and that life was not all difficulties. If they pulled out now, it would be like chopping down a beautiful new flower. Give us another three-year cycle and help us solidify." MAG has possibilities of solidifying because their showcase band impresses business and education alike, so Johnny's project will no doubt

survive. Our question is how will UKUSA survive? The answer is simply that UKUSA will not survive.

Moving to SIDA's "Draft Strategy for the Swedish Support to the Regional Development Cooperation, Sub-Saharan Africa, 2002-2006" which was submitted to the S.A. government we read: "The reduction of poverty and constitute the basis for the Swedish regional development cooperation." (Berggren,p.39) .

A most insightful article by the dean of the Haas School of Business at the University of California at Berkeley, Laura D'Andrea Tyson is titled "It is time to step up the global war on poverty." Americans are reminded by the recent terrorist activities that we live in a world of unprecedented opulence and remarkable deprivation. To achieve the U.N. goal of cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015, development assistance must more than double to about \$100 billion per year.

Tyson writes that "working together, developed countries can afford the price tag*\$50 billion a year of additional aid amounts to only 0.2% of the gross domestic produce of the countries in the Organization for Economy Cooperation and Development."

Put another way Harvard economist Jeffrey Sachs said in May that "by spending just \$0.01 in every \$10 on aid, rich countries could save millions of lives each year in poor nations". (Sachs, 2002)

Tyson mentions ways other than foreign aid that additional development assistance can take place. One of these is that "donor governments should forge partnerships with nongovernmental organizations with proven track records in delivering services to the poor." Assistance can be linked to measurable performance indicators. This will prevent additional development assistance from being wasted by repressive, inefficient states.

Donors must take seriously Tyson's suggestions of forging partnerships with nongovernmental organization with proven track records. SIDA forged a partnership with UKUSA in 1996, and UKUSA has a track record of delivering services to the poor for fourteen years. Though SIDA now states that their overall goal of international development cooperation is the reduction of poverty, their criteria for future funding excludes this goal from which all other criteria should emanate. Why?

The question now is - will SIDA continue their partnership with UKUSA. All other donors that assisted UKUSA provided what they termed seed money, and they, in turn, received positive publicity. Such donors also expected UKUSA to be financially self-sufficient in approximately three years. The simple fact is that organizations working with the very poor cannot be financially self sufficient.

Donations come from Western governments and companies who realize profit or obtain wealth through successful business operations. Yet this very success is also a danger. We have created a world where the affluent minority must be seen in the context of an impoverished majority that has had enough.. Horst Kohler, head of the International Monetary Fund, stresses the interconnectivity of the world's economies. He fully realizes that discussions of pressing European economic problems "are far removed from Africa's more basic economic hurdles, like providing clean water and health care." (Labi, p51) Business aims to maintain and improve their own financial situation. If they improve the living situation of others, their business opportunities will also improve. If business is not yet ready to face the vital challenge of reconnecting the creation of wealth with the power of conscience, donors must take up this challenge. Donors must realize that the eradication of poverty should be their benchmark for the purpose of the distribution of funds in Africa..

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