Feminist Activist Archives: Towards a Living History of the Gender Education Training Network (GETNET)

Koni Benson

http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7076-0246

University of the Western Cape, South Africa

konibenson@gmail.com

Abstract

This article engages the dilemmas and challenges of writing histories of the recent past, and of the political agendas of intervening in those histories in the present. This is done through producing an archive of documentation and oral histories of the Gender Education Training Network, GETNET. GETNET was a feminist political education organisation formed in South Africa in the 1990s that is best known for creating spaces of thinking and learning to strengthen action and intervention at numerous levels from 1992 to 2014. This article portrays the history and pedagogy as well as groundbreaking work of GETNET—the first gender training organisation in South Africa that attempted to make real the gains made on paper by challenging gender dynamics and institutionalised sexism in post-apartheid South Africa. It draws on the literature of activist archiving and feminist methodologies of intergenerational dialogue, aiming to (a) share some of the most radical and relevant work done in the decade after 1994 by anti-apartheid feminist activists developing what they called indigenous and regional perspectives, materials, and methodologies to expose and shift gender dynamics, and (b) to spark ideas and conversations about ways of producing activist archives that are accountable to both movements and to the future.

Keywords: South Africa; feminist political education; history; activism; women; Gender Education Training Network (GETNET)

Introduction

This article shares some of the most exciting elements of producing an archive of documentation and interviews that capture, amongst other things, the politics, the history, the pedagogy, and the groundbreaking work of the Gender Education Training Network (GETNET). GETNET was a feminist political education organisation formed in South Africa in the 1990s. It was the first gender training organisation in South Africa that attempted to

make real the gains made on paper by challenging gender dynamics and institutionalised sexism in "post"apartheid South Africa. GETNET is best known for creating spaces of thinking and learning to strengthen action and intervention at numerous levels in and beyond southern Africa from 1992 to 2014. Looking back over two decades of her relationship to GETNET, feminist activist Wilhelmina Trout (interviewed by Erna Curry and Koni Benson, Cape Town, 15 February 2012) describes the need for such an organisation:

> I was a worker leader, I always held positions in a male-dominated union. I was the chairperson of the branch and I chaired a lot of national meetings and international meetings of a growing labour federation that was extremely militant and played a big role in bringing about the 1994 changes. And then in my own existence, life, and work, I saw that there was almost no equality or freedom for me as a woman and I wanted to understand that, and I felt that there was something wrong with how that society is structured. Something is not right here! And I saw GETNET as the only place that could help me understand this framework, understand this system, understand what was happening. I went there to be able to equip myself with understanding why Marxism or Leninism or whatever we kind of aspired to while fighting for liberation—why at the end of the day it still meant that here I was feeling that women were being marginalised … When I attended that first workshop … on "What is Gender" with Ruby Marks … It opened up a lot and it actually changed the direction for me in terms of how I saw the world and that's how I became involved in feminist politics and feminist struggles and feminist organisations.

Between 2011 and 2015, I worked with Trout as part of the GETNET Collective—a group of feminist activists based in various movements and organisations—including the South African Municipal Workers Union, the Sex Work Education and Advocacy Task Force, Ogoni Solidarity Forum, Whole World Women's Association of Refugees in South Africa, the International Labour Research and Information Group, Just Associates Southern Africa, and the African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town. We had answered a call from the former GETNET board that hosted an open forum to discuss the options for closing down GETNET.

We argued that GETNET was still needed and set ourselves three tasks: to write up the history of the organisation and its lessons and legacies for feminist activism today, to collect and update the training materials, and to continue with the feminist political education for community organisations, social movements and trade unions. I was part of the first task team that designed, coordinated and carried out an oral history and documentation research project called the *G-Story*. This was carried out in various parts, by various people over time, and resulted in (a) an electronic archive of key GETNET materials including its training products, publications, proposals, presentations, research, programmatic, meeting and annual reports,

and (b) a long paper which drew on engagement with relevant literature on the women's movement and organising in South Africa post-1994, on the archived materials and various GETNET publications, and on a set of 20 interviews we carried out with GETNET staff/board/supporters, feminist academics studying and engaging gender justice work, and people involved in allied organisations that continued to navigate the shifting terrains of liberation movement building today.[1]

This 250-page report, entitled *Towards a History of GETNET* (Benson and Davis 2015), offers an overview of the key phases and themes gleaned from the GETNET archives that were given to the GETNET Collective in 2011. It aims to highlight the content and methodologies, networks and community that GETNET built over the years, and the ways in which the organisation responded to the shifting challenges facing the women's movement from 1992 to 2011. Within the report, these experiences are consolidated into four phases: Phase I: The Establishment of GETNET (1992–1999), Phase II: The Gender Mainstreaming Years (2000–2005), Phase III: Resisting Decline (2005–2007), and Phase IV: Regeneration Plans (2008–2011). It then highlights key themes that were woven throughout the archive and that stood out as relevant to the challenges in and to our various organisations and movements in 2011, such as: politicising gender training; organisational structures, political leadership and sustainability; and GETNET's legacy for the present and the future. The report and the consolidated GETNET Archives were donated in 2015 to the ongoing Struggles for Justice Programme (SFJ) at the South African History Archive (SAHA), an online platform established by anti-apartheid activists in the 1980s. SAHA's central mission is to recapture lost and neglected histories and to record aspects of South African history in the making, "documenting past struggles against apartheid, as well as ongoing struggles in the making of democracy" (The Archival Platform 2014).

Summarising a room full of boxes of papers, newsletters, reports, workshop packs, minutes, booklets, training guides, organisational reviews, and strategy planning that spanned more than a decade, as well as the transcriptions of numerous detailed and deep interviews with feminist activist leaders who knew GETNET well and had continued to do related work, into (only) 250

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[1] The project took four years. We worked as a team, meeting with former board members to try track down parts of the project previously envisioned, and devising a plan with archiving, interviewing, transcription, writing, and feedback teams. In the writing phase, I was responsible for the first draft of the long paper, including identifying the key themes, developing the structure and integrating many of the interviews.

pages, was structured by the two goals of sketching GETNET's history on its own terms and within its context, and the goal of then putting this into conversation with the issues that were most relevant to what we were trying to do as feminist activists in 2011. There was a strong sense that we could not just let an organisation we all felt was still needed, close. We felt that even within the progressive activist spaces in which we were based, there was an urgent need for dedicated feminist network building, analysis, debates, and training materials. At a minimum, we wanted to consolidate and share GETNET's materials, and to grapple with writing up its history, as one of inspiring inroads as well as experiences of demobilisation and depoliticisation of radical gender work from the 1990s into the 2000s. These tasks, and this approach to engaging history, I argue, are part of producing strategic tools of imagination and analysis for plotting feminist futures within activist organisations going forward.

The telling of the stories of feminist history documentation and production contribute to a critical approach to the power dynamics of knowledge production, and can be important to collectives attempting to think through and intervene in these dynamics. Extending Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai's seminal text, *Women's Words* (1991), contributions in *Beyond Women's Words* (Srigley, Zembrzychi, and Iacovetta 2018) share some exciting ongoing approaches to feminist oral histories, including discussion on oral history as community engagement that this work of archiving and writing about GETNET attempts to do.[2] The interview section of the GETNET history project was done, in part, to piece together more of the context in which the GETNET work took place, but, importantly, was not limited to describing or re-membering the past.[3] These oral histories were, importantly, reflections of an older generation of feminists (positioned in various spaces: women's organisations, trade unions, housing or land sector campaigners, gender studies departments, or based in political education initiatives) who have continued to engage in the issues at the heart of GETNET. These were conversations with this older generation about how to actualise GETNET's vision in a changing context, that I am now trying to share with a third generation, as it were, of activists who have never heard of GETNET.[4]

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[2] Also see Baker (2016), Nagar (2014), Sheftel and Zembrzycki (2013), Stolten (2007), White, Miescher, and Cohen (2001).

[3] For debates on the limits of some of the conventional approaches to archiving liberation struggles and to oral history in southern Africa, see Namhila (2015), Lalu (2007), and Minkley, Rassool, and Witz (2017).

[4] Likeminded attempts in the contemporary South African context include *Keleketla Library, 58 Years to the Treason Trial: Intergenerational Dialogue as a Method for Learning* (Keleketla Library 2012).

