



# TRAINING FOR TRANSFORMATION

External Impact  
Study Report 2009 - 2014  
Face-to-face Interviews



A Programme of The Grail Centre Trust  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1. Detailed description of data collection processes	3
<b>2. STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. Aspects of learning environment at the Grail which contributed to impact	4
2.2. Radicalism of the course's approaches and principles	6
2.3. Special interpersonal skills learned from the course	6
2.4. Impact of the TfT course	9
2.4.1. Signs of impact	9
2.4.2. Impact on individuals who attended the course	11
2.5. Impact on the organizations	15
2.6. Impact on communities	17
2.7. Enabling Factors	21
2.8. Challenges	21
<b>3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>23</b>
3.1. Conclusions	23
3.2. Recommendations	23
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>25</b>

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Training for Transformation (TfT) is a 'classic' in the fields of community development and adult education. It is one of the Grail programmes of The Grail Centre Trust. The Grail Centre Trust is a unit of the South African Grail, which is part of the International Grail.

TfT is founded on the philosophy that there is a need for a new generation of ethical leaders in development who are self-motivated and whose thinking and practice is grounded in dialogue and enabling bottom-up responses to community needs and empowerment. This integrated approach has been developed and methods captured in a four volume publication entitled *Training for Transformation: A handbook for community workers*; by Anne Hope and Sally Timmel, both members of the Grail community.

The TfT training programme emanated from a workshop attended by more than 50 civil society organizations at Kimmage Development Study Centre in Ireland in 2000. In 2002, responding to the request from civil society organizations, Kimmage Development Studies agreed to be the certification partner of the Training for Transformation programme, in South Africa.

## **The Training for Transformation programme aims are:**

- To build a new level of leadership in the development education field that is grounded in good theory and practice.
- To build the skills, insights and abilities of teams, from NGOs and community organisations, to empower local self-reliant community development efforts and to link these efforts within wider global and national movements within civil society.
- To build confidence, knowledge and skills to work with and challenge local and national governments to ensure macroeconomic policies that are to the advantage of the marginalised.

Since 2002, TfT facilitated eight one-year in-service Diploma courses and three nine month Certificate courses, attended by 663 participants from 118 organizations (from 31 different African countries, 7 Asian countries, 3 American and 5 European countries).

The Training for Transformation (TfT) Programme commissioned this study to determine the contributions of the TfT Course to the development of individuals who participated in it, their organizations and communities that they serve. The impact study involved four different but interconnected processes namely:

- i) An online survey questionnaire that was circulated for TfT graduates and their organisations to fill out
- ii) Individual interviews and focus groups with staff and board members of the TfT Programme to assess internal capacity and its impact on effectiveness of the training programs
- iii) Face-to-face Interviews, focus group discussions and workshops with graduates and representatives from graduates' organisations
- iv) Review of such strategic documents as the annual reports, evaluation reports, etc.

This report is based on the face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and workshops with TfT graduates and representatives of their organizations. The research questions that were answered through these methods included the following:



1. What has been the impact of TfT on organizations' approach to development since its staff's participation in TfT?
2. What has been the impact on the organizations' structure since the time its staff participated in TfT?
3. Did TfT training have an impact on other staff besides those who attended the course?
4. How has TfT impacted on the work of organisations? What have proven to be the advantages and disadvantages of the course (supported by examples)?
5. How are organisations of graduates making use of the TfT training?
6. What has been the impact on the communities served by participants in TfT programs (what is the evidence of this impact)? What aspects of the TfT training led organisations to enable the community to make this change?
  - What shifts in power/roles have occurred in the community?
  - What are the structures and practices of decision making in the community? Who participates and what has changed? What networks have been built and sustained?
  - To what extent has community increased its access to the leadership?
  - To what extent has intergeneration representation (both male and female) been taken care of in the community?
  - What vision does the community have for the future of society and how does it view its participation in influencing the changes that will be necessary?
  - How has the training impacted on communities' consciousness and action on issues of spirituality, environment and economics?
7. How would TfT graduates describe their organizations' relationship with TfT?
8. Has TfT increased organisational capacities to:
  - Mobilise human and material resources? How? Why?
  - Introduce initiatives and innovation? How? Why?
  - Establish and expand networks of cooperation? How?
  - Act credibly and ethically? How?
9. Has the work of TfT graduates in transformation changed through their participation in the course?
10. How effective have been the communications between organisations and the TfT office in all phases of the training (recruitment, in-residence, home phases, post training)?

## 1.1 Detailed description of data collection processes

Information in this report was collected through participatory techniques in line with the culture of the TfT course. Visits were made to South Africa's provinces of KwaZulu–Natal and Western Cape, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where graduates from these three countries as well as Malawi and Mozambique, attended workshops and responded to in–depth interviews. In the countries that the researcher visited, visits were made to some of the communities that have benefited from the application of TfT approaches for purposes of triangulating what graduates said of the course with the lived experiences of community members. Community members were engaged through focus group discussions and other edutainment activities such as drama to inform the impact study. A semi–structured interview guide, focus group discussion guide and workshop program were used to steer the respective data collection processes that relied on these methods. The table below profiles the sample of informants who provided research data.

COUNTRIES	ORGANISATIONS	PARTICIPANTS	
		Male	Female
Zambia	The United Church of Zambia	0	11
	Women Legal organization, Zambia	0	1
	Congregation of Christian Brothers	1	1
	Malawi representatives	0	2
	Community representatives	2	20
South Africa KwaZulu–Natal (KZN)	Women's Leadership and Training Programme (WLTP)	1	4
	WLTP beneficiaries – focus group	7	28
South Africa Western Cape	Mozambique representatives	1	0
	North–West province	0	1
	Eastern Cape	0	3
	Western Cape	0	3
	Gauteng Province	1	1
	KwaZulu–Natal	0	1
	Malawi	0	1
Zimbabwe	Africa Book Development Organization	2	1
	Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust	0	2
	Africa Community Development and Research Centre	1	1
	Female Students Network	0	2
	Katswe Sisterhood	0	1
	Beneficiaries	0	8
<b>Totals</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>92</b>

**Table 1.1** shows a total sample of 108, including 65 community beneficiaries and 43 TfT graduates. Of the 106 research participants, 87% were women, which is in line with the course's policy of recruiting more women than men. 61% of the sample was made up of community members who were targeted with programs that TfT graduates implemented, which was sufficiently large for the research to triangulate the impacts that different study participants attributed to the course.

The findings of this evaluation are presented in Chapter 2 to inform the conclusions and recommendations in Chapter 3.

## 2. STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The primary focus of this study was the impacts that the TtT course has made on the lives of the graduates, their organizations and the communities with which their organizations work. However, in order to place the study in the appropriate context some attention was paid to the aspects of the design of the TtT course which graduates viewed as the sources of its impact. Three aspects were identified as sources of the course's impact, and these are:

- i) The learning environment at the Grail Centre
- ii) The radicalism of the course's underlying principles, and;
- iii) The special interpersonal skills that are transferred through the learning processes.

