Cape Town Together,
Community Action Networks (CANs) & sharing resources and learning

Acknowledgements of slides:
Co-learning CAN, various Khayelitsha CANs, Salt river CAN, Kenilworth CAN, CBD CAN and others

GCRO, Social Surveys Africa and HSRC Seminar on “Collecting social data: adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic - Community-based research” 27 August 2020
Cape Town Together started in March 2020 as a rapidly evolving community-based response to COVID-19, and is growing every day!

The network is made up of thousands of volunteers, some for the first time, others through existing community associations. Anybody can join a CAN or help start a new CAN if one doesn't exist in your area.

Existing spatial and social divides were starkly exposed by the pandemic and we aim to bridge that. COVID-19 reminds us that we are all interconnected and we feel called to rebuild our communities and our society more just and equal than before.

By building relationships of solidarity within our communities and across our city. As a collective, to inspire, promote and support ordinary people in every community to organise around local challenges while sharing ideas, experiences, skills and resources. Volunteers are working together on everything from food relief and mask making to homelessness and evictions.
Background: What are the CANs?

- 10 days before lockdown a group of community organisers, social activists and public health professionals came together to kick-start a rapid community led response to Covid-19.

- Catalyzed a network of self-organizing neighborhood based groups (or CANs) all responding to Covid-19 in their neighborhoods, and connecting across the city drawing on collective energy, and collective wisdom.
Gathering Social Data
Outline

Part 1: The Coronavirus epidemic
- The Coronavirus epidemic in South Africa
- Why is SA not on the expected trajectory?
- How much community transmission in SA?
- Some future epidemic scenarios

Part 2: South Africa’s Covid-19 response
- Stages of the SA Covid-19 response
  - Next steps: Stopping small flames to reduce the risk of raging fires
- Conclusion
Stage 8: Vigilance / surveillance

- Need to stay one step ahead of viral spread and not wait for patients to arrive in hospitals to act

- 3 components to surveillance:
  - Ongoing CHW house-to-house screening and testing especially in vulnerable communities
  - One day each month – health worker surveillance
  - One day each month - National surveillance day for schools, mines, prisons & big companies
  - For now self-taken swabs (later change to fingerprick) from a small sample of people in each setting
CORONAVIRUS OP-ED

Sparks, flames and blazes: Epidemiological and social firefighting for Covid-19

By Eleanor Whyle, Manya van Ryneveld, Leanne Brady & Kentse Radebe • 24 April 2020
“However, even these teams of highly trained, well-equipped professionals can only respond to the needs of confirmed cases and their known contacts. Community-based screening and testing might help us find the epidemiological flames before they spread, but it cannot identify the sparks of unrest and injustice, of fear and anxiety, and poverty and despair, that turn neighbours into strangers and communities into bubbling cauldrons waiting to boil over.

Finding and extinguishing the sparks of stigma, xenophobia, hunger and poverty cannot be achieved through the collection of epidemiological data at all. Rather this requires social data, collected and reported by professors of the street, based on real-world experience.
“Community Action Networks (CANs) like Cape Town Together, Eastern Cape Together, and more recently Gauteng Together are some of the community-based groups organising at the local neighbourhood level, and are generating this much-needed social data or community-level intelligence.

[...]

We can learn so much just by listening to people’s experiences. For example, that right now hunger is a much bigger problem than Covid-19 for most people. Or that stigma is bubbling beneath the surface and is about to boil over. The government could address these issues if it just paid a bit more attention to the community-level intelligence being generated by those organising at the neighbourhood level.”
Bottom-up responses of CANs

Adaptive network
(not a structured and bureaucratised organisation)
that enables the dynamic, bottom-up ways of working to respond to hyper-local needs
CAN key issues of focus

- Mapping communities to plot where needs and vulnerabilities are, and where possible resources lie
  - Street Champions
- Covid-19 awareness and education
- Addressing fear and stigma
- Mask-making and distribution
- Access to water in informal settlements
- Addressing food insecurity through community kitchen and food gardens
- Neighbourhood based models of care
- Building solidarity across the city
Some examples....

- Covid-19 awareness and education
- Addressing fear and stigma
- Distributing flyers safely
- Keeping spaza/corner shops COVID-free (safe distancing lines and sanitizer)
- Safe distancing lines outside clinics
- Mask-making and distribution
Food insecurity – towards sustainable food systems

- Food parcels
- Community kitchens
- Food gardens
- Local farmers
Good morning everyone ☀️ My little community mapping tool is now open source and available on Gitlab. If you're keen to set it up for your local community, check out my Medium post — it's easy to do and free to run:
https://link.medium.com/dVHUhb7Z54

feel free to spread this! Let me know if you have any questions or feedback.

Check out the interactive map and stay in touch with the community during the coronavirus isolation. Add more information to the map to help keeping everyone healthy.

Source:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/CapeTownTogether/?post_id=211856813252099
* To get a meal for you and your family, please go to the nearest community kitchen at the time provided on the map.
* Please practice safe physical distancing at all times (2 meters between each person in the queue).
* Please wash your hands and food container thoroughly, and take your food container with you to the kitchen.
* If you have someone who lives near you who is too old or sick to get to a kitchen, please speak to a mobiliser from your area to let them know this, or see if you can assist them.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>VYGROND UNITED 4 CHANGE</th>
<th>WHERE RAINBOWS MEET</th>
<th>AMAVA</th>
<th>PSYCHOSOCIAL TEAM</th>
<th>CANS</th>
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<td></td>
<td>AVELA: 076 888 4491</td>
<td>MURINA DA GAMA: 082 475 6187</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: https://www.facebook.com/groups/CapeTownTogether/?post_id=278422233262223
“In the early days of lockdown there was a flurry of activity to try and collect information about people who may need help with groceries, or were living on their own etc. in Kenilworth we never really managed any accurate "mapping" of the Neighbourhood

But I have realized that over time with our food delivery program the CAN team has definitely learned a huge amount of information, a lot of it not yet written down, about where the most vulnerable families are, where the church networks or neighbourhood groups are already stepping in and where the gaps are. Our main thing has been that most of this information is just in our heads. But if we sat down as a group we could probably generate a huge amount of social data of this kind for our specific area- definitely something to do in the CAN when we have a bit of time!”