There are so many papers that could come out of the GETNET history report. With the insistence on a black feminist intersectional orientation of a leading strand of the RhodesMustFall/ FeesMustFall/ PatriarchyMustFall student interventions across campuses from 2015, the landscape and language of young feminist mobilisation, at least on campuses in South Africa, shifted (Ndelu, Dlakavu, and Boswell 2017, 1–4). Conversation with this movement from its inception into the ongoing debates on actualising radical change has shaped the urgency and focus of what to first draw out of the GETNET archives. This article therefore begins by sharing some of the most radical and relevant work done in the decade after 1994 by anti-apartheid feminist activists developing what they called indigenous and regional perspectives, materials, and methodologies, to expose and shift gender dynamics. Much of GETNET's materials exemplify the language of their time: radical notions of gender and of gender mainstreaming, which have since been depoliticised (Essof 2007, 150–1). GETNET's structural analysis, which I would argue comes from a Pan Africanist and intersectional black feminist approach to decolonisation, is framed within a 1990s vocabulary of terms such as "integrated," "development," "transformationist," "regional," "indigenising analysis," "gender sensitisation," "consciousness raising," "network building," and "gender mainstreaming." These are terms that easily lose their meaning and connection to present-day dissident/progressive thinking without historical contextualisation.

This article is divided into three parts. The first section explores the thinking behind the establishment of GETNET, and the second section looks at how these ideas were actualised in the programmes, materials, and methodologies they developed as an organisation that prioritised education and solidarity as central tools to understand and intervene in deconstructing and reconfiguring gender and power in society. The final section draws on the literature of activist archiving and feminist methodologies of intergenerational dialogue to reflect on ways of producing activist archives that are accountable to movements and to the future—how can "the GETNET story" be written as "a stepping stone" and "not a tombstone" (to quote the words of one of the GETNET stalwarts [Jeremy Daphne, interviewed by Erna Curry, telephonic, 17 May 2012] in handing down the organisation's archives)?

Context and Considerations in the Establishment of GETNET

Pethu Serote (1991, 5–6) described the idea or assumption that "national liberation equals women's emancipation" as a "myth" that "totally exploded" in South Africa in the 1990s. This section goes back to some of the conversations and concerns of activists at the front lines of

various components of the liberation struggle during the "transition" to political democracy to share some of the processes that led to the establishment of GETNET.

The idea to establish GETNET was born in intensive discussions amongst a group of activist comrades working together informally as political democracy was being negotiated in South Africa. "This pool of skilled people," wrote GETNET's first director, Pethu Serote (1991), "all with full time jobs, wanted to share their skills with the community and explored ways of making this possible in a coherent way." This group of 11, referred to as "the cohort," attended an initial six-week residential training session together, and then began to challenge the structures within their organisations. They spent the subsequent year discussing if and how they could create a "training network" to impart skills and impact the gender dynamics in their work to actualise the gains made in 1994.

Jeremy Daphne (interviewed by Erna Curry, telephonic, 17 May 2012, follow-up interview with Koni Benson), a board member from 1995 to 2010, described the idea behind establishing the network:

> The principle purpose of GETNET was to contribute towards development, towards conscientising, awareness raising, and politicising around gender issues [and] women's empowerment. … GETNET would be an activist organisation, part of a new post-1994 intensification of focus on transformation, on rights, and in this case on gender power relations [and] women's empowerment.

Kaizer Thibedi (interviewed by Erna Curry and Koni Benson, telephonic, 31 May 2012), deputy general secretary of SACCAWU at the time, and one of the founding members of GETNET, spoke about how only four of the 16 members (25%) of the union's National Executive Committee were female, despite the union's 70 per cent female membership. He recalls returning from the first GETNET sessions and attempting to make institutional change:

> The result was that when we came back we had to develop an entry strategy for our organisation for how we are going to effect change. Together with Patricia [Nyman-Appolis] we worked on the plan for SACCAWU and also beyond our union into COSATU. We developed structures and the debates raised: do we have a women's forum or gender forums, because of the power relations between women and men. That debate continued for the period I was there. My view was a women's forum alone [was] not enough but women must be involved in the Constitutional debates and also recognise women needed the space to debate on their own and then to involve in the structures … We took resolutions for the establishment to take the campaign into COSATU and we can proudly say that initiative contributed toward changing

gender relations in COSATU … and today we have strong women structures and leaders in the labour unions.

Careful, radical, decolonial, Pan Africanist, feminist thought went into plotting what to do. "We started very, very slowly because at the time we were testing whether our ideas around indigenous frameworks would work," said founding director, Pethu Serote. "Flying where only eagles dare" is how Serote (2004) described discussing the need for a "consciousness raising" initiative for organisations around 1994:

> At the time we started GETNET many people who were in NGOs had left the sector for government and therefore many organisations were in crisis. Funding was shifting from NGOs to government, and there was a situation created where NGOs were folding. So when we started, as a very small NGO, people around us wanted to know what it is that makes us think we will survive when big NGOs around us were collapsing … We were … a group that felt strongly that instead of getting expertise from outside, we could actually grow our own expertise that responds to the situation here. We spoke about indigenizing the work, responding to the issues of the country.

Early in 1995, the organisation became a reality with the cohort as a steering committee, they hired three staff members and rented an office in Athlone, Cape Town, the city where Serote was based. As an ex-MK soldier and with training in education, and a track record of challenging the ANC from within the liberation struggle ranks (Serote 1991, 5–6), Pethu Serote was uniquely positioned as a driver of GETNET from 1995 to 2004. She had been a teacher at the ANC in exile's Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College (SOMAFCO) in Tanzania and was committed to making resources relevant to the changing South African context and the specific environments of each organisation GETNET worked with. This continued to be an important and consistent feature of GETNET's work.

There were no organisations doing the work of thinking about and providing training on racialised gendered power relations at this time (Goniwe 2001; Neocosmos 1998; Salo 2005; Serote 1992). GETNET described its approach as transformationist, unique, and radical for the time. The passion, excitement, energy and sense of family/comradeship that those involved and connected felt in relation to this unique work is evident in this quote from Trout (Wilhelmina Trout, interviewed by Erna Curry and Koni Benson, Cape Town, 15 February 2012):

> You see our struggle was such that: it was Apartheid, it was Capitalist Apartheid. It was a common enemy that we all identified. There was no time to say, women's organisation, we all had to pool our resources because we had one agenda, we had one goal and we worked together. … After '94—that rude kind of awakening in my life! Hello, what's happening: why aren't the

women's issues on the agenda? And when I looked around me I could only see GETNET there to help me understand it. The [ANC] Women's League was there and was obviously part of the whole political set-up so that was not the answer. I mean places like ILRIG wasn't even focusing on gender yet either.

According to the director of ILRIG, Leonard Gentle,[5] who supported the creation of Building Women's Activism (BWA), a feminist monthly public forum for social movement and union activists at ILRIG from the early 2000s, GETNET was established by a

generation of feminists which fought patriarchy within the mass movement … who faced the same vituperation that many feminists face today—that it's about white women, that it's divisive etc. … There was a period immediately before 1994, a number of radical feminists— some within trade unions and others elsewhere in the mass movement—sought to work together in a loose network, like BWA of its period. That is why this network is called GET(NET). Like everyone else in that period they sought to manoeuvre a space within the rapid move towards the end of apartheid and the vision of what a new democracy might look like. But their passion was to ensure that women's liberation was placed at the centre of the changing process. These comrades used to meet and challenge patriarchy with COSATU, etc.

Indeed, key to the establishment of GETNET were the strategic choices of a broad coalition of feminist policy analysts and gender activists actively pushing for what they called "gender transformation" during the "transition" negotiations (Britton, Fish, and Mentjies 2009). The setting up of a gender machinery was the organising work of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in the early 1990s (Hassim and Gouws 2000). In the transition negotiations, this coalition made the ANC commit to non-sexism by ensuring a gender equality clause in the Constitution, a three-level gender machinery in the state as well as large numbers of women in Parliament (Gouws 2004; Walsh 2009). This along with pressure from mobilised "issue networks" brought about "an impressive array of legislative reform" (Govender 2007; Walsh 2009) with the aim of making systemic change that would outlast any individual woman (Britton and Fish 2009).

