

“Karibu sana” to our July 2023 update!

1. In a three-day workshop on identity construction organized by EASUN, leaders of civil society organizations (CSOs) learnt new skills in identity construction. This was a critical strategic step for CSOs, especially as non-state actors involved in development projects work and, more significantly, as an institutional sector working to expand participation, inclusion and empowerment in human systems that impact the quality of development experienced by diverse groups of people in organizations and communities.

2. FOLD (Facilitating Organizational Learning and Development) training for Kenya and Tanzania is in full swing. Module 2 of cycle F1 was held from 12<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Great experiences shared by CSO leaders attending the course. Read all about it. **Apply now** and experience exponential growth in your own power to create change in communities and organizations. Contact us through [info@easuncentre.org](mailto:info@easuncentre.org).

1. From identity construction training, CSO leaders are talking about “managing polarity”, for sustaining both identity and adaptability of the organization.

2. In EASUN’s FOLD training, 14 CSO leaders acquire skills and tools that facilitate empowerment of others.

3. Upcoming events

## Organizational identity construction

Training workshop brings new awareness and skills for leaders of civil society organizations (CSOs) in East Africa

EASUN’s training workshop on CSO Identity Construction was held in Moshi, Tanzania, from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The 3-day workshop brought together 16 CSO leaders from Tanzania and Kenya. *Identity construction* is among several activities regularly organized by EASUN for the institutional development of civil society organizations, toward governance practices that are responsive to inclusive needs of people in organizations and communities.

The workshop created an opportunity for CSOs to collectively examine issues that affect the development and impact of the sector from the point of view of their growth. Key aspects of the workshop included:

- Understanding patterns of managing organizational identity.
- Understanding *organizational learning* and its role in strengthening an organization’s ability to manage its identity.
- Creating polarity maps to help participants see the full picture of issues related to CSO identity management.

### Previous experience with identity management

The first day involved exploration of how CSOs are currently managing their identities. In groups, participants shared relevant incidents from their organizations, then created role-plays around the incidents shared. Plenary

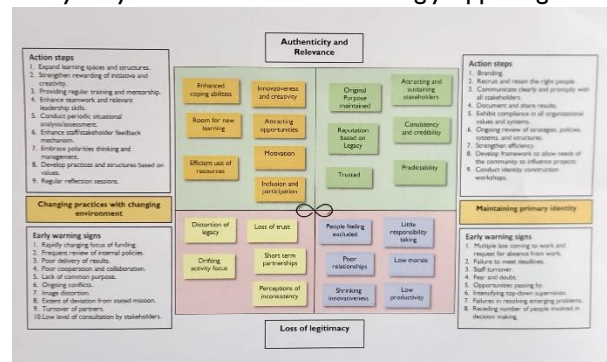
discussions of the role plays enabled the participants to see key things that are involved in organizational identity and the factors in complex organizational situations and changing environments influence identity evolution.

The role-plays surfaced challenges that CSOs currently face with identity management. Insights generated by the analysis and reflection included; 1) the need for shared understanding of organizational identities; 2) identity construction is on-going and requires time commitment; 3) shared understanding builds confidence for identity construction; 4) identity construction requires critical reflection on issues such as compliance and its consequences, e.g., on claimed values, and what to let go of, for meaningful adaptability.

## Identity construction through polarities management

The second day of workshop started with a look at identity construction through the concept of polarities. Several models were introduced to help participants become conversant with the concept of polarity. From a brief presentation on “power-use effectiveness” model, for instance, they recognized that the tension between using power to *control* vs to *enhance* can never be resolved by choosing one side or the other. Managing the polarity and paradox inherent in it requires a creative dance between the two sides, enabled by keen awareness of *advantages* of each, and the *downsides* of leaning too much on any one side. The input and participants’ reflections on “power use effectiveness model”, prepared them to engage with the issue of organizational *identity construction*, both by individual CSOs and the whole institutional sector.

Participants were then asked to pick and work with one of the roleplays from day 1 of the workshop, in which they had observed what the organization was struggling with in relation to identity questions. They picked a roleplay that was underlining the practice of building ownership of communities served through project activities. The roleplay became a practical case that also influenced their formulation of a *polarity* to work with in the subsequent process of learning identity construction. The polarity they identified had two seemingly opposing



sides, around the struggle between change and stability: 1) constructing an identity and clinging to it, which has implications on the ability to cope; 2) adaptability or compliance with changing demands in the environment, which carries the risk of evaporating the values that give meaning to the existence and purpose of an organization.

At the core of the identity construction process itself, the CSO leaders in identified strategies that would enable them to maximize the advantages of each side of the polarity. They also developed early warning signs that would

signal to them when they are leaning too heavily on either one of the polarities. At the end of the session, participants shared their insights around the complexity of managing organizational identity, for instance: “this process enabled us to see more in the story of the organization (in the role-play) than we did before.” (See map above produced by participants in the workshop).

