

Research Article

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Transformative and Indigenous Frameworks in International Development

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Abstract: The international development community made a commitment to transformative goals related to social, economic, and environmental justice that requires them to leave no one behind. We argue that the use of transformative and indigenous frameworks for evaluation provide guidance towards achieving those goals. We provide a rationale for inclusion of these frameworks, along with an explanation of each framework and examples that illustrate their application. We conclude with hope for transformation on a global scale and reflections on our personal transformative experiences in conducting this work.

Keywords: transformation, indigenous, international development, gender, disability.

1 Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations member states endorsed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030 to “end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all” (United Nations, 2018). In the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs incorporate advances in such sectors as education, health, agriculture, food security and economic development, as well as including broader goals related to climate change, equity, and safety. The UN recognises the interdependence of achieving sectoral goals with broader societal goals and the need for transformative change in order to achieve these goals. For example, one of the SDGs that addresses education is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This needs to be considered in relation to the overarching issues of climate change,

equity, and safety.

Despite the global commitment to SDGs made in 2015, a progress report issued by the United Nations (2024) noted that “the world is severely off track to realise the 2030 Agenda (p. 4).” The report documents critical gaps in gender equality, climate change, peace and justice, and education. The UN recognises that transformative change needs to occur in order to address these gaps.

In this article, we begin by describing our own experiences in working with UN organisations to integrate a transformative and Indigenous approach into the evaluation of programmes on a global scale. Our starting point is that culture influences how we interact with the world around us; it is the basis for our perceptions about the nature of reality, ways of knowing, and our perceptions of our values. Drawing from a recent sense maker survey (Chilisa, Major, Kovabe, Kealkitse, Frehiwot, Govender, Mwaijande, et al., 2024) on evaluation practices, we demonstrate that African indigenous knowledge systems are based on a relational reality and relational ways of knowing and are part of a new indigenous science paradigm. We demonstrate how an indigenous framework emanating from an African indigenous knowledge system can serve as a transformative tool that promotes people-centric projects that enhance ownership and sustainability of projects. We first describe the basic assumptions of the indigenous and transformative paradigms and then we illustrate the application of such approaches in different countries, calling for methods that are specifically focused on bringing about change for the most marginalised and vulnerable populations. We identify the application of transformative and indigenous approaches, as well as opportunities to enhance the transformative impact of the evaluation process.

1.1 Our Experience in Bringing Indigenous and Transformative Approaches to International Development

Chilisa and Mertens were hired by the UN organisations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to

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provide guidance in their evaluation strategies to achieve their mission to serve the poorest of the poor through sustainable agriculture. Chilisa was also hired by the Pan African Consortium in a MasterCard Foundation funded project to develop an Ubuntu spirituality tool to enhance community participation and ownership of projects and sustainability of project outcomes. Chilisa is an African belonging to the Bantu people of Southern Africa and comes from Botswana. She has written extensively on indigenous research and evaluation methodologies that promote evaluation that leaves no knowledge behind and respond to the aspirations, needs and priorities of the people (Chilisa, 2020). She has advocated for inclusion of the indigenous paradigm that reflects the assumptions of indigenous tribes and nations across the globe. Mertens is a non-indigenous scholar with expertise on gender issues and working with people with disabilities. Mertens introduced the transformative paradigm to articulate assumptions that guide research conducted in pursuit of increased justice (Mertens, 2023; 2024; Mertens, Hall & Wilson, 2025). Our work provides a framework for integrating transformative and indigenous approaches into research and evaluation related to achievement of goals for those who are not traditionally included in this process.