### 2.1 Aspects of learning environment at the Grail which contributed to impact

As aptly expressed at a Workshop in Zimbabwe, TtT graduates agreeably felt that “just being at the Grail Centre is learning itself”, and that “learning begins as soon as one steps onto the ground at the Grail Centre.” The Grail was viewed as a place with so special homely and educating qualities that even without actual tuition, residents can come out of the place emotionally or intellectually revived and transformed. The following are the identified transforming attributes of the Centre and the living arrangements of participants:

- **Connection with nature** – the Grail Centre's facilities are constructed in the midst of natural vegetation in a way that does not disrupt the biodiversity of the environment. According to participants of this research, the green color of vegetation, singing of birds and view of the surrounding mountains makes the place peaceful and highly suitable for one's quiet period of reflective meditations. *“I usually refreshed took some time off the busy learning schedule to climb the mountain and when I returned I felt very refreshed”*, a Zambian graduate said.



*The Grail Centre's facilities are constructed in the midst of natural vegetation.*

- **Accommodation arrangements** – the idea of living in the same houses and sharing space and resources with people who have divergent practices because of such differences as culture or race helped participants to discover their social shortcomings that they needed to work on after quarrels arose as a result of their differences in preferences (e.g., some prefer to live quietly while others within the same space would rather talk or sing, etc). Participants involved in conflict were encouraged to resolve these using the skills they acquired during the course, and all who informed this study reported that they successfully resolved their conflicts and made peace. *“I used to be very temperamental, and my background as a freedom fighter made it worse”*, a female Zimbabwean TtT graduate reported. *“But after clashing several times with one of my white house mates I discovered that I still harbored bitter memories of the liberation war and needed to seriously reflect on this and get over it, which changed me so much that many people today still do not believe that I am this kind of a peaceful person”*. A Zambian TtT graduate had a similar experience about which she said, *“I almost slapped one of my housemates who seemed not to respect me in spite of my seniority.”* However, through the processes of resolving that conflict, *“I learnt that in every conflict I must be the solution and never view myself as being superior to others in any way”* she said. On account of such lessons some study participants opined that the idea of keeping men and women in separate houses need reconsideration as the practice of mixing male and female housemates has the potential of exposing participants to more complex dynamics that could similarly facilitate the unique exercise of gender education received during the course.

- **Intense pressure to write research papers** – Tft graduates reported that they were assigned to write and submit a paper on the topics that they studied each week. Writing papers requires participants to study many books, which keeps them on their toes, especially considering that everyone was expected to submit their papers typed, not handwritten. One South African graduate who came to the course without any computer skills had a torrid time trying both to study many books and to learn computers, but at the time of carrying out this study she was highly appreciative of her newly acquired computer skills. *“I suppose the insistence on studying many books and writing many papers is meant to train us to work hard, to read widely and to cope with pressure”*, one participant remarked. However, another perspective was that pressure to read books and write papers meant limited time for participants to relax, which minimized the learning benefits of taking a few hours to connect with nature around the Grail Centre’s environs including the beach. In addition, this kind of pressure could easily invite competition among participants rather than cooperation.

- **Cultural exchanges between course participants**

– the course exposed participants to the outside world of people who are not like them, with different languages, cultures and habits. *“I could only speak my own Zulu language, but the course forced me to speak in English all the time and now I can comfortably speak good English. This has made me an international development ambassador,”* a South African participant reported. Participants became able to identify life-giving aspects and challenges things about their cultures by comparing values thereof with values of other cultures. This reflection inspired a South African woman to do a number of unconventional things on her wedding day (e.g., she did not wear a white dress, but put on traditional Xhosa and Zulu dresses). *“I made this decision after learning that most things done at weddings are borrowed from other cultures and they mean nothing except to reflect the colonial mind that Africans have been infested with.”*



*Cultural exchanges between course participants.*

- **Mixture of people of various levels of learning** – at the Grail Centre, participants are not whose command of English was much better than mine, people who had PhDs and masters degrees and other higher learning qualifications, which were better than mine”, one South African graduate recalled. *“I thought I was not going to say a single word in the class and just listen to these learned colleagues, but the facilitators showed interest in my opinion until I grew in self-confidence and assertiveness.”* Rather than judge one another, participants learnt to be humble and to support each other. *“You never know who is who, but you just see human beings interacting as equals and learning from each other”* (research workshop participant). This aspect was associated with the ability that graduates now have of similarly managing to address people of various social standings as part of the same group and making each one therein able to actively participate and contribute.
- **Integration of lecture hall learning and tours of places of interest** – the course employed tours to such strategic sites as the beach, the forest, Robben Island, crowded and unhygienic squatter camps, markets, high density locations and related others to inspire fresh thinking in participants. Where interviews with people around the visited sites were facilitated, graduates reported of learning important things about life, the need to appreciate other human beings, and that judging others on the basis of visible characteristics was inaccurate. At some tours, graduates reported, painful emotions were aroused which caused many to initiate new kinds of projects to help others when they returned home. *“I decided to support poor women trying*



to make ends meet through income-generating projects” (Zimbabwean graduate). Nothing seems to better propel people to act against an unfortunate status quo than seeing other people suffering under it.

- **Mutual sharing of care, love and trust** – the Grail Centre environment connects people to a level where they share care love and trust in and outside the lecture hall. Facilitators generally try their best not to meddle in the affairs of participants including those who quarrel, urging them to resolve their misunderstandings amicably through the new knowledge acquired at the course. *“My husband died while I was here studying, but everyone came to console me and I took courage to go and attend to the funeral”* (South African graduate). *“And when the funeral proceedings ended I was able to return to the Grail straightaway and continue learning (instead of spending some weeks at the home, mourning my husband), which is regarded as taboo in our culture”*. Some graduates have maintained their links and communicate with or visit each other as close friends. These networks were seen as a firm foundation from which powerful regional movements can be launched and supported.



*Robben Island Tour  
TfT 2014-15 Diploma Course*

## 2.2. Radicalism of the course’s approaches and principles

Participants of this research generally view the program as being necessary for changing the way community problems are viewed and addressed. Most of them, especially those holding degrees or other high qualifications from universities, pointed out that they subscribed to the traditional approaches of community development which are based on assumptions that:

1. local communities are incompetent, illiterate, ignorant and so unable to resolve or see their problems that they generally need help from external ‘experts’;
2. people in local communities should look and appreciate as development agents do things for them to save them out of their problems, and;
3. problem symptoms that are visible are sufficient clues of what needs to be done to address them.

The course TfT course however introduced a radically new perspective that *“helped me to realize that members of a community are the best solutions to their own problems and development agents can only be effective if they work with and not for local communities”* (Zambia graduate). Graduates reported that they essentially learned that the starting point of developing the best solutions to community problems is to understand the root causes of the problems from the perspectives of those affected.