The decision to mainstream anti-sexist accountability into all portfolios of the state, instead of forming one women's portfolio in the country's new governing structure, was not by chance. Many of the people involved in setting up GETNET were influential in these debates which impacted on what GETNET saw as strategic opportunities to train the new gender portfolio staff at different levels of the newly won state. Furthermore, women going into government,

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[5] GETNET history feedback session with Leonard Gentle, from the International Labour Research and Information Group, in 2013.

saw GETNET as a resource (Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, interviewed by Yaliwe Clarke and Erna Curry, Cape Town, 3 July 2012). The Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) had a legal responsibility to develop "relationships and partnership with 'like-minded organisations'" (Meintjes 2008, 84) and GETNET was poised to do this work. Vainola Makan (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 8 November 2012), who worked closely with Rita Edwards at the New Women's Movement from GETNET, explained that GETNET was also positioned to do this kind of work regionally:

> That was a very vibrant time and GETNET [was] one of the NGOs that did play a central role because they were training many of the people. It was also the time when the concept of a gender desk or person with a gender portfolio to deal with women's issues, people started to get employed on the basis of that, and GETNET was the organisation that was training them. And the nice thing about GETNET was that they had both national reach and reach in southern Africa at the time.

Indeed, GETNET had wide and deep roots in the South African movements as well as connections in the region and internationally. The fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing in September 1995 and focused on incorporating gender issues into macro-economic planning and policymaking in Commonwealth countries. South Africa was represented by Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, an active GETNET board member (Madlala-Routledge and Serote 1995, 76). With the goal of integrating postapartheid South Africa into the continent and building on anti-colonial movement comradeship, the original suggested name of SAGNET, for South African Gender Network and Training, was changed to GETNET. GETNET's first training was held in Harare which was of utmost significance to the politics and practices of African solidarity and "integration" which was part of the larger project of decolonisation that GETNET was anchored upon (Serote 2004, 5–8).

Interviews about the year of strategic thinking that informed the institutionalised training programme give us insights into strategic considerations on board what became the GETNET ship. These include the following: What form, direction, and approach should the organisation take? Who should it target? How could it provide a structured way to pass on feminist politics and transform practices beyond individual attitudes? How could it create relevant materials that spoke to workers, including predominantly female unions with mostly male leadership? (Patricia Nyman-Appolis, interviewed by Koni Benson, telephonic, 6 June 2012) How could it conceptualise interventions "to engage government, ANC policy, who was transforming from a liberation movement to a ruling party," as well as focus on CBOs, the NGOs and the labour

movement?" (Kaizer Thibedi, interviewed by Erna Curry and Koni Benson, telephonic, 31 May 2012).

Sindiswa Tafeni (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 20 June 2012) was a GETNET trainer and staff member. She describes how GETNET was about more than training individuals: "GETNET say gender education, training, network. GETNET's plan was to educate masses around gender, so it was not for the individual person it was for the individual person plus the workspace." This led to deep discussions on how workplaces are gendered, and on GETNET's approach to men. Through debates that emerged at the first training in Harare, GETNET (2000) decided to take the following stance on the role of men and masculinity in their project for a feminist future (or in their words, "for shifting sexist oppression"):

> In our understanding, to achieve women's empowerment requires change in two directions: special measures to improve women's social condition, and steps to change women's position in unequal relations of power, unequal access to resources and decision-making in all spheres of society. The transformation of gender relations and women's empowerment does not mean that equality between women and men is an issue for women alone. On the contrary, GETNET encourages the full participation of men in efforts to increase women's control over their own lives, to eliminate violence against women, and to promote organisational and institutional transformation.

What did it take to get funders on board with a more radical project? Jeremy Daphne, (interviewed by Erna Curry, Johannesburg, 18 May 2012) observes,

> There were debates about women's empowerment and equality and about whether we should be referring to women, or … looking at gender power relations and looking at reformist vs. transformatory perspectives of gender issues, and looking at feminist vs. womanist perspectives. … We were almost solely funded by the Ford Foundation and the funder had a very interventionist practice with GETNET and actually joined board meetings from time to time. There was quite strong pressure on the board to adopt a more neutral perspective, and not to be seen playing or projecting what the funder would see as more radical perspectives. There was a debate around women's empowerment, as opposed to equality between women and men … [We were] more successful in the debate/discussion and the funder had to accept that, which fortunately they did.

From the start, GETNET thought carefully about how to organise themselves and were sceptical if not outright critical of funded organisations.[6] In 1995, they opened an office in Cape Town with a small staff, a board, and a plan to experiment with creating a panel of

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6 For example, Serote and Jordaan (2001) argue that funded organisations were more vulnerable in "Facing the Challenges of Sustainability: A GETNET Response."

trainers/associates who would deliver the training/workshops. The structure of GETNET came out of the political perspectives that aimed for a network of gender activism. GETNET chose to have a small core team of in-house staff who designed, wrote, and delivered training manuals and workshops as well as trained a core panel of consultant/associate/panel trainers in different provinces of South Africa who were then called on to deliver training. This panel of trainers undertook a two-year training and then became associates, carrying out workshops and courses around the country.[7] This structure was a carefully designed response to the dilemmas of donor dependency/accountability and non-profit organisation building in a capitalist economy that continue to challenge institutional growth and sustainability today.

By 1999, there were three full-time employees in Cape Town, a panel of trainers from Gauteng, Natal and Eastern Cape and a board of trustees (Serote 1999). Nozipho January-Bardill was the first chair of the board (and a founder member). In 1997, GETNET was working with a R500,000 budget, and by 2000, they were working with R1.8million. The board also grew in number, and in political spectrum, and played a very hands-on role in GETNET from its inception. In 1999, they bought their own building in Athlone. Mamputa's concluding remarks (Geoffrey Mamputa, interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 13 September 2012) are a good note to end this section on the process and considerations that went into the establishment of GETNET: "Those were the beginnings of GETNET as an organisation that was not only going to advocate but to practically provide tools for society and other organisations especially NGOs to deal with issues of gender, and not only to shout about gender." The tools developed out of these visions are the focus of the following section.

Actualisation: GETNET Programmes, Methodologies, and Materials

Audre Lorde's words (1984, 110) "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" come to mind when beginning to write about the tools developed by GETNET to challenge systemic sexism in South Africa. Over the years, GETNET developed a set of programmes and activities aimed at strengthening civil society and enabling government in South Africa and the southern African region to implement strategies for gender equality. GETNET's first organisational pamphlet (1995) described their work as follows:

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7 The pros and cons of this approach over time are discussed in the longer GETNET report, see Benson and Davis van Es (2015).

Gender education and training is the organisation's core service, based on the recognition that in order to transform gender relations and empower women in our society, we need to give people the skills to design and implement gender-sensitive delivery instruments. The need for gender-sensitive people with shared understandings of gender imbalances—conscious agents—is widely apparent.

GETNET's target group are these change agents—people who are well placed to initiate gender equity in programs and institutional practice and to maintain organisational change. The training programs are designed to:

- Create gender awareness and promote theoretical understanding of gender power relations.
- Enhance capacity to formulate policy from a gender perspective.
- Ensure gender equality mainstreaming in policy.
- Impart individual skills to implement policy in institutions and workplaces.

Research and materials development projects support the training programs. Networking and partnership activities are perused to make optimum use of resources and implement effective strategies for gender equality. A regular newsletter assists communication with the gender network.

GETNET ran hundreds of courses and workshops across South Africa, as well as specific workshops as far as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, and Ethiopia. They also hosted public forums, developed materials, publications, analysis pieces, and new methodologies. In 2000 alone, for example, there were 22 training events attended by 576 participants. The following section looks at some of the pedagogy and practices in the six key aspects of their training consolidated from the archive, and then highlights some of the most exciting interventions (frameworks and methodologies) they developed to do this dynamic, responsive and groundbreaking work between 1992–2015.

The Gender Awareness Workshop

The awareness raising workshops took off like a veld fire. (Jeremy Daphne, interviewed by Erna Curry, telephonic, 17 May 2012)

This was a beginner's course for men and women who had little or no previous training in gender-related issues. As a two-day course, it was outcomes-based, using participatory learning methodologies including group work, discussion groups and stimulating debate to further the learning process. The module covered the following basic concepts within gender theory and practice: unpacking the meaning of gender and gender issues, the social construction of gender relations theory, gendered analysis of ideology, and an introduction to gender tools of analysis.