1.2 Indigenous Paradigms

A people without knowledge of their past, history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots (Marcus Garvey) it's like 'people without a soul' (Sir Seretse Khama)

There is growing literature that there are cultural patterns that differentiate peoples around the world. In the book *The Geography of Thought*, Nisbett (2004) differentiates between Anglo Western thought that organises the world in categories, values individualism, and reflects a tendency to see change as linear from that of thoughts from the Eastern world, especially East Asia, where the world is organised in relationships and there is a tendency to strive towards societal harmony. Along similar lines, Lent (2021) maintains that there are patterning instincts that are the basis for meaning making in different cultural contexts. Eastern thought is to some extent similar to African thought and world view. The African world view is dominated by an I/We relationship. African thought comes from the African adage: I am because we are. This thought process views relations between and among people, and between people and their environment as the pillar of human existence and a guide to human interaction with each other and with the universe. A postcolonial indigenous paradigm with an emphasis on

relational realities, ways of knowing and values is guiding transformative research and evaluation tools in the design of people centric development projects that promote community ownership of projects and their sustainability.

One of the characteristics that distinguish indigenous paradigms from mainstream Euro-Western paradigms is the concept of multiple constructed realities grounded in material, social and spiritual contexts. These multiple constructed realities are further marked by the interconnectedness of the living and the non-living and a relational existence. Knowledge is subjective, objective, and complex and is historically located. The notion of a spiritual reality has been difficult for researchers and evaluators to comprehend and apply to their practice. However, African-based researchers are making progress in integrating the indigenous paradigm into methodological guidance. For example, the Pan African Consortium in a MasterCard Foundation funded project is applying an Ubuntu spirituality tool to enhance community participation and ownership of projects and sustainability of project outcomes. The transformative nature of the tool is in respecting, honoring, and including indigenous knowledge in the evaluation planning and execution of results. In this section, we highlight a context-first evaluation approach that draws from an Ubuntu spirituality, steps in combining knowledge systems, and using '8R' and decolonisation as an evaluation tool.

Step 1: Context Applying an Ubuntu Spirituality

There are five elements in the Ubuntu spirituality as follows:

People: An Ubuntu spirituality based on an I/we relationship implies that the evaluator embraces a relationship with the people that value collective working together, respect for the people's local knowledge, their norms and taboos. The evaluators also invoke local knowledge practices to ensure harmonious relationships amongst the diverse structures of the community. In most parts of Southern Africa, for example, the evaluators must enter the community through the community leader and without his knowledge and permission the evaluators cannot get the cooperation of the community.

Place: Every place has a local history and culture that binds the people together and informs their daily interactions. This history is stored in the folklores, the stories, sayings, and songs.

Space: Here the emphasis is the physical location where, for example, a clinic or school building is erected. People have connections with their land and space and there may be areas or spaces where it might be a taboo to hold an evaluation event or erect a project building.

Imagine an evaluation outcome where there is minimal utilisation of a clinic because it was erected where the people's ancestors are buried. An evaluator who does not apply an Ubuntu spiritual tool might interpret the outcome as the people's unwillingness to utilise modern medicine. Space also points to physical spaces where the evaluators meet with people for data collection.

Environment: Through totems, each and every person is connected to the environment. The connection to the environment seeks recognition of sacred places during initiation of projects and environmental justice as an important component towards sustainable evaluation outcomes.

Time: The time of the year, month and day are symbolic from an Ubuntu spiritual context, and it is important that evaluators observe the taboos that are associated with time to ensure rigor in data collection. Figure 1 illustrates the Ubuntu Spirituality Tool.