## 2.3. Special interpersonal skills learned from the course

Without attempting to study the course syllabi or review the learning materials that TfT relied on, the researcher asked study participants to mention the key skills that the course imparted on them, especially the ones that would instantly remind them of the training. The following is



the list of the skills with which TtT graduates most closely relate the training:

- **Facilitation skills**
- **Six steps of digging deeper** to understand the root causes of problems using codes.
- **The holistic nature of development**
- **Gender mainstreaming** – *“we learned that gender inequalities are realities in communities and were helped to appreciate the gender dynamics at play in communities”*
- **Paulo Freire methodology** – *“this laid for us the foundation for determining how to interpret realities that we face daily”*
- **Experiential learning** is the best route to effective learning
- **Non-violent communication**
- **Collaborative leadership** – *“everyone should be willing to learn from others and their lived experience, be able to question what they see or hear and find answers”*
- **Communication** – importance of sharing feedback
- **Dialogue and negotiation skills** – *“there are always differences in opinion between people at various levels in society, so even when we know that we are right we should negotiate our way around until we reach a consensus with others who hold contrasting opinions”*
- **Approaching development with transparency** – the importance of making everyone aware of the purpose and desired result of every action taken in an organization or community
- **Emphasis on monitoring and evaluation** – *“we cannot know the results of what we do for community development unless we periodically evaluate and continuously monitor our efforts”*
- **Deep democracy** – we have to listen to everyone in the organization
- **Group dynamics** – in every group individual behavior does not reflect an person’s true characteristics, but their efforts to belong and comply with group norms
- **Learning Teaching Teams (LTTs)**
- **Social business or entrepreneurship** – the greatest investment is in people, not money or materials
- **Visits to interesting places** (e.g., Penguin colony, Robben Island, commercial farms, etc) – *“these visits were highly enlightening, although there is always room for improvement to make them more fruitful”*
- **Spirituality** – students were transformed to a level where they (a) appreciate that values and goals of spirituality are so uniform and shared across religions that they should unite and not divide people, and, (b) can comfortably interact with people of a different religion and facilitate effective transformation
- **Centrality of self in transformation** – *“I came to attend the course hoping to gain skills of transforming other people, but discovered that I needed to be transformed more than anyone else”*

From the list of interpersonal skills that graduates of the course learned came the following important lessons, which they are applying with varying levels of emphasis to sustain their personal, organizational and community transformation processes:

- **Importance of forging networks** with like-minded institutions or individuals and writing down a vision of how a development process should proceed – graduates of the course learned that they cannot make any impact to their environments if they operated in isolation and without the guidance of a vision or plan.
- **Importance of economic analysis in development work** – the Economics Module further enlightened participants about the inseparability of economics and politics as well as how these two affect development. However, economics was not taught in the conventional way that otherwise makes it difficult for the academically challenged participants to understand, but “even holders of Economics degrees realised that they had a lot to learn about economics” (Zambian graduate).
- **People are the most important**, precious and expensive resource that the world cannot do without. It is erroneous to view money as the answer to our problems.
- **Cultural heritages** are salient in shaping people’s values and distinguishing them from others. It is therefore important to respect other people’s cultural values.
- **Unnatural manipulations including genetically modified organisms, artificial beauty products and related others are regressive** and can destroy or distort the good things that can be obtained from nature. The course taught participants the importance of conserving the environment and giving back to nature as much as what they receive from it. As a result of the training one South African organization introduced a new policy that requires all staff members not to use artificial beauty products.
- **Gender is inescapable wherever community or organizational development is discussed**, but due care must be taken to avoid evoking bitter and negative emotions, especially among female group members. The methods used for gender training must leave everyone feeling that they are victors and not victims. It requires an unbiased approach that does not leave women feeling wronged by men or vice versa, but must demonstrate that gender imbalances are results of social structures such as patriarchy.



*Impact Study focus group, Zimbabwe, September 2014.*

## 2.4. Impact of the Tft course

This study identified three levels of impact resulting from the Tft course through the key skills and overarching lessons highlighted above. These include impact on graduates, on graduates' organizations and on communities. However, before turning to these forms of impact it is important here to discuss the grounds on which this impact was attributed to the Tft course and not to other causes. For an experimental study this can be established by comparing a control to an experimental group, but for a qualitative study where statements of respondents are the central basis such comparisons can be difficult to scientifically rely on. For this study, graduates remarks about the course's impact were given credibility by three signs.

### 2.4.1 Signs of impact

- **High demand of the program from organizations that have staff who participated** – the organizations that ever sent one of their staff to the Grail Centre for training have kept sending more participants to undergo the course in successive years. This cannot happen if these organizations are not seeing an impact in their staff, their operations or in communities. The United Church of Zambia, Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust (ACPDT), Africa Book Development Organization (ABDO), Africa Community Development and Research Centre (ACDRC), Female Students Network (FSN), Women's Leadership and Training Programme (WLTP), Silveira House, Congregation of Christian Brothers, Katswe Sisterhood and others send staff for Tft every year. In addition, heads of organizations that sent staff for Tft for the first time reported that they were so referred by graduates of the course (e.g., the FSN Director attended the Diploma course in 2013/14 after being receiving information about it from the Director of Katswe Sisterhood).
- **Sacrifices that graduates made in order to complete the course** – one pregnant Zimbabwean who had been enrolled for the course decided to (a) arrange for an early delivery of her child in order to attend the course and (b) leave behind her two weeks old baby in the care of her husband in order to concentrate on the course. One participant whose employer could not support her completion of the second phase of the course because of financial challenges rather contracted loans to complete the course than discontinue. A South African woman lost her husband during the course, but left the Grail Centre just to go for his burial and returned soon thereafter. These behaviors demonstrate how valued the Tft course is, and this was taken to symbolize its strong impact.
- **Confirmations of other people who did not attend the course but interact with the Tft graduates** – the study revealed that the appreciation of the work done by Tft graduates at their organizations and in communities increased from the time they completed the course. Case studies of community projects being implemented using Tft approaches are documented in a separate chapter of this report to demonstrate this.

The exact impact of Tft on individuals their organizations and communities was assessed using some of the tools of the course. One tool that was most heavily used is the 'River of Life', where research participants were asked to liken their life before and after attending Tft to the flow of a river. The study identified eight kinds of river flow patterns reflecting the state of graduates' lives before they attended the course, during the course and after. The different river flow patterns demonstrate the ways in which the course changed graduates' lives:



*Kudzai Makoni, facilitator of face-to-face discussions, Kleinmond, South Africa, August 2014.*



## A. Before attending the Tft course

1. **Narrow river courses** – prior to attending the course graduates went through periods of limited understanding and restricted performance. Reflecting this, a Zambian Tft graduate said: *“I would say that my river was narrow because whilst I was good at listening to other people, I was poor at asking strategic questions”*. A Zimbabwean participant who founded a non-governmental organization (NGO) using skills gained from the course added, *“I was good at dreaming and had ideas for starting an organization that would advance the interests of female, but my ideas were scattered all over, and I had no focus”*. She added that her river was narrow because: *“I was not confident about my ability to challenge the status quo, which is male-dominated, and my marriage further limited my horizons”*.
2. **Turbulence** – a period of confusion in one’s life when they did not understand where they were going with life or their purposes therein, which was a result of limited knowledge. A Zambian participant said of the period of turbulence, *“before attending the Tft course I knew what I needed to do (e.g., arranging workshops), but I did not know how best to do it, which kept the pace of community development slow if not stagnant.”* Turbulence also represented challenging life courses such as bereavements, illnesses, financial and other challenges that participants faced during or just before the course.

## B. During the Tft course

3. **Convergence** – a period when different rivers come together and the river increases in flowing energy: this is the networking of people from different backgrounds, countries and regions that the course facilitated. With the meeting of different people Tft graduates have gained increased energy and some have pursued new challenges using these networks (e.g., one Zimbabwean graduate linked up with a Tft facilitator and enrolled for a Gender and Social Transformation Certificate course in India where that facilitator works. He had completed the certificate course at the time of producing this report).



