



Case Study

Inside Out

A deep dive into the journey, organisational structure, service model, and population supported by Inside Out, with reflections on its impact and key lessons learnt



Inside Out

City Cape Town
Country South Africa
Region Africa



“**InsideOut supports communities to identify the socioeconomic factors impacting their mental health**”



Organisational profile

Team size	Very small (1-10 people)
Age of organisation	6-10 years



Key aspects of our work

Primary contextual issue	Trauma-affected populations
Life stage	All
Gender focus	All
Level of intervention	Prevention & Promotion + Assessment & Direct Care
Annual Reach	100+ people

Contextual issue

InsideOut works across South Africa from townships to cities, with a view to bring social justice to communities experiencing multiple forms of oppression. These communities carry the weight of complex socio-political histories that are compounded by factors such as high-poverty rates, violence, and gang activity.

InsideOut fills a critical gap in directly addressing the widespread effects of intergenerational trauma—often overlooked or poorly understood—by offering specialised education and interventions. They work to bridge the generational gap in understanding how sociopolitical histories shape wellbeing, and to foster the sharing of resources that help people access support and ease these tensions.

Objectives

A collective of trainers, community workers, and activists, InsideOut NPO is dedicated to social justice, healing, and transformation. They support people across the lifecycle affected by violence and oppression through a people-centered, systemic approach. Through community wellness groups, and tools of personal development, community building, and community organising for social change, InsideOut supports communities to identify the socioeconomic factors impacting their mental health, including systemic violence, and build critical consciousness.



WHEN?

When was the organisation established?

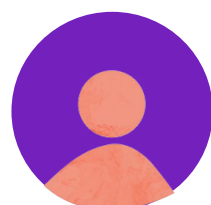
InsideOut started its activities in 2018, officially establishing itself as an organisation in 2019.



WHY?

Why did the organisation start its activities?

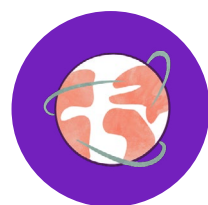
InsideOut wants to see communities where historical wounds are acknowledged and collectively healed, where young people grow into conscious, courageous leaders, where every person has an opportunity to thrive with dignity, purpose and connection.



WHO?

Who started the organisation?

InsideOut was established by Judy Kennedy, a community development practitioner and leader in girls' empowerment, and Des van Niekerk, a trauma counsellor specialising in healing, healthy masculinity, and resilience through therapeutic and community-based programmes across South Africa.



WHERE?

Where did the organisation start implementing its activities?

Activities began in Bonteheuwel, Mitchell's Plain, Khayelitsha, Vredendal on the West Coast, Gauteng, and Durban, communities where the organisation had worked for many years and built strong relationships.



WHAT?

What did the organisation do in its initial stages?

In its initial stages, the organisation ran a variety of programmes supporting farmworkers, prison serving professionals, and mining affected communities through trauma support, healing circles, feeding schemes and peer coaching.



HOW?

How was the organisation's work started?

Founders of InsideOut were facilitating an internationally funded programme for girls and young women affected by violence. When the funding came to an end, they decided to continue the work with their own resources.

Organisational structure

The organisation is led by a Board consisting of 7 members which includes:

- Clinical psychologist
- Professor at UCT in Humanities
- Other professionals in the gender spaces
- Director.

The board is responsible for governance and compliance as well as financial oversight. Decision-making on strategic direction of the organisation is made at board level.

InsideOut is led by a director with a background in youth and community development and research. It is formed by three core areas:

- Programs (community-based psychosocial support initiatives)
- Masculinity (rethinking manhood)
- Operations

Key decisions are made by the Director and Programmes Manager and ratified by the board. InsideOut has a horizontal structure, only having a director title for the purpose of registration. Judy and Dezz have extensive experience with NGO's and learned what not to bring to their organisation.