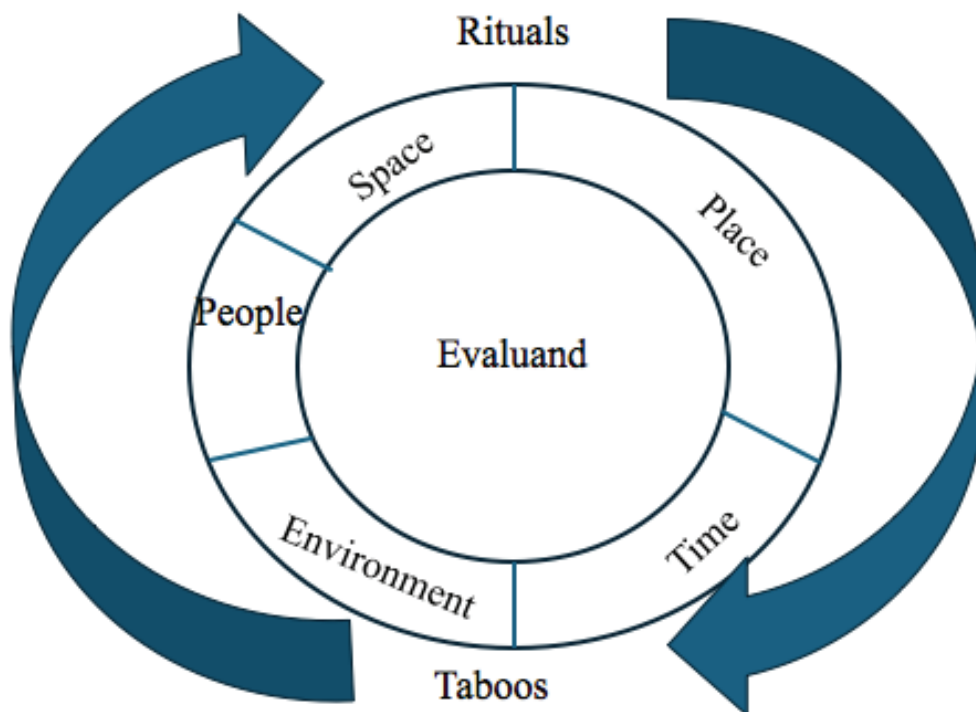
In their quest for quality and transformation, evaluators must leave no knowledge behind. They must adopt a 'context first approach', value, revitalise and restore, the history, and culture of communities, listen and learn how communities define success and measure it, value and document the uniqueness of indigenous research and evaluation tools and frameworks, indigenous

local knowledge, and the importance of using them in evaluations they conduct. Evaluators must contextualise the evaluation process by bringing to the center of the entire process the physical, the spiritual, the emotional, historical, social, and the ideological aspect of the phenomena for more rigorous, credible, and inclusive inquiry.

The evaluator must bring to the evaluation process indigenous tools that build and nurture relationships and connectedness of the people with each other and with the environment to ground evaluation at the local level. The evaluator must invoke indigenous knowledge to inform ways in which concepts and new theoretical frameworks for the program evaluation are defined to expand the boundaries of rigor and credibility in research inquiry. To broaden the literature base, the evaluator must depend not only on written texts but also on the largely unwritten texts of the formerly colonised and historically disadvantaged people so that no knowledge is left behind that can contribute to the completeness of research inquiry.

Step 2: History of community engagement

The evaluators need to find out about the role of the community in the design of the programme. Who initiated the program? What is the history of the community in



relation to the programme to be evaluated? What is the structure of the community and how is power distributed and shared? What role does spirituality play in peoples' beliefs about the ways of knowing and the programme?

Step 3: Building Relationships

Evaluation is political. Relational, political, discursive and historical powers dictate what is considered reality and truth and shape the realities under review. An evaluator starts a dialogue on building relationships that challenges hierarchical structures that prioritise dominant cultures and knowledge systems. The evaluator needs to have knowledge of the community values, taboos and protocols for entry into the community. Evaluators need to decolonise their minds by 1) acknowledging the value of building relationships; 2) creating one's internal conditions for healthy relationships; 3) recognising the diversity of knowledge; 4) acknowledging the human nature connection; and 5) recognising the value of interconnectedness. The evaluator at this stage agrees with the community on a collaborative evaluation model.

Step 4: Determining what counts as success

The evaluator balances funder's indicators and measurement of success with that of the community and dialogue with the community to frame the evaluation questions. The community identifies what they consider to be successful when an intervention is introduced.

Step 5: Decolonising Mixed Methods Theory and Practice

The evaluator can address the following: How will the study use a balanced borrowing from a Euro-Western paradigm and indigenous paradigm? What methods balance power between the community and the evaluators and the knowledge systems? What indigenous data collection tools give voice to the communities? What methods will the evaluation use to accurately generate and record marginalized voices and indigenous and local knowledge that has been predominantly excluded through Euro-Western conventional methodologies? How will the study invoke the histories, world views, and indigenous knowledge systems to imagine and suggest new methodologies? Will the study in any way restore and revitalise indigenous knowledge?