4. **Island** – participants identified certain periods of isolation during their course when they did not receive adequate support from envious others. *“During my home phase there is a time when I felt I was on an island, as my mentor did not pay enough attention to my work”* (Zambian graduate). The woman whose husband died during the course and the one who left home a two-week old baby to attend the course both viewed these situations as island experiences, as they endured severe criticisms from their relatives and in-laws for their decisions. Such periods however strengthened Tft participants who experienced them, and they increased their resolve to fight on and complete the course.
5. **Waterfall** – a period where Tft participants experienced a sudden end to things (e.g., one participant was told at her workplace that the course was inappropriate for her position and that she had to remain at work when the second phase was due, but she resigned and pursued the course using her own resources). All Tft graduates who informed this research reported going through this kind of experience at least once during the course, but they feel that it strengthened them.

## C. After completing the Tft course

6. **Tributaries** – the river branches and flows in different directions resembling the period when Tft graduates reach out to other people and communities in need, beginning to impart the skills they learned onto others, to start new movements and to forge new partnerships locally regionally and internationally. Another way the tributaries were interpreted is when those who attended the course begin to recommend others to attend the course.
7. **Change of river course** – where people completely changed their career paths after attending the training (e.g., one Zimbabwean woman who was an administrator turned to become a social scientist and researcher on graduating, and she is currently studying towards a Psychology degree). A rural schoolteacher became a Project officer while a college Principal abandoned administrative work to complete social science studies up to masters degree level and now works fulltime as a researcher. An accountant who remained in that profession reports that she now approaches accountancy with a social science mind. *“Although I am an accountant, I am a development thinker,”* she said.
8. **Wide and deep sections of the river** – Tft graduates are able to support the professional growth of others through their work in communities – the female, young girls and boys, women in entrepreneurship, war survivors, governments, municipal authorities, international partners and so forth.

### 2.4.2. Impact on individuals who attended the course

The Tft course made stronger impact on individuals than on organizations and communities because it is applicable not only in professional work settings, but every other sphere of life including one's marriage, family and religion. In addition, it does not need one to be employed by a specific organization to personally apply Tft lessons. *“I attended the Tft program in 2009/10, but before I completed the course I switched jobs, joining an organization that does not subscribe to the principles of Tft, so the course just transformed me, not my organization or communities that it works with”,* said a Zimbabwean Tft graduate. The following are the key impacts that different Tft graduates identified:



Self-awareness or self-discovery.

- i) **Self-awareness or self-discovery** – the course prompted participants to search for meaning in their lives because of its emphasis on introspection. It increased graduates' understanding of self, especially the capabilities that they have. Those who felt superior to others learned to respect others regardless of social status. *“I thought I knew everything about the subjects that I studied at university before Tft training helped me realize that I in fact have a lot to learn not just in a university, but from others”* (Zambian graduate). Tft is a process that brings together intergenerational, academia and experienced development practitioners. In the process the course boosted the self-confidence and self-esteem of participants, especially female ones who because of patriarchy in society previously felt that they were incapable of doing anything to change their worlds. Self-reflection exercises have continued to be a post-training practice that distinguishes Tft graduates from the rest. One of the results of self-awareness has been to discover one's purpose in life, leading some participants to found organizations after graduating (e.g., FSN, Katswe Sisterhood, etc). *“I had a dream to start a movement of delivering abused or exploited women from their plights,”* said one female graduate who now heads an organization that she founded and organization.

Other discoveries were the centrality of self in creating order, making peace with others, healing the environment and so forth. Accordingly all participants who informed this study reported and showed evidence that the course made them more charitable than they were before the course. *“I learnt that life is more about giving to others in the community and changing this world for the betterment of other people’s lives than gratifying oneself, so I do a lot of development work”* (Zambian graduate). Most graduates have launched and are driving their own initiatives towards plowing back to their communities even as some of them have no means of using their TtT skills in the new organizations that employ them. One Zimbabwean reported: *“I am an accountant at my new organization, which does not have any TtT background, but I use my skills in my community to organize fellow farmers to practice environmentally-friendly methods.”*

- ii) **Critical thinking** – most graduates became more critical in their view of situations, other people and themselves, especially because of the training’s emphasis on the importance of asking the question “why?” Patriarchy is one system of the current status quo that most TtT graduates questioned. Outstanding examples include a young South African woman that questioned her father why men alone assumed the role of communicating with ancestors as if women had no petitions to make. *“Against all attempts to scare me, I now conduct my own rituals, burning incense, and speak to the ancestors directly whenever I feel I need their help,”* she said. Another female participant questioned the tradition of wearing black clothes after the death of a spouse, and resolved not to do that in the possible event of similar bereavements in future. *“In my community, respect is at the Centre of everything, but it has to be directed at our elders and culture, both of which should not be questioned. I was concerned about certain things in my culture, but could not question them until I attended the TtT course”* (South African participant). This participant’s critical thinking helped her realise that she was in a wrong marriage relationship, as she had entered it via abduction – a common cultural practice in South Africa that has landed many young girls into marriages with much older men. She ran away from the husband and the marriage against all criticism and *“used the time away from that marriage to reflect on my life”*.



Thelma Nkosi, Coordinator of Campaign against the mining in Mpumalanga. Participant on Impact Study focus group Kleinmond, South Africa , August 2014

- iii) **Improved work-related technical skills** – from the perspective of management personnel of organizations that send staff to TtT the major impacts include improved facilitation, research and report writing skills as well as increased participation in processes to shape the organization’s vision, increase in the level of participation in district processes of development (e.g., in Zimbabwe’s Tsholotsho District, TtT graduates at one organization are now regularly invited to facilitate local authorities’ workshops).
- iv) **Tolerance** – lessons on Spirituality changed the way that all participants who informed this research approach their own and other people’s religions. Graduates of TtT reported that they previously regarded their own religions as the perfect and only ones, but now they tolerate people who worship God in other ways and are ready to work with them. This tolerance in fact transcends beyond religious values to include tolerance of other people’s cultures, political views, habits, strategies of doing things and so on. One Zimbabwean graduate reported: *“I used to be temperamental, but the course helped me know that the only way I can change other people is to first change myself”*. At the Grail the living arrangements challenged her to



understand diversities among people, enabling her to accommodate others. *“I shared a room with a person from a different country and African region whose habits were not compatible with mine and at first we used to quarrel,”* she said. *“But I learnt from the course that I have a choice between accommodating people of different strengths and weaknesses for the sake of progress or peace and closing other people out, which is bad.”* The course helped people to introspect and make new decisions to deepen their levels of tolerance, with three participants taking one new training courses in disciplines like counseling, “do no harm” short course and others that enhance negotiation and communication skills.

v) **Desire to increase in knowledge and pursuit of further their studies** – as a result of self-discovery; several TfT graduates have taken to furthering their studies, some of them in entirely new professional fields. *“I took up a counseling course after learning that I, not other people, was the problem behind my bad relationships with others because I was confrontational,”* a Zimbabwean graduate reported. *“I changed the way I argue from being judgmental to being reflective and introspecting, leading my husband to saying ‘ever since you completed that course you behave like a mature person’”* One South African graduate came to the course with a certificate in Building and resolved to increase his knowledge of social analysis through further education. He went further to study the English language, having realised that he needed mastery of the language in order to increase his relevance at a global scale. *“The English course became easy for me because of the foundation that TfT laid for me,”* he said. With his improved language skills, this TfT graduate proceeded to acquire a certificate in Environmental Management.