For the first few years of GETNET's programming, this workshop was a compulsory requirement for entry into other GETNET courses. In this course, GETNET provided a language for understanding gender oppression and a space to figure out what do to collectively

about it. Shamillah Wilson (interviewed by Erna Curry and Anna Davis van Es, Cape Town, 15 June 2012) recalls:

> That beginning time with Pethu …was very exciting because I think it was that time when people were starting to take seriously the whole notion of gender training and this consciousness that moves beyond just your individual consciousness to a collective consciousness-raising and then kind of using that as a basis to get people to act.

Panel Training Programme

From 1996, one of GETNET's main aims was the coordination, administration and promotion of a "panel" of trainers (also sometimes called consultants or associates) committed to implementing gender education and training programmes.[8] The GETNET panel brought together gender trainers and activists from diverse backgrounds with a wide range of skills and experience. In 2000, they took the decision to create a more systematic basis for recruitment and membership and a new programme was developed to institutionalise (formalise, market and promote) a course for the development of skills and expertise for GETNET gender training and education consultants. It was assumed that this approach would make GETNET less dependent on the changing commitments of individual panellists by growing a group of gender consultants with a defined organisational relationship to GETNET, well versed in GETNET's gender frameworks and methodologies.

The first two blocks of the panel training in 2000, for example, involved two, six-day training sessions with 16 trainees who would move to the next stage of the programme where they would "earn and learn" as trainee GETNET consultants. Each participant was required to undertake at least three GETNET gender training assignments by the end of 2001. The course itself was also then standardised. It covered gender awareness and gender education; organisational development and transformation; mainstreaming gender equality in institutions, organisations and projects; gender analysis and policy; and networking and partnership building. GETNET also went into discussion with the African Gender Institute (AGI) at the University of Cape Town to obtain accreditation for this course. Panel members participated as trainers, report writers, and researchers, thereby increasing GETNET's capacity to deliver services. The actual training of gender coordinators shifted from the director to facilitation by the members of the panel.

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[8] In the interviews and literature, the terms GETNET "trainer," "associate" and "panellist" are used interchangeably.

Jasmin Nordien went through the two-year programme and then became a trainer. She recalls that GETNET's gender theory, analysis, and training content were cutting edge because the organisation was relevant and also engaged the African and South African context and lived realities. The training methodology was stimulating and inspiring, said Nordien, because "the trainers who presented were all gender savvy and experts in their fields" (Jasmin Nordien, written submission, 25 April 2012). Sindiswa Tafeni (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 20 June 2012) was also trained as a panellist. She worked at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and had an adult education background. She remembers going through the first training course by Pethu Serote and Tony Sardien and finding it too general: "We had a week's training. For me, the course was an in-and-out kind of training course. When I say in-and-out, we didn't go into much detail on gender issues, one that I had to pick up on as time went on so one was just introduced to gender concepts and a bit on how to train around gender issues." As a result, she proposed a deeper engagement with gender budgets, which she took on and became a trainer and then a GETNET staff member running further training courses: "I wanted to look at how do we put budget and gender together … how do we get a gender budget? So that was why I got involved with GETNET."

Gender Coordinators Training Programme

> To me the GETNET framework is an uncomplicated way of analysing gender issues in all situations, be it by junior staff, in civil society or at management level, and I think the people concerned will grasp it without difficulty. I believe people could be workshopped with this strategy without feeling threatened. (Tlhagaswane 2000, 12)

These are the words of Kedilithle Tlhagaswane, assistant director in the Office for the Status of Women in North West Province in 2000, who participated in these workshops as someone responsible for implementing the new gender policies being developed at the time. These workshops covered the basics: the social construction of gender, group and institutional power, planning frameworks and gender analytical tools in common use, and frameworks for mainstreaming gender in institutions. The trainings, recalled Geoffrey Mamputa (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 13 September 2012), "gave me a much more structured way to look at gender relations instead of moving from gut and theory that I read." The materials for these workshops were updated over time to focus on the links between HIV/AIDS, violence, and poverty (referred to as the triangle framework which is discussed below), and expanded into the southern African region. The Gender Coordinators Training Programmes (GETNET 2001a)

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were meant for women and men who are employed as change agents in institutions including gender practitioners and government functionaries in the Gender Focal Units (GFU) at a national and provincial level. We also work with NGOs, organised labour and community-based organisations. The advancement that we made in 2001 was to extend the programme to include SADC regional participation, with participants from Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania. A new development in the programme has seen GETNET exploring a methodological framework dealing with the relationship between HIV/AIDS, gender based violence and poverty concerns. The framework is presently being piloted as action research in training workshops within their and other programs of GETNET.

In 1999, GETNET provided this training for local government and the Department of Land Affairs in the Northern Cape, Free State, Northern Province, and the Eastern Cape. In Mpumalanga they trained the provincial administration, and they held an SADC seminar. They trained NGOs such as the Development Action Group, Women's Budget Initiative, and Social Change Assistance Trust. A snapshot from a decade later gives insight into the range of organisations present at one of GETNET's 2009 gender coordinators' training workshops: Rural Support Services, Rural Development Services Network, Idasa, Oxfam Eastern Cape, Community Agency for Social Enquiry, Swaziland Youth Congress, Commission for Gender Equality, Education and Training Unit, First National Bank, Lawyers for Human Rights' Gender Desk, University of Natal, African National Congress, Men for Change, the Centre for Human Rights' Gender Desk and Women'sNet. [9]

These courses had concurrent forums, for example GETNET worked on lobbying structures to push government to implement the principles of the Beijing Platform of Action (Madlala-Routledge and Serote 1995, 76)[10] and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), by providing training about these rights, but also by bringing together 70 interested representatives from the region to discuss what our governments are and are not doing (Serote 2004, 7). These selected examples highlight the role and scope of GETNET's training as organised multifaceted interventions in the region at this time.

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[9] These organisations appear on GETNET's registration form for Day 1 of the "Gauteng Gender Training Workshop for Gender Coordinators," 27–29 September 2009, in Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

[10] For the ways in which GETNET continued to participate and critically assess the Beijing process (and what Serote called the loose screws of the gender machinery), see the August 2000 edition of *GETNET Network News*, in particular the following articles: "The Beijing+5 Review Process in South Africa" by Nomtuse Mbere, "A Beijing+5 Outcome Document: Implications for South Africa" by Pethu Serote, and "Beijing+5: The Impact on Women in Zimbabwe" by Thoko Matshe.

Train the Trainer Programme

According to GETNET materials, this programme provided gender educators and trainers in organisations, unions, and institutions with knowledge, skills and resources to design, coordinate and facilitate their own effective gender education and training. The course was open to those who had attended the men's workshop and the gender coordinators' programme. Jasmin Nordien's (Jasmin Nordien, written submission, 25 April 2012) experience of her training and the ongoing relationship with GETNET is indicative of the way this programme was designed to build a network of associates based within the world of gender training who learnt from and contributed to GETNET's ongoing training and resource development:

> I joined GETNET in 2000, when I attended the Gender Education and Training programme (2000–2001), a two-year theoretical and practical training programme on gender and organisational change. I joined GETNET to supplement my gender knowledge, to network with other practitioners working in the field of gender, and to get support for the work I was doing as programme manager for UMAC's women and peace building programme. After the training, I was invited to be on the GETNET resource panel. In this capacity, I did the following: material development, training, wrote an article for their publication. I developed a training module on Gender Planning Frameworks and conduct[ed] Gender Awareness training workshops (2003); wrote an article in *Network News*: "For Women Who Live in and Travel Third Class" (2003); conducted gender awareness and gender mainstreaming workshops primarily for South African government departments (2005); and developed a Training of Trainers Gender Planning Frameworks module for the Department of Water Affairs (2005).

These details give us a sense of GETNET's strategy to build capacity within and beyond feminist organisations (Banda 2005) and this model is relevant for ongoing debates today about both the content and forms which education initiatives should take.