The evaluator who wishes to use a standardised research instrument and evaluation framework developed predominantly using a Western lens will need to contextualise the instrument or framework through a qualitative research approach using mainstream data

collection tools, e.g., interviews, focus group discussions, and other qualitative data collection procedures. They also need to include indigenous qualitative data collection tools, e.g., talking circles, storytelling, community metaphors, proverbs, folklore stories etc. The indigenous data collection methods generate and make visible marginalised voices and indigenous and local knowledge that has been predominantly excluded through Euro-Western conventional methodologies. The approach can also be used to design survey instruments.

Step 6: Dissemination of Results

Evaluators combine mainstream and indigenous reporting strategies.

In the next section, we describe how the indigenous paradigm's assumptions about ethics and values are manifest in methodological decision making.

1.3 Decolonisation and the 8Rs

These ethical principles are based on an I/we relationship and places responsibility for a successful evaluation process on all stakeholders including beneficiaries, funders, and commissioners. The 8Rs define the indigenous paradigm's ethical assumptions.

1. **Relationality:** The emphasis is on belongingness, togetherness, interdependence, collectiveness, love, harmony and relationships of humans with each other and with earth-creation. There is emphasis on valuing community strength and building community relationships and coalitions for working together to inform research or evaluation intent, motive, and methodology. Implicit in this principle is the need for healing of communities.
2. **Responsibility:** It is about the role of a researcher or evaluator in pursuing social, economic, and environmental justice, resisting dominant ideologies that silence local communities and community ideologies that discriminate on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, race, ableness, age etc.; and contributing to, unity, and harmony within the community and of all stakeholders' responsibility in playing their roles.
3. **Reverence:** Indigenous research recognizes the critical nature of spirituality and values it as an important contribution to ways of knowing. Many Indigenous people place value on sacred sites and spiritual practices. The evaluator or researcher applying a relationality lens needs to figure out what is revered, how they will participate in it and how it will inform interpretation of their findings and feed into a radical

change of program development, design, planning and implementation and evaluation.

4. **Reciprocity:** Whose development program is it? Who initiated it and how will they benefit from it? Who will hear and learn from it? These are fundamental questions that address the pitfall of colonial evaluation research that serves the interests of the funders and commissioners. Requiring evaluators to pay attention to who initiated the programme helps to hold governments accountable to their citizens instead of serving as an easy market for projects designed by the funders without community consultation.
5. **Respectful (representation):** Respect requires that the process, from the initiation of the research, the questions asked, the methodology, the data-collection procedures, and the reporting and dissemination of the report, is guided by the community and that the community has ownership and access to the data collected.
6. **Reflexivity:** The principle of reflexivity requires evaluators and commissioners and all stakeholders to continuously reflect on their position within existing powers and ensure that the evaluation will address the priority needs of communities. Radical change can happen if evaluation ethics direct donors and commissioners to reflect on current practice where evaluation too often provides performance assessment compliance and accountability functions for donors and commissioners at the expense of the learning agenda and relational knowing.
7. **Responsivity:** Responsiveness is the ability of researchers or evaluators to learn from the process, recognise the evolving changes, and adapt their approaches and methodologies to become the change agent, and ensure a context based, and culturally sensitive, transformative, and appropriate evaluation process. Evaluation approaches designed by African countries are to play a critical role in transforming programme design, planning and implementation. Evaluators under this principle raise questions about who is learning from whom? Under the conventional model the main role of the evaluator is to provide performance assessment for funders and commissioners and perform compliance and accountability functions, not communal learning.
8. **Rights and Regulations:** This calls for ethical protocols that accord communities the rights and opportunities to prioritise their needs, claim and guard against misappropriation of indigenous knowledge and have the rights to confidentiality.