vi) **Leadership in Rehabilitating family relationships** – a Zambian student who had closed all communication with her father started calling him in order to make peace after attending the course, and now their relationship is in order. A South African graduate, who once was abducted for a forced marriage but escaped, managed to reconcile with her parents and extended family to the extent of getting their support for her wedding with the man that she truly loved. *“I do not hold any bitter feelings for them even though they took part in my forced marriage because my emotional wounds were healed at the Grail Centre”,* she proudly reports.

vii) **Self-confidence and assertiveness** – the course involved participants presenting their papers before the class and receiving critique from classmates in return. Participants who attended the course young and inexperienced reported that they used to be nervous when asked to present their group work outcomes or research papers before the class, considering the high learning of some of their classmates, but repeated positive feedback changed them. Today, they reported, they are assertive and self-confident.

viii) **Writing skills** – Writing of papers is a part of the course, and participants who did not have strong backgrounds in the academia report that they improved their writing skills through peer review sessions that they had with others. This has benefited their organizations, as they now can write important organizational documents such as proposals. Directors of organizations that employ TfT graduates confirmed this finding, reporting that this was their justification for sending more staff members to Training for Transformation.



*Writing of papers is a part of the course.*

ix) **Adaptability and the ability to communicate complex things in the simplest language** – Tft graduates are now able to use tools that people in remote areas identify with, which do not intimidate them. “We used to trust PowerPoint presentations and most people would not participate in our processes because they felt intimidated by that technology,” a Mozambican graduate said. A Zimbabwean graduate in a non-programs department said, “I am an accountant, but I have grown to understand the context of development, and am now a process thinker”. She added, “I ask people questions and listen to their view of things as opposed to telling people what they have to do, according to accounting principles”. A former Secretary/Administrator is now active in the implementation and management of community development programs and research work because of the diverse skills that the Tft course gave her.

x) **Seriousness about making of personal goals and pursuing visions** – as stated in other sections of this chapter, Tft graduates took to pursuing further studies and creating new organizations to address societal problems that bothered the participants (e.g., Katswe Sisterhood, Female Students’ Network, Women Empowered Against Negativity (We Can), etc).

xi) **Membership to high profile boards or committees** – most Tft graduates learnt the importance of positioning themselves strategically in order to influence decision making. Accordingly the study learnt that Tft graduates interacted with powerful people in politics and business where they contributed more meaningfully than before the course in the formulation of national budgets and policies, using their experiences of project implementation. One South African female graduate is a member of the Mpumalanga Water Caucus, which “made comments to the national water policy in 2013”, and the Mining Forum of Tsukomathi.

xii) **Inner healing** – “The Grail Centre was a place of inner healing”, according to most female graduates of the course who took part in this research. At all four workshops that this research facilitated in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa’s KwaZulu-Natal and Cape Town participants concurred that they came to the Grail with heartbreaks and emotional problems, but they were able to overcome their bitterness through activities such as the ‘River of Life’. A lot of people returned home to forgive those about whom they were bitter, and made peace. The course trained people to know that they were the answer to their problems and that no one except oneself would address their challenges.



*“The Grail Centre was a place of inner healing.”*

The major advantage in the course’s registering the strongest impact on individuals is that there is a guarantee that transformation will happen wherever Tft graduates will apply themselves, whether in their families, at their organizations or at community level. That is the case whether these graduates remain employed by the organizations that sent them to the Grail in the first place. The evidence from this research that two of the participants founded and now lead new organizations and that several spearhead development work on their own initiatives shows that the course’s individual impact is fast benefiting more people. However, it is desired that Tft graduates should add value to the organizations that sent them to the Grail Centre, which raises the need to assess the course’s impact on organizations.



## 2.5. Impact on the organizations

The study revealed that Tft is highly popular among the Directors of organizations, which made us conclude the course's impact on organizations was positive. Generally, Tft graduates and managements of partner organizations identified “attitude change” as the major transformation of Tft graduates and the basis of the impact on their organizations. One form of attitude change was their increased sense of ownership of the organizations and their processes. Some reported that trained staff members are able to stand by the organization even when there are limited resources and the organization cannot pay salaries. They understand that they are the agents to change the situation, and “we do not fear the threat of industrial action” (Director, Zimbabwean NGO). Specific impacts at organizational level were as follows:

- i) **Tft graduates are championing new practices of pursuing community development** – all graduates are applying lessons on listening surveys by carrying out baseline assessments before introducing new interventions in order to understand community needs, collect baseline data for evaluation purposes and understand the root causes of local problems in order to devise the most responsive programs. At one organization, a gender policy was formulated to regulate relations amongst staff and the organization's approaches to development as a result of efforts of Tft graduates. In Malawi the Tft graduates consult communities through what they term “All-inclusive conferences”, which they use to gather people's views about a problem and its solutions before translating these ideas into “post-conference action plans”. “My organization now has a strong command in Malawi and is well respected for being people-centred,” one Malawian graduate reported. It is now a practice among organizations that value Tft to spearhead issue-based development approaches, and proposals are informed by prior needs assessment exercises in communities.
- ii) **Tft graduates are imparting the skills gained from the course on other staff members and creating demand for the course** – part of the Tft program's process is for trainees to report back to the leaders of their organizations and to share their lessons with other staff members. Through these processes other staff members have not only gained basic knowledge about transformation, but developed a desire to participate in the course at the next opportunity.



Loretta Josephs, Director of “We Can” and Thandiswa Blie, Facilitator of “Mamelani Projects”. Impact Study focus group Kleinmond, South Africa , August 2014

- iii) **Tft graduates contributed to expanding the scopes of their programs and widening of the range of their target groups** – because of the emphasis of Tft on exploring the roots causes of community problems through “digging deep”, course participants at all organizations that informed this study have collected wealthy information that broadened their scopes of operations and, in particular made their programs more holistic or integrated than before. One organization initially focused on protecting the environment, working with young girls, now responds to the health and intellectual needs of young women, and addresses the interests of young men as well after learning that environmental management could not be achieved outside the socioeconomic well being of locals. Another organization that concentrates on increasing communities' access to strategic information now targets all age groups in communities including children, although its former focus was the adult population.



- iv) **The course increased the usefulness of the graduates to their organisations** by “broadening the range of services that I can offer” (Zimbabwean Project Officer). “Before the training”, reports the project officer, “I just focused on deliverables in my job description, notably field visits to support community groups and report writing, because I did not have a holistic understanding of development work but now I am involved in writing proposals for the organization’s funding.” As a result, organizational heads now enjoy greater technical support from staff who attended the course, especially during planning and proposal development. The Mozambican TtT graduate reported that he was more able to write proposals for community development projects that were more responsive to local needs now than before the course because of the consultations of locals that now precedes his proposal writing.
- v) **Application of TtT skills increased acceptability of organizational programs in districts and other organizations** – in Zambia and South Africa’s KwaZulu–Natal the study was informed: “Our training manuals are used by other big organizations such as World Vision”. In Zimbabwe, the special ability of trained staff of ACPDT and ABDO to broker discussions that have united people of contrasting political affiliations in communities have raised their profiles at all levels, including among government ministers. Testimonies of beneficiaries of TtT graduates’ programs confirmed this, and may have endeared relevant organizations with local authorities. TtT graduates all reported improvements in networking skills, having widened the network of institutions that they involve in processes of their community development initiatives. “Before attending TtT”, said a Zambian TtT graduate, “I did not regard the District Commissioner at all and did not consult them for ideas when implementing our projects, but now I engage everyone who has something to do in our target communities”.
- vi) **Change of organizational cultures and policies** – participation in the organization’s planning now involves not just the technical and managerial staff, but everyone including the cooks, cleaners and related general staff. With TtT came a growing appreciation of the importance of all people in an organization, including the understanding that people are the most important resource in the organization. There is also a growing emphasis on transparency, where even financial managers are expected to brief other staff about the organization’s position from time to time so as to keep all staff in the right picture. With this knowledge staff members are more motivated as they feel respected and take ownership of their organizations. WLTP adopted Paulo Freire’s methodology in doing their work and made it a policy that (a) when a staff member returns from a training they must report back to others within a learning environment, (b) all staff should seriously pursue further education and (c) staff should maintain their natural looks without applying artificial beautification products. A Zimbabwean graduate reported, “we introduced a gender policy at our organization after learning at the course that gender parity is so critical that without a gender policy, it is difficult to promote the participation of women in the organization’s running”.