Policy Makers, Local Government Training and Gender Budgeting Work

The Policy Makers and Gender and Government Budget Training began in 1995 and then became the Gender and Local Government programme in 2000. The overall objective was for councillors and local government officials to integrate gender perspectives in policy planning, formulation and implementation. Because of the legislative changes that took place after the 1999 local government elections, GETNET undertook research to adapt the programme and training materials and to make them more relevant. These programmes expanded exponentially until about 2007 and Celeste Fortuin is well remembered for the materials she developed to work critically with new local government councillors. For example, between 2000–2004 GETNET developed a resource manual for gender training in local government to help trainers design workshops on various aspects of integrating gender into local government services, planning and organisational culture and practice (Fortuin 2002). They assessed and wrote about

the challenges and opportunities (and responsibilities) of local government and the prospects of using education and training for improvements (Fortuin 2001; Govender 2004; Maythye 2002). They drew on their experiences at hearings on gender policy frameworks in each province to compile a guidebook for municipalities wanting to formulate gender policy, and pushed for a municipal gender policy framework that did not yet exist (GETNET 2003, 3; Lazarus 2000; Mathye 2002).

The local government work took an important turn in 2005 when it expanded to work not just with councillors but also with the electorate on gendering participation and the issues that local government officials decided to focus on. GETNET co-hosted a women and elections campaign arguing that "local government … is the sphere of government closest to the people and thus represents a natural point of service delivery. Local government provides a framework for public participation and is also best placed to improve the quality of life for people and change the conditions of women" (GETNET, GAP, Engender, City of Cape Town 2005). GETNET began to publicly acknowledge and comment on service delivery protests and suggested ways in which local government could intervene in gender-based violence.[11] In 2006, the Department of Provincial Local Government and Housing approached GETNET to train women councillors and asked them to join the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) team (Makanza 2006). GETNET used these opportunities to work with like-minded organisations and develop materials for these workshops. For example, "The Intersections between Gender Based Violence, HIV/AIDS and Poverty: Implications for Local Government Service Delivery," was a document published by GETNET, GAP, Engender, and the City of Cape Town, based on GETNET's "Triangle Seminar" held at Parow Civic Centre on 25 August 2005.

Sindiswa Tafeni (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 20 June 2012) spoke about the challenges in this work where women councillors in leadership positions were too busy or thought they already knew about gender, but then

> when you start unpacking the real issues of councillors, especially women councillors and then they start seeing, okay I might say I'm a councillor but there are gaps in my own knowledge of understanding. If I'm talking about I want a tap in section B, what does that tap necessarily

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[11] See *GETNET Network News*, April 2005; its focus is on local government and it has articles that critique the gender neutral approach of government, on strategic challenges, on the 50/50 campaign, on basic services, ward committees, and budgeting.

mean for women and children around that. That's when you start talking about issues of how do you link water and gender? What is interesting, the new councillors had more interest than the old councillors and interestingly one could say that those who were in middle management had very little interest in the workshop [compared to] ward councillors.

These reflections then fed back into who GETNET would target for subsequent rounds of training or target to invite into the larger network. Anne Mager (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 17 October 2012) speaks to the importance of this training that provided spaces to reflect on management and power:

> The training that went on there I think was very important because people really didn't know how to manage resources, how to run the show and do it in a way that was empowering for individuals in non-hierarchical ways, non-exploitative ways … to find new ways of working together around these resources that they were now responsible for.

GETNET became partners with the Women's Budget Initiative to develop training materials in gender budgeting for members of parliament and national, provincial and local government. Once piloted and then up and running, they opened up these sessions to other institutions and organisations that would like to understand and plan a budget from a gender perspective. Research with local councillors, for example, began with a three-day gender awareness-raising session and then moved into modules GETNET had researched and developed on gendering government policy. By the end of 2003, GETNET, in partnership with the Women's Budget Initiative, completed the SADC Gender Analysis of Government Budgets, focusing on Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe. This has created mechanisms still used today to hold governments accountable for budget allocations beyond lip service to address the gendered nature of inequality and "transform" women's lives.

GETNET was very good at designing materials for particular levels of intervention needed to implement such large-scale visions. For example, the "Gender Responsive Economic Policy Making in Africa Course: Curriculum Development Workshop" (30–31 March 2006, Africa Union Headquarters) was the first course of its kind, with the aim of filling the "capacity gap for African economic policy makers, budget planners, development practitioners and policy advocates in designing and implementing gender sensitive economic policies and programs."[12] "Gender blind" economic policymaking was a need identified in the Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2005 (Moser and Moser 2005). The

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[12] GETNET internal report on the "Gender Responsive Economic Policy Making in Africa Course: Curriculum Development Workshop" 30–31 March 2006, Africa Union Headquarters.

GETNET course pack argued that "African economic policy-making remains largely informed by orthodox thinking, which does not include gender as a variable in macro-economic analysis and formulation." Policies such as trade liberalisation, privatisation, fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies recognised market-oriented work and ignored non-market work—most of which, argued GETNET, is the unpaid subsistence, reproductive and care work done by women in households and the informal sector. Furthermore, it was observed that economists had little gender literacy, yet the gender experts on the other hand equally lacked adequate understanding of economics.

There was therefore a need to bridge this knowledge gap of the economists on gender issues and to improve the economic literacy of the gender experts. The training course aimed to equip the policymakers, advocates and legislators with gender analytical and conceptual skills needed to understand gender in the context of economic and social development, and to provide some practical tools for integrating gender into poverty reduction, development policy frameworks and processes on the continent as well as to enhance the gender awareness of African trade negotiators. Participants in this course came from a cross section of institutions in Benin, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa with different professional backgrounds in economic policy, trade, and gender, with a shared interest in increasing their capacity to analyse and integrate gender into economic development. GETNET's pedagogical approach to this course included lectures, discussion, group work, analytical papers, analysis of policy documents, and research approaches, debates, presentations, and computer exercises. It is interesting to note that one of the criticisms of the 2006 curriculum development workshop was that there needed to be an explanation of why gender mainstreaming had not succeeded, and more on what challenges to mainstreaming had been faced in the past with new suggestions for addressing them at present.

GETNET ran many similar workshops on gender budget analysis in SADC and beyond in those years, building regional teams of researchers, trainers and experts to constitute reference groups on gender budget analysis. GETNET's "Gender Budgeting, Training of Trainers Programme Facilitator's Guide" (2006) leaves us with detailed insights into its approach to grappling with the economic structures of gendered oppression. The guide included the following modules: Module 1: The Social Construction of Gender Framework; Module 2: Adult Education and Learning (this included: Training for Transformation, Experiential Learning, Action Learning Cycles, Constructivism, and Freire's Key Principles); Module 3: Gender Planning Frameworks

(this included a history and rationale of gender planning and different approaches like Women in Development vs. Gender and Development as well as various tools and an activity on what they called the "web of institutionalisation"); Module 4: Gender Budgeting; Module 5: Developing a Gender Training Programme and; Module 6: Facilitation Skills.

It is interesting to note that gender budgets are only raised in Module 4. A detailed look at the preceding course materials give substance to what GETNET meant by gender training. For example, Module 1, The Social Construction of Gender, covered socialisation, gender roles, gender norms, gender stereotypes, sex and gender, power, myths and beliefs, ideology, access and control. The aim was for participants to be able to:

- identify the way in which women and men are socialised into their respective gender roles and that these roles are culture specific;
- understand how gender relations are learnt and that these can be unlearnt;
- know the distinction between sex and gender;
- explore myths and beliefs that contribute to gender stereotypes;
- describe power and define individual and group power;
- distinguish between the concepts of access and control;
- unpack an ideology.

It did this through 11 activities. The interpretation of the *World by Others*, for example, is a step-by-step activity that charts the building blocks of social construction, starting with how children learn about the world, and what happens when boys and girls do not conform to their expected gender roles. The module then moves on to the characteristics of gender, and includes a handout on the relational, hierarchical, historical, context specific, institutional, and personal/political aspects of gender. Facilitators' notes included definitions of gender roles and responsibilities like productive work, reproductive work, community work, and gender relations. After sketching out the roles women and men take in the "real world," at home, in employment, in religious ceremonies, and in community activities, participants then move to an activity on Myths and Beliefs. This activity looks at the ways that women and men are socialised through cultural practices to adopt gender roles and how these roles are culture specific.