- Manya Kenilworth CAN
Generating and disseminating knowledge through Co-learning
10 WAYS OF WORKING

- Network
- Build solidarity
- Self-organise
- Collaborate
- Encourage initiative
- Sustain energy
- Share good information
- Work safely
- Be inclusive
- Move at the speed of trust

Evolution of the CAN Co-Learning Sessions

1. Origins
2. Purpose
3. Approach
How did the Co-Learnings Session start?

March 2020

- New CAN admins were connecting and asking questions
- Several CAN members loved storytelling, bringing people together, facilitating collaborative space
- It was the first step in building foundations and reaching across the network

“It started out as a storytelling space that involved sharing not only what CANs are doing, but how they are doing it, and what they are learning, loving, and battling with in the process”

We work COLLABORATIVELY...

Collective action is powerful! Everyone has something to contribute in our community. Some of us are weavers and builders, others are storytellers, caregivers or healers. Some of us are disruptors and warriors, whilst others are experimenters and guides. We all have gifts and experiences that we can contribute. In many communities there are structures and organisations we can collaborate with without duplicating efforts.
What is the purpose of the Co-Learning Sessions?

This is a space to share our experiences and stories and to learn together bridging space between practical learning and deepening our personal/political/social consciousness.

We encourage CANs to bring ideas and co-host on a topic that they are passionate about.

“We space that tries to make as much of the learning that happens while in the moment”

“Brings us a little closer to each other”
The Co-Learning Sessions approach

Each of our CANs are unique and each co-learning sessions is unique as well

Guiding questions:
- What is the purpose of the session?
- Who needs to be involved? Whose voices need to be heard? Who is missing?
- What ways do they have of accessing/contributing information? (zoom, written info, audio recordings answering key questions etc.)

We build SOLIDARITY...

This is a time for radical generosity. Social solidarity is the foundation of our work – it is how we build our network. We value relationships of solidarity between and across all forms of difference and privilege, including class, race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion and nationality. While the CANs are driven by the needs of those living in the community, solidarity across CANs is an important way to share resources, practice radical generosity and learn what is going on across the network. We aim to build a response that can help to transform the unjust economic, social and environmental challenges in our society.

We have facilitators to help create a conscious container for each session - for conversation and process (tech etc)
When tensions or contradictions come up, it might be important to flag them. How is this tension part of the process? What might we learn from it?

Don’t be afraid to name what’s coming up (e.g. this seems to be a result of trying to connect from very different class positions) and signal that this is what we are trying to learn about. Doing so can help de-centre the potential destructive discomfort we feel confronting tensions and re-centre that we are people trying to work together in difficult circumstances with a lot of necessary learning as we go.

5. We work INCLUSIVELY and try to flatten hierarchies...

We need to build a culture of “calling in” not “calling out” We value a diversity of experiences and points of view and we strive to be inclusive of everyone. We are mindful of the many reasons people do not or are not able to participate in initiatives and conversations – whether it be because of a lack of data or technology, language, or because a voice is not valued. We strive to be conscious at all times of the power inequalities that exist within our groups, and to be aware of whose voices are being heard and whose voices are missed or excluded. We do not tolerate any form of domination or discrimination and we are generous and courageous in how we address these issues, knowing that we are all learning how to respond to this new and difficult moment.
CAN Ways Of Working

A quick WHAT, WHO, WHY and HOW we work

COVID-19 Response
Community Action Network (CAN) Starter Pack

Welcome

Safe cross-CAN Solidarity during lockdown

PHYSICAL MOVEMENT ACROSS THE CITY SPREADS COVID-19

Lockdown means that we cannot keep our homes secure or socially engaged. During lockdown, we know that there can be more people in the homes and chances are we are spreading more quickly. The pressure is even heavier for those who are already vulnerable. Therefore, it is more important than ever to practice social distancing and be more protective of our homes. We have some advice on how to stay safe during lockdown, and some ideas on how to help others stay safe as well.

If you cannot avoid the transporting donations yourself during lockdown, take these precautions:

1. Communicate with community leaders or others in the response in your area.
2. Don’t treat it as a social event. Plan for safety measures to prevent the donation volver.
3. If you are donating clothes, wash them before donating. A hand wash with detergent will do.
4. Only wash non-food items.
5. If you are preparing food parcels for delivery:
   - Make sure to wash your hands before preparing the food parcels.
   - Use gloves if possible.
   - Make sure that all food items are in good condition.
   - Use containers that are clean and secure.
   - Label the parcels with the date of preparation.

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Make sure donations are virus-free

Other than the clothes, all items from the homes are in good condition. If you are supplying food parcels, please take the following care to protect their contents:

1. Put your container in a locked box.
2. Mark the box clearly with a label indicating the contents.
3. Place the box on a flat surface and ensure the temperature is below 2 degrees Celsius.

SOCIAL-PHYSICAL DISTANCING, SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

Accessible Resources 😊
Some (written) References

- FaceBook “Cape Town Together”
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- Writers CAN, Cape Town Together "Cape Town Together, a neighbourhood-based network of 170 organisations" Daily Maverick 26 August 2020