The study revealed that the TtT courses impacts on individuals could only to trickle down to benefit organizations in the following circumstances:

- a. The leaders of the organization in question have some knowledge about and an appreciation of TtT;
- b. The trained staff continue to serve the organizations that have a relationship with the Grail Centre;
- c. The trained staff are responsible for program formulation, implementation, and constantly interface with communities.

Encouragingly, just one TtT graduate out of the 43 who took part in this study had left the organization to work in an organization that had no knowledge or appreciation of the course, and was employed in a non-programming department. This means that the course has predominantly reached people who are strategically positioned to apply their skills for the benefit of the organizations that sent them to the Grail Centre and communities.

## 2.6. Impact on communities

The study identified two types of communities that Tft graduates have touched with their skills. The first is the community in which they live and the other is the community that their organizations work with. The following are community-level impacts of the Tft course:

- i) **Increased community ownership of the development process and its outcomes** – Tft graduates concurred that funding resources were dwindling, raising the need for innovative ways of cutting operating costs. However, demand for organizations' services was said to be increasing, which means that the old ways of doing everything for the people, which entails frequent field visits can no longer be economic. *"I coordinate 66 study circles in communities within three districts, and I used to visit the communities often because they depended heavily on me", a Zimbabwean graduate reported. "After completing the Tft course I have taken a new approach of transferring the onus or running and managing the program to communities, which has reduced the number of field visits that I need to make."*
- ii) **Greater potential for the sustainability of community development programs** – related to the above impact, programs managed by Tft graduates have immense potential to be continue with minimal or no direct support of implementing organizations.
- iii) **Increased gender literacy** – Tft graduates generally perceive a change in the way men and women relate in the communities that they have reached. ABDO deals with Zimbabwean rural communities in which the education of girls was not valued, women not respected and unable to preach in church or speak at community meetings, while some religious groups exist which authorize the marriage of teen girls to much older men against their will. The organization's transformed processes of imparting gender literacy have stimulated active discussion of gender insensitive practices in the communities, which could see a reduction in the rates of child marriages and related social ills.
- iv) **Empowerment of women and girls** – all interviewed graduates target women and girls in their work and they report that these have been enlightened about their importance in the discourses of their communities' development. Through the Tft training in gender, graduates have facilitated processes that have helped community members to view each other as equal partners in development and appreciate the skills of capable leaders regardless of sex, which has seen in surge in the number of female leaders of community-based organised groups. Among the Tonga people in Zimbabwe's Binga District, for example, women were traditionally not allowed to speak in the presence of men because such was viewed as disrespect and indecent conduct. But the work of ABDO in this region has seen a change, and women can freely participate in community development activities. Two organizations that seek to promote the well being of women were created as a result of Tft in Zimbabwe, being Katswe Sisterhood and Female students Network. The latter has so far managed to amass a membership of 20,000 female students of tertiary learning institutions of which 8,600 are paid up subscribers and the former has 2,000 women members. The members actively organise themselves to address their reproductive health rights and defend their freedoms.



Impact Study Zambia , June 2014

One Zimbabwean Tft graduate facilitated strategic planning processes for two community-based women's income-generating groups and linked them to a funding organization. To date this group has scaled its operations up and is making huge profits, keeping books of accounts after it secured a grant from USAID for the purchase of a grinding mill with the technical support of the Tft graduate. In Zambia, Tft graduates work with women in every parish of the Church of Zambia on income-generating projects. A visit to some rural projects showed that these women, mostly widows including some who are living with HIV, have been successful in supporting their families through their projects. Detailed information on girls' and women's empowerment is provided as case studies in Box 2.1 overleaf.

- v) **Peace between rival political party supporters** – The use of relevant codes and centering sessions emerged effective for ACPDT staff who attended the Tft course to broker negotiations for peace between rival political party members in communities of Mashonaland Central where the hottest political antagonisms are characteristic.
- vi) **Redress of social injustices** – Khulumani Support Group in Eastern Cape reported that its intensified advocacy to push the government of South Africa to compensate the survivors of Apartheid massacres, including the Maricana Massacre, have awakened communities to the need to get political office bearers to account for their actions. Through listening surveys the organization's work has broadened its scope to address livelihood needs of its target beneficiaries, the families affected by Apartheid injustices, for sustainability.
- vii) **Protection of communities from exploitation** – in Mpumalanga one graduate led a movement that led to the closure of a mine that did not benefit the community, but rather destroyed the environment. The mine had been closed for three years by the time of this study. She earned a place in the published book entitled 'South African Women' where her work in the community was profiled. Further details of this graduate's transforming work are available online: <http://bow2012.mg.co.za/thelma-nkosi/>
- viii) **Integrated projects** – Tft graduates, through their application of listening skills that they learnt at the course, have actively contributed to the broadening of the scope of their projects to make them holistic and responsive to more challenges, especially livelihoods. Projects responding to HIV and AIDS (e.g., Mamelani's projects in Western Cape) no longer end at encouraging PLHIV to adhere to treatment and a balanced diet, but support initiatives for beneficiaries to grow nutritious food and earn money. Conservation farming in community gardens was found to be popular initiatives in Zambia (United Church of Zambia), KwaZulu-Natal (WLTP) and Western Cape (Mamelani). Khulumani Support Group in Eastern Cape secured space for a community vegetable and crafts market to complement its work of campaigning for Apartheid survivors' reparations while. We Can, in Western Cape supports youth in performing drama and other edutainment activities for a fee in order to address their livelihood needs. The importance of integrated projects that Tft graduates spearhead is that communities benefit in a wide variety of dimensions.