This module used songs, proverbs and expressions in all South African languages to question how religious practices and traditional beliefs reinforce observations about the real world and are themselves reinforced by those observations. This was followed by an exercise on how stereotypes are learned and how real-world observations are reproduced and how we are socialised into gender roles. Power (what it is, how it works, and breaking it down) was the next topic, covered through an exercise on investigating the power relations of participants' own institutions and organisations. Participants then discussed access and control over various resources, including economic, political/decision-making, information, education, time, and internal resources. They discussed what the difference is between access to resources and control over resources and what the relationship is between accessing and controlling resources and power. The final activity was on the ideology of male superiority in order to name and see patriarchy. The facilitators' notes on some characteristics of an ideology of superiority spell out how ideologies become pervasive and ingrained, so that no one can escape the effects, standards/measurements based on the values of the dominant group as these are internalised, reinforce themselves overtly in laws and in hidden ways through the use of humiliation to control behaviour, create facts from options, label, scapegoat, etc. It is only after this kind of comprehensive base that the nuts and bolts of understanding budgets—terminologies, roles, functions, cycles, approaches—and then gender responsive budgets' analysis and application in this training, began.

In later years, GETNET shifted its focus from those working in African states to include more grassroots activist work. This is evident in the way that *Money Matters: Gender and Government Budgets* (Budlender 2000), published by the Women's Budget Initiative and GETNET, was presented as a flexible package that could be used in a workshop that looks not only at gender analysis of budgets but also at specific sectors like health, education, housing, or could be used for lobbying or for discussing how government works more broadly. In 2005, GETNET added a focus on women's economic literacy; they ran a feminist dialogue on women and the social and economic crisis in 2008 and began a programme on Economic Literacy for Young Women in Delft Township (Cape Town) with the New Women's Movement, and the LBGTIQ Triangle project in 2010. They ran these as participatory research and training programmes for young women who then carried out a survey on the impact of food price

increases on poor women in township and informal settlement households in the Western Cape Metro.[13]

This kind of feminist political action combined with skills training, movement building, and advocacy was how they updated their budget initiative work. Mercia Andrews (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 8 August 2012) spoke to the rationale of doing economic literacy work with women:

> Part of what the programme was about was to understand society and to understand these very issues. Why are they poor, why is there so much unemployment, why are working class women at the bottom of the pile, etcetera. … I think that some of that kind of work needs to be integrated. That's what I find more useful than some of what is said to be gender training … It helps people to sharpen their campaigns and their demands so that it is also linked to making demands that are much more transformative.

Selective project work like this was one way that kept GETNET alive at a time when its director, Rita Edwards, was battling terminal illness (at this point she was working from home, supported by Wilhelmina Trout), its funding was in crisis, and its board members were predominantly far from its base in Cape Town.

Men's Awareness and Masculinities

GETNET was the first training organisation in the voluntary sector to initiate men's gender training. From the first GETNET training held in Harare in 1996, there was discussion of what to do about men and the role of masculinity in reproducing sexism and patriarchy. Jasmin Nordien recalls that this "gender training for men was launched at a time when gender training for men was not sexy" (Jasmin Nordien, written submission, 25 April 2012). Jeremy Daphne (follow-up interview with Koni Benson, Johannesburg, 16 June 2012) describes the start as a response to problematic dynamics in workshops: "Pethu was explaining that some men come to the gender awareness workshops and dominate the space. The suggestion of holding a separate workshop for men came out of that because GETNET was about confronting oppression." Although framed along the lines of a stark gender binary, GETNET took a firm stance on the responsibility of men and on addressing some of the most toxic elements of masculinity. The organisation was clear: "the transformation of gender relations and women's empowerment does not mean that equality between women and men is an issue for women

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13 See *Gender and Economic Literacy: Summary of Findings on the Impact of Food Price Increases on Poor Women in Selected Households in the Western Cape Metro* (2010) by GETNET in collaboration with the New Women's Movement.

alone. On the contrary, GETNET encourages the full participation of men in efforts to increase women's control over their own lives, to eliminate violence against women, and to promote organisational and institutional transformation" (GETNET 2000). This section looks at how this programme developed over time, and also dedicates space to the voices of activists interwoven into GETNET's history who have since the time of these interviews passed on—this includes Tony Sardien, Elaine Salo, and Michael Blake.

GETNET faced a lot of critique about their work with men, as Jeremy Daphne (interviewed by Erna Curry, Johannesburg, 18 May 2012) reveals:

> When the Men and Masculinities programme was initiated lots of people working specifically with women were arguing that we were taking resources that could be allocated to women's work and putting them into men who already control the resources of society. We argued that unless you include men in the equation you will not be able to achieve gender equality. When we started the programme, we realised first of all that there [is] a group of men out there who were committed to gender who wanted to work towards gender equality and there was no way of catching that interest. We also discovered that in the programmes facilitated by women—even when there is male participation in workshops—some of the issues that relate to masculinity get lost because we are not sharply aware of those issues.

A course ("Training Events: April to December 2002") advertised in the *GETNET Network News* in July 2002 explained that it was

> [a]imed at male gender practitioners, managers and programme co-coordinators in all sectors. The men-only workshop provides education and information on the importance of gender equality, forms of masculinity and the roles of men in organisational change. The programme aims to contribute to building partnerships between women and men in mainstreaming gender equality in institutions and organisations. Key focus areas of the programme include the social construction of gender, the role of power in gender relations and strategies for addressing gender-based violence.

In 2001, GETNET's programme on Men and Masculinities was taken through a process of review in which its content was improved through a combination of seminars and research (Blake 2000; 2001; Daphne 1998; Kapp 2001). A training resource "Masculinities: In the Making of Gendered Identities; a GETNET Guidebook for Trainers" was launch in 2001 (GETNET 2001b). The aim was to move it from a general gender awareness-raising programme for men in the 1990s, to focusing on some of the key issues facing men in South Africa in the early 2000s (Holland Muter 2002). These included looking at the role of power relations and exploring men's roles and responsibilities with regards to culture, gender-based violence and the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa.

Susan Holland Muter (interview by Koni Benson, telephonic, 4 June 2012) described the revamping of the masculinity programme and the discussions of moving from experiences of masculinity to a feminist analysis of power:

> Masculinity was a product, an area of work, a niche market that needed to be taken care of and we got together a reference group: Peter, Tony, Geoff, and someone from UWC Psych Department … It needed to be from a feminist perspective and to challenge male privilege and power. We didn't want it to be "oh life is so difficult and complicated for me." We wanted to offer it to the same audience, like government and also to organisations. There was a discussion to say being a man is complicated and difficult and look at the negative effects of being a man—a perspective of people doing masculinity training, versus saying that is one thing you look at, the negative effects of patriarchy for men, but [this] needed to be looked at as power position and [to] be accountable to women's movements and feminist position … Often men complain how hard [it is] to be a man, instead of looking at effects on women. That is an entry point but needed to move on.

Far from some of the men's work in the 2010s that pushed a "men are being left out" agenda, Tony Sardien (in GETNET 2001b) described the way in which the GETNET masculinities work was established to directly challenge sexism and power dynamics by challenging men and supporting women:

> Striving to build partnerships means that men should construct partnerships with women at all levels of social life and respect the independent consciousness, interest and organisation of women. Men should respect women, their concerns and capacities, gains and achievements and recognize the principle of gender equality in practice. Men need to participate directly in gender transformation activities and recognize that the development of society depends on transformation of gender roles and the ending of gender oppression.

Peter Jordaan (interviewed by Erna Curry and Wilhelmina Trout, Cape Town, 14 June 2012), a participant who became a GETNET trainer, further explains the approach:

> So what we would have done is take the men first aside, sensitise them and then at a later stage bring them into when we're talking about gender mainstreaming and stuff like that. Then we would have been sensitised that gender is not a women's issue but about women and men.

The work on men and masculinities, in this period, was considered to be groundbreaking, argued Elaine Salo (interviewed by Erna Curry, telephonic, 12 September 2012):

> I remember being impressed with the programme because with the work in Manenberg I recognised the bias within gender training was often skewed towards issues affecting women and in many impoverished communities the need for training with regard to masculinities and unpacking masculinities has become key especially relating to issues around violence—specifically young men's morbidity and mortality rates, as well as high levels of interpersonal

violence targeting women, so I remember being present at one of those trainings and being impressed with that. I thought they were very cutting edge at the time.