Decolonisation and decoloniality: This calls evaluator to resist the blind borrowing of Western theories, conceptual frameworks, and methodologies, and to adapt these methodologies and theories where necessary to make them contextually and culturally relevant. When done well, adaptation leads to new method theories that are context and culturally rooted. It calls for decolonisation of self and cultivation of knowledge through formation of coalitions.

1.4 Transformative Principles for Evaluation: Gender and Disability

As part of our role in consulting with IFAD, we provided guidance on how they could integrate transformative approaches to a greater degree in their work (Mertens, 2023; 2024; Mertens, Hall & Wilson, 2025). We emphasised that evaluators who strive to leave no one behind need to incorporate strategies that are culturally responsive for inclusion and support of historically marginalised populations, as well as investigate the root causes for the lack of equity experienced by these populations. For example, the root causes that women are left behind are reflective of oppressive societal norms, beliefs, and values. The same is true for members of the LGBTQ population, however, there are additional root causes related to stigma, legislative and cultural contextual factors. For people with disabilities, the root causes are also associated with stigma and oppressive cultural norms, beliefs, and values, but obstacles are also presented by a lack of resources and knowledge for appropriate accommodation and inclusion.

The application of transformative principles is evidenced in the work of three UN agencies, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), IFAD, and World Food Programme (WFP) (2021) who developed gender transformative approaches (GTA) in the context of rural development. The transformative principles in GTA included addressing root causes of rigid gender norms, unequal power dynamics, and discriminatory social structures. These approaches seek to “actively examine, challenge and change the underlying causes of gender inequality that are rooted in imbalanced power dynamics and relations, inequitable social institutions and structures, including rigid gender norms and roles, harmful practices, unequal formal and informal rules, as well as gender-blind or discriminatory legislative and policy frameworks” (FAO, IFAD, & WFP, 2021, p. 2). They encourage the use of participatory methodologies and recognition of the intersectionality of characteristics that are used as a basis of discrimination against women.

The UN agencies include the concept of intersectionality, but do not explicitly address the non-binary nature of gender as it is manifest in the LGBTQ community.

Guidance for inclusion of persons with disabilities is available from many UN documents (e.g. UN, 2021; UNEG, 2022), including IFAD's Disability Inclusion Strategy (2022). However, this guidance needs to be integrated into evaluation planning and implementation. This guidance includes:

- Develop evaluation strategies for disability inclusion that include the collection and use of disability-disaggregated data.
- Consultation with persons with disabilities and advocacy organisations and form partnerships (e.g., Global Action on Disability Network, International Disability Alliance, and ILO).
- Use participatory approaches that allow for persons with disabilities to influence the design and implementation of the evaluation.
- Provide reasonable accommodations that increase access, such as necessary support and resources, sign language, braille, assistive technology, interpreters, augmented audio or visual materials, and verbal or written materials that are responsive to the person's needs. Kenney et al. (2023) expand on these ideas by suggesting that evaluators gather prior knowledge about the communication capacities of the persons with disabilities, provide multiple means of engagement and responses (e.g. activity-based interviews, photo elicitation, drawings, collages, or walking interviews). Provide extra time if needed and ensure a comfortable environment that is free of distractions. Additional accommodations might include providing sensory aids, personal assistants, assistance animals, or assistive technologies and communication methods. Technology can be used to provide images or videos for those who are less literate, and the content can be adapted to the user's needs.
- Use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) throughout the evaluation to integrate disability sensitive measures into the design, implementation, and use of the evaluation. "UDL is a generic term describing design that is intended to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost" (Center for Universal Design, 2017, cited in Mertens, et al., 2025, p. 363). The basic idea behind universal design is that environments and products should be created, right

from the start, to meet the needs of all users rather than just an average user.

- Follow principles of engagement: dignity and respect, equal opportunities, nondiscrimination, effective participation, accessibility, and consideration of intersectionality (e.g. gender and disability).
- Begin evaluations with a disability-focused poverty and livelihood analysis.