*Impact Study focus group,  
Zimbabwe, September 2014*



## BOX 2.1: Case studies of Community impacts of Tft graduates' work

### Self-help Project, Zambia (interview with group chairperson)

"Self-help is a group of women with ability to help themselves rather than to wait for their husbands or uncles for support them. The aim of this program is to open our minds and to approach the government with our petitions." The group's key activities include conservation farming, a piggery project, discussion of HIV and AIDS issues affecting group members and responding to it by promoting good nutritional practices, using local foods like soya beans, groundnuts, and maize (mixed with skimmed milk). *"We are also seed propagators and when we harvest our crop and sell it we are always able to feed our children and meet their educational expenses even though most of us have no husbands to economically depend on"*. The farmers also rear pigs and chicken for sale as a group and as individuals. *"We have group and individual projects. In my own project I harvested 70 bags of maize."* They save their individual incomes and deduct part of it to contribute to the group's budget from which individual farmers then take loans and repay at a modest interest rate of 10%. In the group the women talk about gender-based violence (GBV) and strategies of protecting themselves and others as well as sharing peer support for adhering to HIV treatment. Courtesy of Tft culture, the group does not have a permanent chairperson, *"but we rotate leadership roles so that everyone can develop their leadership skills and the absence of one person does not negatively affect the group's progress"*. Women in the group exchange knowledge and skills, teaching each other in special skills such as vegetable drying, cooking, and baking – a clear Tft approach. Their dried vegetables are taken to laboratories for quality testing before marketing, and they have always produced very good grades.

### Sustainable environmental management practices – Zambia – Focus group discussion

A Tft graduate introduced conservation farming among women in one Zambian province where farming was previously mechanized, wasteful and less profitable. The smallholder farmers reported that they were accustomed to buying hybrid seeds from the shops, which they neither afforded nor harvested enough from. After being introduced to conservation farming by one Tft graduate they ceased to depend on one type of farming, diversifying into intensive market gardening to grow various vegetables for sale and consumption. Most beneficiaries of this initiative were living with HIV, widowed and yet supporting between two and six children each. *"When grass grew long during winter, the tractors were deployed to cut it and we used to collect the cut grass to burn it. However we were taught that this grass can be profitably used in our gardens to make compost heaps that can be used to fertilize our crops. We now do not just throw away natural waste, but use it for growing vegetables, which we sell and raise some income for school projects"* (discussant 1). *"I only knew about hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizer that is sold in the shops at prizes we cannot afford, but nothing about our ability to generate our own seeds until we were trained on seed propagation and selection."* In their gardens the smallholder farmers grew diverse crops including butternuts, onions, tomatoes, cabbages and other vegetables, which they said enriched their nutrition. *"Would you suspect that I am HIV-positive?"* a woman benefiting from the initiative asked in reference to her good health.

### Preserving biodiversity in the environment and producing food – KwaZulu-Natal – focus group discussion

WLTP successfully mobilized young men and women in schools to take actions to protect bird species at the risk of extinction, which both contributes towards preserving natural ecosystems and increasing the participants' knowledge. These youths educate their communities about the importance of preserving bird life through dramas, speeches and related campaigns during special holidays. In their schools some of them practice conservation farming and promote energy saving, switching off every light and electrical gadget before they leave school and educating their peers to do the same. *"Before we started our energy saving project the headmaster told us that the school's monthly electricity bill was ZAR6,500 on average but after our project began, the bill decreased by ZAR2,400 to ZAR4,100"*. The graduates in the clubs that do this work have been enlightened about their position as a central part of nature, and they say *"we protect ourselves first by living a healthy and responsible life so that we can always be alive and well prepared to preserve other components of*

the ecosystem”. Two boys involved in the project reported that they had quit drinking and smoking as part of this drive.

### **Responding to women’s and girls’ special needs in Nigeria – a letter from a Tft graduate to the Grail**

*“Our transformation work is in progress, presently we work with abused women and I use trash to make treasure. I have introduced some new innovations, namely (1) converting old Towels into flowerpots and (2) using pieces of clothes to make bubble quilts. Now I innovated re-washable sanitary pads that can be re used (to address the needs of girls from poor communities and backgrounds). I make these in three sizes and I use brand new towels. So far I have trained 27 women in 10 months, and I donate the pads to poor girls only. They are not for sale. We have 11 new sewing machines and we have started a Cassava – Gari factory. It is owned by a sister in New Zealand but our women manage the factory for her. The gari factory will employ 10 women in Ibaso, and we have started the production last month. The good news that I want to share with you is that a community called Igbesa in Ogun state, a border village between Lagos and Ogun, has invited us to build our transformation center in their community! They gave the land for & \$1,000 per plot and we have bought 4 plots of land, we are yet to pay in full, but they agreed that we should pay it when we can. We have paid \$1,000 already. I hope you know that we have already bought a plot at Agbara in June, which is very close to our place, and we paid \$3,000 for it.” Olutosin, Nigeria*

### **Fighting for social justice for the underprivileged in Western Cape – South Africa – a letter**

*“I did my Tft training in 2009. I work for Mthimkhulu Community Development, which empowers communities in the Overberg and other rural areas in a just, sustainable and holistic way by providing services, primarily aimed at women, children, youth and the elderly, that address:*

- *Health: for the body, mind, heart and soul,*
- *Learning: educational support for children and skills (life and career skills) for adults*
- *Connecting: networks and events within and between communities and the world*

*I use Role plays, Listening skills, mobilizing, campaigning and problem solving for trainings. After the training I was nominated as a chairperson of housing committee. Getting houses for poor people from Overhills, Poppordorp and Proteadorp backyard dwellers was a big battle. The struggle to get a piece of land for houses took us more than 10 years accompanied by big match and petitions. At last the land that was reserve for nature was given for building of 410 houses although 9 people have been already lost their lives including 2 children. 24 Bricklayers and painters were participating to build their houses through hard skills received from Mthimkhulu. Huge demand for houses makes it very difficult for those who were not selected from the list. Friends and neighbors tend to be my enemies accusing me of planning to sell the houses together with housing officials. Regular communication with communities explaining criteria makes them understand. Acknowledgement from house owners is unbelievable but if it was not because of their participation and support the whole project would fail. I would like to thank Tft facilitators for the skills I received. Because of my work I was interviewed about Solar System for new houses and the information will be compiled in a book. Although the book will be translated into English, I hope all information given will contribute to the people at large.”*

### **Helping mothers of children with disabilities to better help themselves – Zimbabwe – interviews**

A Zimbabwean Tft graduate started working with an organized group of mothers of children with disabilities as part of his home phase assignment. After assessing the root causes of their challenges and establishing that the women lacked technical fundraising and strategic planning skills, he worked with the group to develop a capacity building plan. Through a series of trainings and team planning sessions, the group managed to develop its operational and strategic plans, which it implemented and monitored through weekly meetings. Within about six months of operating this way the group secured a grant from USAID that it used to procure a maize milling machine, which it uses for grinding maize meal for a fee. The group has managed to remain viable from 2010 to date because of the training and technical guidance that it receives from the Tft graduate on request.

## 2.7. Enabling factors

TfT graduates have been able to implement their new skills because of the supportive environment within which they operate, which is characterized by:

1. **Buy-in and support of local authorities** – one of the important things that TfT graduates learnt through the course is the importance of engagement of key decision makers regardless of differences in political or other affiliations between them and development agents. Local authorities have supported projects in different countries through various ways including providing land for operations (Nigeria), space for establishing markets (Eastern Cape, south Africa) and mobilizing communities (Zimbabwe, Zambia).
2. **Supportive funding partners** – funding partners that appreciate the TfT approach to development (e.g., Africa Groups of Sweden, Diakonia) approve proposals of programs designed to apply the principles.
3. **Organizational leaders who appreciate the course** – TfT graduates serving organizations with leaders who once attended the course or at least appreciate its value have found it easier to implement their TfT skills at their workplaces.