Furthermore, Michael Blake recalls attending a civil society meeting in St. Helen's Bay where Tony Sardien was facilitating and remembers it being a good session about women's oppression and masculinity where Tony got the men to engage and asked what you have done in the fight for women's equality in the last week. Others mentioned how "the stand-up technique worked well. We had a list of the 10 worst things men do and for everyone we called out anyone who had done that had to step into the circle and by the end, all the men were in the circle" (Jeremy Daphne, follow-up interview with Koni Benson, Johannesburg, 16 June 2012). Blake was later approached by GETNET to do some research while he was working with the advice offices in the Western Cape. He produced a paper, "A Critical Review of a Selection of Writings on Men, Masculinity, and Organisations," for GETNET in 2000 and with others he contributed towards the GETNET guidebook for trainers on masculinities. Bernadette Muthien was also commissioned to write "A Review of Masculinities" in 2000, which included literature on masculinity, ethnicity, gender, and the intersections of class, ethnicity, and sexuality. These research pieces, combined with feedback from workshop sessions, culminated in the development of a new guidebook on masculinities written up by Anne Mager (GETNET 2001b). The new guidebook on masculinities was described in the following way (GETNET 2000):

> It will support GETNET's revised men's programme and will reflect some of the learnings from the past work. It will provide trainers and learners with conceptual footholds to develop a deeper understanding of masculinities in their lives, workplaces, and in wider society. Case studies will provide an opportunity to apply theoretical tools and think critically about masculinities in contemporary South Africa and ways forward towards remaking gender systems, masculinities and femininities more harmonious and free of violence to self and others.

The programme as a whole was busy with vibrant workshops, reference group meetings, seminars, invitations to talk on radio and to participate in men's marches. A conference was held from 1–3 December 2003 on "Building Effective Partnerships Between Men and Women for the Achievement of Gender Equality," inspired by the positive results of the programme in raising awareness and enabling men to define their constructive role in reducing the incidence of HIV infections and understanding their role in decreasing gender-based violence. Two years later, in January 2005, GETNET and UWC hosted an international conference, "From Boys to Men: Masculinities and Risk," with a focus on interventions for and by men in communities. This allowed for much-needed dialogue between theoretical work on masculinities and on

ground activities with men.[14] GETNET was also invited to do training in Angola with Norwegian People's Aid who were contracted to clear landmines. During this period, there was a clear shift to include young men in the programmes and in the taking on of new staff.

Siwiwe Minyi became a men and masculinities trainer in 2005 and the young men's training was implemented from April 2006 (Minyi 2005; Sardien 2006).[15] The ability to adapt the workshops to speak to where participants were at continued to be of utmost concern to GETNET's political education and writing goals. Mamputa (Geoffrey Mamputa, interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 13 September 2012) elaborates:

> Look at for instance, how accessible the GETNET programme was because one time that gender training for men was done for labourers who were carrying refuse. Those are traditional guys, they stay in that labour hostels but it was so accessible that they could, they did not resist it, you understand? That's how practical and how … the approach was at GETNET because one would think that these men are going to kick you out.

Methodologies of Relevance and of Movement Building
The term "gender training" covered a wide variety of methods and approaches that were shaped by the desire to be relevant and to be part of building a network of people striving to do this work. This section explores some of these methods in their courses, in their writing, and in their internal processing—including in moments of organisational destabilisation.

GETNET wrote about its methodological range: from using techniques such as songs, games and discussions to raise awareness with grassroots communities, to more formalised training in gender-aware project design for groups of "decision makers" in governments, donor organisations and non-governmental bodies. Methodologies "follow the adult education principle of starting from people's own experience, from the every-day work of caring for a family to dealing with preparing project budgets" (GETNET 2006). There is not space here to include many testimonies that exemplify the techniques GETNET developed, but they can be found throughout the longer report and include sketching childhood images and processes of learning about the world (van der Westerhuizen 1999), and methods developed such as the

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[14] For more about how the thinking in masculinities training has shifted, see "From the 'New' Man Is Human" by Edward Pieters, in *GETNET Network News*, April 2005. This article also includes an example of men and masculinities programme methods—the life spiral methodology.
[15] See Tony Sardien's (2006) article in *GETNET Network News* about how a historical perspective is critical for development.

"Spiral of Life" and "Mountain Top Model."[16] Many interviewees spoke of the ability of GETNET facilitators, especially Pethu Serote, to craft the content of workshops and materials to ensure the *indigenising* of the work so it could connect to multiple groups and make gender training "accessible." Geoffrey Mamputa (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 13 September 2012) speaks to this:

> That's what made it exciting because it wasn't a matter of being politically correct, it was a matter of coming up with issues as is practised from your background, and then throwing it there, and cooking it all, and spitting out what is not relevant. That was the most exciting time and the most exciting approach, and GETNET created space for that. We were one of the few organisations that created that kind of space, where you're not wrong you don't have to speak a certain kind of language and they made gender understanding accessible.

Vainola Makan (interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 8 November 2012) concurs:

> I can remember a training in Limpopo where I found it interesting how she [Pethu Serote] could indigenise training on gender. She was, for example, asking people what is the culture of Limpopo province, how do people speak about women, how do they refer to women? There was one example where the pumpkin seeds became a metaphor for if you have many pumpkin seeds spread all over then that's a good thing because that encourages men, if you are a man then it's a good thing but if you are a woman then it's not seen as a good thing, but there is a local expression for all these things and it was interesting how she could tap the expressions from people, both women and men to begin to understand and unpack those cultural expressions that actually hamper women to emancipate properly.

These approaches were also developed into frameworks that anyone could use. For example, over time GETNET developed its own framework on the social construction of gender that encapsulated the intersection of HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, and poverty, with gender (Serote 2004). The Triangle Framework was developed through action research in 2002 to improve GETNET's programmes and to make them relevant to the southern African context (Hatane 2005). Although they would not put it this way, they were creating a new language for a new reality by treating education as study, as research. On their old website (GETNET n.d.), they described their approach as engaging in ongoing "programmatic research" and materials development to improve their training:

> These activities are vital to maintaining our position at the cutting edge of debates, stimulating debate among peers and among clients. They enable us to utilize current, indigenous, and internationally recognized gender perspectives on gender equality and women's empowerment. The value of this ongoing research is evident in the training reports of our gender training

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[16] See *Network News*, July 2004, available at: http://www.getnet.org.za/Network_news_july2004.pdf. Also, a version of these methods is available at: http://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/activities/life-spiral-exercise.

interventions. Our research activities continue to focus on gender theories and training methodologies, workshop and materials design. Through our practice we continuously identify emerging issues from our interventions. We have a more *programmatic direction* to a defined Research Programme in line with our strategic priorities.

Likewise, GETNET's concept of building a network was integrated into their approach in a number of ways. The panel of trainers was a network in itself—because few trainers were full-time employees. These panellists were handpicked, which ensured that GETNET remained in control of who was doing the training (and their political approach) and the focus of the training. Their networking function developed through the strategy of arranging joint seminars, workshops and other forums, through *Network News* and through a range of partnerships that existed in areas of national government, local government, within the NGO sector, within the SADC region, university departments and research institutes.

Joint activities "enrich the critical dialogue that is vital for the development of indigenous theoretical frameworks and methodologies, effective strategies for implementation of gender equality and ensuring the impact of intervention is lasting" (Serote 2001a, 15). They took these activities seriously as spaces to think through and develop training materials and networks of experts/trainers, and conferences were convened that shared methods of gender awareness work for trainers. They also saw their networking as a stance against the grain of divisions and competition between NGOs and sectors of "the women's movement" for tenders, contracts and consultancies (Serote 2001a).

Network News offered analytical pieces on new programmes, issues, and legislation with contributions from board members and staff, as well as updates and adverts for GETNET courses and work. It was a place to advertise upcoming courses and was used as a way of reporting back with contributions from GETNET staff in the form of workshop reports and voices of participants and trainers. *Network News* had a strong regional focus from the outset and mirrored the regional work being done.