This guidance addresses the issues of inclusion and accommodation, but not necessarily the root causes of leaving behind people with disabilities, women, and gender minorities. To address the root causes, evaluators need to give attention to strategies that enhance the potential transformative impact of an evaluation, including taking time to build culturally responsive relationships, developing coalitions, integrating social activist strategies, using participatory strategies to address root causes such as cultural norms and structural barriers, addressing power inequities, and recognising the heterogeneity of targeted groups.

1.5 Example of Transformative Approaches

An example from the UN illustrates the application of a transformative framework in a study that demonstrates how methods can be used to increase participation and inclusion of intersectional groups of women, including those with disabilities. Stocker et al. (2020) conducted an evaluation of an economic development project for women who work from home in Pakistan under the auspices of UN Women. The intervention was designed to provide vocational education at training centers with the goal of increasing women's economic empowerment. The evaluators were from Pakistan, and they knew that women with disabilities and transwomen are excluded groups in that country (and many other countries) because of deep rooted stigma and lack of supportive infrastructure. They describe these two groups of women as "the most persecuted groups in the country; their political, social and economic exclusion has overwhelmingly exposed them to systemic violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination" (p. 7). Their approach illustrates the application of transformative principles that were used to modify their evaluation plan to include women with disabilities and transwomen.

The evaluators began by forming relationships with civil society organisations that worked to support inclusive rural development. They spent time consulting with all the stakeholders, including women with disabilities and transgender persons. They were explicit about the pillars that guided their methodology: "(1) voice and inclusion,

(2) appropriateness of research methods, (3) triangulation of information, (4) contribution (5) transparency and confidentiality, and (6) human rights and gender equality responsive” (Stocker et al., 2020, p. 3). As the evaluators began their data collection, they recognised that meaningful engagement with women with disabilities and transwomen required a modification of their approach.

To this end, they designed and conducted a case study to evaluate the intervention as it was applied to women with disabilities and transwomen. They recognised that working with these two excluded groups required specialised knowledge, previous experience, and “warm networks and contacts in these groups, particularly in the transgender community” (p. 47). They partnered with disability organisations to identify women with disabilities. Even so, they faced a challenge in motivating these women and their families to participate because of family concerns about their daughter/sister/wife’s ability to function outside of the home. Through interviews conducted over several time periods, they were able to ascertain that the location of the training close to the woman with disabilities’ home was critical. Also, provision of transportation and enabling a caregiver to stay with the women was important.

The project and the modified approach to evaluation led to documentation of transformative changes for women with disabilities:

[T]he WWDs project has touched deeply women living with disabilities and triggered a self-transformation process – increased their self-confidence in their potential and capabilities and has given them hope and courage. Women with disabilities who participated in the vocational trainings and for two months daily came out of their house, for most [the] first ever time in their lives, they felt liberated from a prison. Going out was a big thing for these women in the social and economic context of Pakistan as the project made these women mobile. (p. 31)

While this personal transformation was considered to be an indicator of project success, the evaluators noted that the project had failed to recognise the stigma attached to disability and that this represents the biggest impediment affecting women with disabilities to achieve economic empowerment. Future replications of the project would enhance the effectiveness for women with disabilities by partnering with organisations so persons with disabilities could enhance their economic rights.

Stocker et al. (2020) reported a lack of success with the trans community. They made the decision to stop pursuing the transgender community because of increased risks of violence experienced by their staff.

They recognised that a different approach that relied on partnership with trans organisations would be needed to navigate this community.

2 Example of an Indigenous Approach

There are not many examples of the application of an indigenous approach in international development. However, Arko-Achemfuor, Romm, and Serolong (2019) provide such an example through their work with farmers and their families in the North West Province of South Africa. Lesego Serolong is an indigenous woman from that region of South Africa who left the country to develop expertise in economic development. She returned to her home province and founded Bokamoso Impact Investments with the goal of supporting sustainable agriculture through training farmers in advanced farming techniques and marketing strategies.