## 2.8. Challenges

The study noted one challenging impact of the transforming presence of TfT graduates, namely that authorities in some countries seem to *“view us as a threat because we challenge the status quo”* (South African graduate). *“We are not from the same pot with them and while we are concerned about transforming communities, their concern is to maintain their jobs and power”*. Politicians are generally interested in people’s votes, but do not work towards improving their voters’ welfare – something which TfT graduates were trained to question. *“Politics is like a snake; it swallows a person and before they know it they will be confused, not knowing whether they are close to the snake’s mouth or tail and unable to save themselves from its belly”* (South African graduate).

The following are the challenges of implementing TfT programs in home countries:

1. **Limited resources** – Some organizations are willing to sponsor their staff to attend the course in South Africa, but have failed because of resource constraints. On the other hand, TfT thrives on a foundation of a strong relationship between a change agent and communities, which are usually distant from away. To maintain regular contact with them costs more money than is available. TfT graduates have therefore invested heavily in building local capacity so that the work we started can continue to progress at the same vibrancy in our absence.
2. **Staff turnover** – participants who attend the course early in their careers have a high likelihood to leave their employers for others. If they join new organizations that do not have a participatory development culture, TfT graduates cannot apply their new skills, restricting the impacts of the course to happening at the individual level.
3. **Missed opportunities** – TfT graduates have gradually lose contact with one another after completing the course, with the few who are still in contact with each other communicating at the levels of their friendships, not as part of a movement or for professional collaboration. This is because of the absence of a coordination mechanism that can link TfT graduates from the same countries or regions who attended the course at different times. Participants of this research felt that communication amongst TfT alumni could give birth to powerful regional movements and collaborations which can make the leveraging of resources possible.



4. **Resistance from managements and board members** – who do not understand or have not been exposed to TfT principles. This is because the course has attracted the attention of technical staff members such as project officers, program managers, and related others more than it has attracted directors, board members and founders of organizations or representatives of donor agencies. However, these senior officials make decisions regarding approaches to be used in development work. It is appreciated that the more senior one's position in an organization becomes is the busier they get, which limits their availability to attend the course, but senior officials can be exposed to the short introductory courses.
5. **Limited capacity** – although in general TfT skills have been imparted on many development agents, there still remains a large proportion of professionals needing the course who have not yet received it because the Grail manages to accommodate 36 people from + 12 countries at a time. This is reinforced by the absence of TfT delivery Centres in other African countries outside South Africa. *“The harvest is plenty but laborers are few”* (www.biblegateway.com, Matthew 9:37).
6. **Mentorship-related challenges** – are exposed to mentors who possess sharply contrasting mentoring skills, which mean that some will enjoy good quality mentorship while others can be exposed to poor mentorship. Poor mentoring practices include giving mentees negative feedback that discourages them, criticizing mentees in view of workshop participants, sending negative comments to the Grail team without making attempts to address shortcomings with the mentee, and abandoning the mentee to concentrate on other things. *“Each time I visited my mentor, she would spend most time asking me about my organization's Director's welfare – how she was doing, how far she had gone with building her house and so on, not my work”*, one graduate reported. Mentors procedurally receive from the TfT instructions of what they should and are expected to do, but some have seemingly failed to adhere to the standards. However, mentors currently have the opportunity and responsibility to evaluate, not the other way round.
7. **Inadequacy of computers in the library** – While many people now afford laptops, there are still several participants who come without these and will need to rely on computers in the library. There happens to be pressure on the available computers in the library, especially towards deadlines of submitting papers, which raises the risk of damages to available ones.
8. **Development of illicit relationships between male and female studying at the Grail Centre** – from the time that the TfT course was transformed from exclusively targeting women to accommodating men repeated reports of illicit sexual relationships between male and female participants, including married ones, have been received. This potentially tarnished the Grail's strong reputation as a Centre of excellence.



*Impact Study focus group, Kleinmond, South Africa, August 2014.*

### 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 4.1. Conclusions

Chapter Two demonstrates that TfT is widely acceptable among the alumni who informed this evaluation, along with managements of their organizations. According to one group of five at a workshop in South Africa, “it is our DNA, and we live it, think it, and do things the TfT way”. Its popularity and high demand, evidence of its community impact through case studies documented in this report and positive feedback from people who have not attended the course but seen the change in the behaviors of graduates create the basis of associating the impacts reported in this report to the course. TfT has mostly transformed individuals, enabling these to transform their organizations and communities. Perhaps as a result of the course’s strong emphasis on gender education, women and girls in communities have particularly felt its impact more than other population groups. The course is undoubtedly needed and, with demand still outstripping supply, scaling up its delivery is worth serious consideration in view of the recommendations that follow in this chapter.

#### 4.2. Recommendations

- a. The program should consider decentralizing and strategically setting up in individual countries, leaving the Grail Centre to focus on overseeing quality assurance across the network and to handling the Diploma Course in support of national and regional programs. Doing so will increase access of the training to more people, including those who need it more for personal reasons than organizational growth. Decentralized national TfT programs can see an increased number of people being reached per year with introductory and certificate courses, with the potential to enhance the course’s impact on individuals, organizations and communities. These courses will raise participants’ eagerness to pursue the diploma in South Africa.
- b. TfT should be popularized among other professions such as university lecturers whose expected use of TfT tools can potentially contribute to high quality tuition and development of effective future community development professionals. Government employees including politicians, especially those who interact with communities in their work, also need the course. These may be reached through short courses or in-service trainings given their likely busy schedules.
- c. Participants of this research felt that the idea of reading many books as part of the course, while enriching, increases pressure on participants, sometimes at the expense of the listening and reflection that TfT requires. The pressure of reading many books against tight deadlines can tempt participants to search other people’s ideas on the internet with minimal reflection, thereby taking away their originality. This does not mean that participants should not read many books, but the trainers may need to promote group work by asking participants to study different texts of the same topic, share notes and write their papers. This way each individual reads fewer books at a time and yet learns about other books from classmates, which enables them to deeply master the contents and, by exchanging notes with others, to develop teamwork as opposed to competition.
- d. In view of the differential mentoring quality to which different TfT participants are exposed, it is recommended that the program should consider introducing confidential evaluation of mentors by their mentees. Resources permitting, annual mentor orientation sessions need further consideration, as these can facilitate standardized approaches and quality of mentoring.
- e. As an alternative to the above recommendation, the program team should consider coming up with a pool of mentors who must have gone through an online training and accreditation

on 'TfT mentoring' that ensures that mentors all use the same approaches and quality of mentoring.

- f. As an alternative to the above recommendation, the program team should consider coming up with a pool of mentors who must have gone through an online training and accreditation on 'TfT mentoring' that ensures that mentors all use the same approaches and adhere to the same standards, but without incurring the costs of accommodating them at the Grail Centre for training.
- g. Subject to resource availability, more computers need to be procured to meet growing demand for these from library users.
- h. The program needs to maintain its contact with organizations and TfT alumni while encouraging their independent networking. A coordination mechanism should be strategized for this purpose, preferably to allow the interaction between experts in specific fields (e.g., environment) from different countries. The database of graduates that the TfT Program already has is a good foundation to build on.
- i. The program needs to strategize how to deal with the complex group dynamics that come with the mixture of men and women in the course, especially the illicit sexual relationships that develop between men and women, including married ones. Participants found such occurrences as a threat to the Grail Centre's strong reputation as a Centre of excellence in learning.



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