Network News was seen as important then, as well as a reflection tool now, argued Wilhelmina Trout (interviewed by Erna Curry and Koni Benson, Cape Town, 15 February 2012): "they were good articles that one could use. I used a lot in my training or in the work that I was doing … [I]t had its leanings sometimes to the academic, but at least it was around issues of the day that one could relate to and use and learn from." The newsletter was one way of communicating

and fostering a sense of a public political collective endeavour which had been part of GETNET from the start. Madlala-Routledge (Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, interviewed by Yaliwe Clarke and Erna Curry, Cape Town, 3 July 2012) recalls how GETNET was very much seen as part of the Western Cape gender community:

> There was a lot going on around GETNET in terms of women's organisations in Cape Town … GETNET was not an island, was not on its own but it was part of a broader family of women's NGOs … What GETNET was doing stood out, but at the same time it was part of a network of other organisations.

This sense of commitment and connection to a wider gender justice community meant that at key moments during the struggle to stay afloat, GETNET called for public meetings to discuss ways forward. This method of accountability and collective praxis of recalibration was one that we tried to extend beyond 2011 and to use as a guiding principle when approaching the GETNET history project.

In a financial crisis at the end of 2006, GETNET attempted to develop a regeneration plan for continuity of their activities and work with existing staff, associates, donors, clients, and networks. While the "stakeholder" meeting that they hosted in August marked the beginning of a series of discussions aimed at culminating in the development of a new strategy for GETNET,[17] the organisation was unable to implement the needed shifts, and all but one full-time and one part-time staffer were retrenched by March 2007. Varying reasons were given in retrenchment exit interviews: a loss of strategic focus, lack of tight organisational structure with a functioning and supportive division of labour, consultancy problems with intellectual property, the indecision around defining and managing the consultancy or becoming an NGO, the lack of a working market strategy, the changing times and landscape which made GETNET work irrelevant, and lack of clarity on who was responsible for fundraising and whether donors had lost confidence in GETNET without its founding director.[18] However, there are two important points to be made here: first, GETNET did continue to do important, albeit thenceforth sporadic work, until 2015 (Abrahams 2008; Keet 2008; Muthien 2008; Salo 2008; Tal 2008). Second, to understand the challenges that led to the retreat of GETNET, a thorough analysis of the wider context of gender mainstreaming, neoliberalism, local and international

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[17] This is taken from the minutes of the GETNET board meeting of 19 August 2006.
[18] GETNET, "Retrenchment Counselling Feedback Report" and "Retrenchment Counselling Report Phase II–Remaining Staff." (n.d. approx. March 2007).

politics and the life narratives of individuals, and movement dynamics, is required. Hannah Britton and Jennifer Fish (2009, 21–2) describe the ways in which some of the post 1994 work that focused on institution building contributed to a halting of some of the more radical possibilities of what they call the anti-apartheid women's movement:

> The initial goals of the women's movements in post-apartheid South Africa focused on state structures for women's participation in public and political life through the creation of the national machinery for gender equality … This approach centered on putting institutions in place first, to create access points for civil society groups and citizens and to begin to work within the democratic government … [T]he intention was that these institutions would be places for activists and organizations in civil society to articulate their needs and interests … [T]his strategy—it was hoped—assured … that gender structures would outlast individual women leaders. Thus once created, these institutions were intended to ensure a lasting change. Ironically, then, women's post-apartheid activism focused on state structures and attention shifted away from civil society—the place where historically, South African women had been most active and the sphere in which most women live and work.

Likeminded organisations, like those run by many of the people we interviewed, responded to the conservative moves of the new state by slowly moving away from the service of implementing new state policy and turning attention to building civil society to push the state (again) (Mercia Andrews, interviewed by Erna Curry, Cape Town, 8 August 2012; Fatima Shabodien, interviewed by Erna Curry, telephonic, 25 September 2012). Ironically, because GETNET initially tried to avoid the NGO funder model, as well as the dynamics of being an employer to too many full-time staff, it had developed a consultancy, whose largest "client" was government (Fortuin 2002; Gouws 2002). Moreover, it had heeded the call to accredit their education courses, but the cost of this recognition process worked to undermine their vision of what this education was for. There was a sense in 2007 that the focus of their modules would also need to be transformed if it was to change its focus and audience, which it felt was important by that time. GETNET was unable to recalibrate and implement its ideas for new plans, at that time, in part because of the resources it would require which included money, time, energy, and a crew to rejuvenate the organisation. The core tension between how to gain *and maintain* space for radical intervention that can be institutionalised and politicised still plagues activists and organisations attempting to shift gender dynamics today.

Building the Bridges We Need for the Ones We Are Trying to Cross

This article has attempted to share some of the details of GETNET's work and how they "actually managed to translate the ideals of those early discussion[s] into practical programmes and a viable organization over the years" (Serote 2004). Even if provisional, limited, and

politically difficult to pull into current debate, this article argues that creatively produced histories of the recent past are urgently needed for strategising ways forward for feminist mobilising, political education, and for debates on institutionalisation in the ongoing struggles for decolonisation today.

Taking GETNET as an example of radical feminist African history that is related to and of utmost relevance to the project of political education as intervention in the ongoing colonial and patriarchal present, this article shares how GETNET attempted to actualise their freedom dreams in 1994. It highlights the (hard) work they did to respond to the immediate need to create relevant, accessible materials and methodologies that could engage and transform ideas of liberation into practice, in the face of rife racism, poverty, sexism, homophobia, and nationalism at "independence."

In the late 1990s, Ruby Marks, who was key to the initial training and strategic planning and then became a GETNET panellist, did an assessment of gender justice work in *Network News*. She concluded "there is a growing realisation that gender training alone was not a sufficient strategy to bring about the kinds of institutional change we were interested in" (Marks 1998). A subsequent article will look at the demobilisation and depoliticisation of GETNET's gender mainstreaming work into the mid-2000s and the various attempts to reconfigure GETNET as an organisation able to continue and sustain this work.

This article is not a comprehensive history of GETNET; it instead aimed to a) share critical ideas and practices developed by GETNET and b) to do this through collecting and preserving its history in a way that informs contemporary debate in general, and the practices or praxis of feminist activism in particular. It is part of an experiment that seeks to produce alternative archives in ways that strategically create space to continue to do the work, without precluding what that work may look like in the future. This approach is part of a search for methodologies that do not just speak to previous historiography but that are accountable to movements of the future—in this case, by consolidating a slice of GETNET's history that speaks to ongoing struggles and searches for activists involved in feminist political education and mobilisation work. In 2013, when I first started writing up the archival report, I would have guessed that the first shorter paper to come out of the project would have been about forms of feminist organising—looking at the prospects of a sustainable organisational model dedicated to feminist political education that was lacking in Cape Town, at the time. In fact, the design of

the project did not just look back—half the interviews that were sought out were precisely with people involved in the past who were still navigating ways of sustaining organising in the present. This approach to the interviews enabled the opening of conversational spaces where many bridges had been broken, and created spaces of reflection on GETNET's decisions and debates on the impact, organisational form, the politics of gender mainstreaming, and the shift from policy to movement building of most of its "sister organisations." The aim was to ease open and to share difficult conversations about GETNET's past and future prospects of feminist organisation building.

However, since 2015, renewed student movement activism has created a demand for alternative curricula and pedagogies. These resonate with many of the considerations facing GETNET in the early 1990s—and have shaped the focus of this article. As Ziyana Lategan (in conversation with Koni Benson, 12 December 2017), a GETNET intern recruited to the scanning team in 2012, commented in a recent conversation about finally writing this article out of the long report, "the work GETNET has done could have been put to good use in recent times, in activist and other spaces, especially the educational work they had already produced. The material could go a long way in making leadership positions less hostile for women of colour."

While neglected in boxes and for the most part inaccessible behind a generation gap, GETNET's history and work is both radical and relevant to our ongoing search for feminist forms of organisation building today. Amongst other things, the GETNET archive of older documents and the transcripts of interviews from the GETNET history project offer us intergenerational insights into methodologies of expanding spaces to actualise what Robin Kelley refers to as *freedom dreams*. Kelley argues against writing of resistance movement histories in such a way that only focuses on systemic gains made. What is lost in such an approach are activists' visions of alternatives that are desperately needed to inspire ongoing struggles for the future (Kelley 2002, vii). Where GETNET managed to translate its dreams into action best was in its workshops and in the training materials they developed. These provide us with a wealth of content that could be drawn upon and updated, but more importantly, provide us with a stellar example of feminist praxis, with approaches and methods of doing feminist analysis and activist work.

Acknowledgements

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