## How CSO leaders experienced the training

1. “I feel **energized**. I see new possibilities opened up. Going through the case-study, I was...getting some answers from the process. It has given me a new perspective and tools, and also generated new questions for me. —*Amani Mhinda, Programme Manager, Open Society Foundation. Nairobi, Kenya.*
2. “My question has **shifted**. I came to the training with a heavy burden, looking at the theme of the workshop— ‘CSO Identity Construction’. I struggled with the mindset and posture of maintenance. My question was, ‘how can we maintain the identity of our organization?’ Now I am talking about “managing polarity”, i.e., both maintenance of identity and adaptability of the organization. My questions have been answered with the tools, new concepts and mindset shifts that I have attained. I have something concrete to take home and share with my organization.” —*Jacqueline Nicodemus INADES Formation, Dodoma.*
3. “I feel **challenged**, looking back at where I come from and the organization I work with and the polarities that exist in it, i.e., a network that deals with lots of varied interests. Another challenge: Process. —*Malesi Shivanji, CEO, KEWASNET. Nairobi, Kenya*
4. **On top of the world:** “I feel enlightened, like a new person, in terms of understanding organizations and the role of leadership in managing polarities existing in an organizational situation. —*Asmini Gombo Success Hands Tz. Dar salaam*
5. “I feel **Inspired**. The identity construction Tool is a problem solving, learning and motivation tool. It has raised new questions for me in terms of how I can use it in my organizational situation and communities we support.

—*Golden Mgonzo, ED, Shalom Children, Arusha.*

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## Problem-solving through productive collaboration

### EASUN’s training builds CSO leaders’ capacity to manage human systems for community growth and development

13 leaders from Tanzania and Kenya attended module 2 of EASUN’s FOLD training from 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in Moshi Tanzania. The module theme is ‘*Facilitating learning in collaborative spaces*. Participants learnt skills that increase leaders’ ability to support team members to work effectively with the contributions of others.

#### After module 1—shifts noted

Module II started with an exercise in which participants looked back at the time between modules 1 & 2 and reflected on how they had applied their new skills in organizations and project situations. The discussions showed that many of them had paid much attention to 1) *contracting*—a key process for success of an OD intervention; 2) tools that support reflective learning to surface issues that often get organizations and leaders stuck. Some specific notable experiences were highlighted, e.g., Hekela Charles of SUMASESU, based in Makete district Tanzania, who facilitated a community project situation that was paralyzed by disagreement on implementation strategies. She was able to create movement in the situation, i.e., from conflict to collaboration, by first doing some self-work, i.e., strengthened her ability for conscious *use-of-self*. Says Hekela:

I shifted my posture from seeing the project participants as a problem, and started *listening* more actively to the whole situation, i.e., by *holding-back* and *letting-go* of my judgement of the project participants. My own shifts enabled me to design processes that generated dialogue, which increased the project participants’ ability to achieve consensus.

In the reconnecting process, understanding of other key concepts that are critical in facilitating change were strengthened, such as 1) *new learning*, and how it is formulated to generate energy 2) *conscious use-of-self*; 3) *active*

listening. Highlighting his own experience of the power of active listening, one participant—Jacob Opara, from Kenya noted: “Complex listening is required for complex situations, such as complex levels of organizations.

Experiences shared highlighted key skills and tools that now characterize the 13 trained leaders as facilitators of learning for change, or transformation. Other Organization Development (OD) skills applied include “working with the wisdom of the situation” and “strategic questioning” techniques, i.e., asking questions that empower people for responsibility taking; 4) surfacing organizational development issues using both diagnostic and dialogic processes.

## Creating collaborative spaces

Exercises on the last day of the module deepened participants understanding of the importance of leadership and



organizational practices that promote and sustain collaboration. They discovered that sustaining collaboration is an outcome of self-awareness of both leaders and community members. Skills and values acquired in module 2 will enable leaders to enhance collaboration through:

- Generating shared understanding and sense of common purpose.
- Grounding commitment and collective responsibility-taking.
- Facilitating constructive conversations, i.e., dialogue.

## Equipped, empowered, motivated

The three words above capture some of the feelings expressed when participants shared how they had experienced the training throughout module 2. They highlighted insights that they had gathered from the 5 days of the module. Some of what they shared is highlighted in the table below.

### FEELINGS SHARED IN THE LAST SESSION OF MODULE 2

<b>Motivated</b>	“Enhanced <i>self-awareness</i> has challenged me to work with my action plans.”
<b>Happy</b>	“Was able to pinpoint things that were critical to my learning and the shifts I experienced in me.”
<b>Empowered</b>	“I feel well grounded. Now I can effectively support collaborative learning situations.”
<b>Equipped &amp; motivated</b>	“I am Looking forward to practicing my new learning in real life.”
<b>Empowered</b>	“I got to understand more about myself. I also feel challenged because I have seen things that I still need to work on.”