As an initial step, the researchers conducted a contextual analysis that collected quantitative data that indicated high unemployment rates, low literacy levels, severe climate conditions, and high levels of poverty. Qualitative data collected from government documents and past international development initiatives. International development initiatives revealed a version of reality that painted a picture of failure rather than success:

Challenges that have arisen include certain unfulfilled promises by potential donors and lack of financial support from the local department of agriculture...many government officials who had visited the hub made empty promises to the farmers and the community at large (p. 3).

The study illustrates the indigenous paradigm in many ways. Serolong knew the importance of forming relationships that were culturally responsive. She described how she worked with the village chief who was well respected and served as a way of assisting communications between Bokamoso Impact Investment staff, the researchers, and the various members of the community. Appropriate cultural protocols were followed in gaining entry for the research and in the frequent engagements that occurred between the stakeholders.

The indigenous paradigm was also applied by paying attention to the voices of the community members and the results of the initial data collection. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data led to the awareness that literacy training was needed before training in agriculture would be possible. As a step in providing the literacy training, Serolong renewed relationships she had with

Arko-Achemfuor who worked at the University of South Africa's (Unisa) Department of Adult Basic Education and Youth Development (ABEYD) department.

Application of the indigenous paradigm was made explicit by the priority given to forming relationships by “working practically with people in communities to create futures yet to be – by trying to explore with communities their challenges so that they can “take charge” as agents, while Bokamoso works alongside them in (re)defining and envisioning ways of responding to the felt challenges” (Arko-Achemfuor, et al., 2019, p. 2). In addition, Arko-Achemfuor et al. comments about the quality of relationships reflects the ethical assumptions of the indigenous paradigm: He wrote that he had “learned certain aspects of the culture of the communities (respect, appreciation, their resilience and spirituality surrounding all their endeavours) and what some of their aspirations are for further studies” (p. 4).

The indigenous epistemological assumption about the nature of knowledge was evidenced in the valuing of knowledge from community members: “This way of working together is in keeping with certain indigenous authors’ promulgation of what is called an Indigenous research paradigm, which respects that “knowing” in indigenous settings is relational and takes place in communities as people interact with each other in relation to felt challenges” (Arko-Achemfuor, et al., 2019, p. 2).

Thus, operationalising of indigenous values of respect, appreciation, resilience, and spirituality created conditions for transformation to occur. The level of literacy was enhanced for farmers and members of their families to a level sufficient for them to benefit from agricultural training. The farmers learned to grow vegetables on a commercial scale, and they receive continuous training in small business development, project management and entrepreneurship. Challenges still arise due to economic setbacks and climate change, but the strength of the relationships have set the stage for solving problems, rather than resigning themselves to their fate. The comment made by the village chief after the farmers received training in setting up cooperatives (which the village chief also completed) illustrates the transformative power of applying an indigenous approach. He was quoted as saying: “God should bless your group, Unisa and Bokamoso for having chosen to support us. We are now seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. We used to be poor but we see that your efforts and our commitment is going to make this community a prosperous community in the shortest possible time” (Arko-Achemfuor, et al., 2019, p. 5).

2.1 Conclusions and Reflections

If the world intends to make progress in meeting the SDGs, there needs to be more attention paid to the cultures and contexts that are styming progress. The lack of attention to root causes of problems because traditional approaches assume an understanding of the nature of the problem and its history; lack of attention to cultural issues; and development of solutions that are rooted in community perspectives. Thus, transformative and indigenous frameworks offer guidance in changing research methods so that their transformative potential is increased.

Throughout this process, we saw advancements and room for improvement in the organisations that we worked with. The solicitation of guidance on transformative and indigenous approaches is certainly an advancement. As discussed, many international organisations provide guidance on addressing the concerns of women and people with disabilities, however, this is less so for indigenous nations and tribes. Unfortunately, the application of the transformative and indigenous frameworks to address root causes is still an area in need of improvement. As we have discussed, examples exist that illustrate the application of these principles. However, global transformation will require a transformation of the thinking of those who design and fund the studies in order to prioritise transformative and indigenous approaches that align with the culture and context in which the interventions are situated. Our experiences have both renewed our belief that progress is possible and strengthened our will to be part of the shift to transformative and indigenous applications in international development.

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