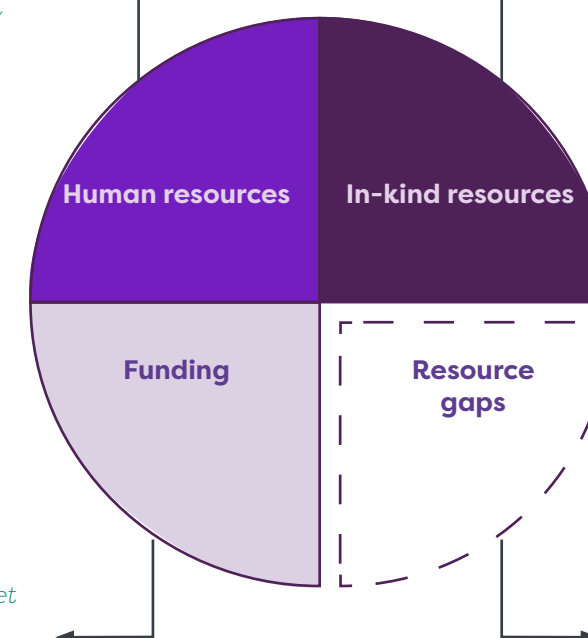
Financial management

Financial management complies with South African regulations for non-profit organisations, including registration requirements. We have a program budget drawn up for each program that is ratified by the board, managed by the director and programs manager. All expenses follow the budget lines and are approved by the director and released by the treasurer, and recorded by the Finance person, who is on a funded post.

Resources

InsideOut has a team of 5 core staff, including 4 program staff (youth and community development practitioners and psychosocial support facilitators) and a finance/administration (funded post by a local funder).

InsideOut benefits from in-kind contributions including community spaces for workshops, care packs for girl participants and volunteer time from professionals on the board. It also leverages local knowledge via the board who provide access to higher learning institutions for participants. Community networks support the program through events that raised a small amount of funds.



The organisation operates with an annual budget of approximately USD 50 000, sourced from small grants. To scale its programs and expand geographically InsideOut estimates a required annual budget of USD 125 000.

Key gaps include limited long-term funding, insufficient clinic staff to meet growing demand and restricted access to transportation and digital tools for rural outreach. Space for multipurpose activities which include an overnight facility for participants who need emergency evacuation.

Model & activities

Target population

InsideOut works with gang affected communities on the cape flats in Cape Town. Its primary target population includes girls and young women aged between 13 - 19 and their parents and caregivers experiencing trauma, anxiety and unemployment.

Services or interventions



Capacity building on psychosocial skills

First, InsideOut invests in capacity building by training local leaders and facilitators to recognise, prevent and respond to safeguarding and mental health challenges.

These training combines basic psychosocial skills such as trauma-informed tools, active listening and peer support.

Community-based psychosocial support

Secondly, the organisation facilitates community-based psychosocial support through weekly group sessions, an outdoor camp and excursion to political sites and reflective discussions grounded in a human and women's rights framework.

These spaces are designed to be safe, inclusive and culturally grounded, enabling participants to share experiences, process stress and trauma and build peer support.

Livelihood activities

Thirdly, InsideOut works to integrate mental health into ongoing livelihood initiatives. This includes partnering with organisations involved in psychosocial support into their work.

These community-based workshops, facilitated by the team and delivered in local venues over three to five days, provide accessible spaces to explore and unpack intergenerational trauma. Offered on request, they aim to strengthen collective understanding, healing, and resilience across diverse groups.



Impact

Key desired outcomes



Enhanced Safety and protection for girls and young women - girls and young women have access to psychosocial support services leading to improved protection and reduced trauma impact



Increased capacity for girls and young women and parents attending the programme



Strengthened social cohesion and peer support within participants who feels safe within program spaces and report increased safety practices at home and school

Methods

InsideOut uses a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data.

- Quantitative is collected through pre- and post assessment surveys **measuring stress levels, wellbeing and perceived social support. Qualitative data is collected through focus group, participant feedback through surveys and facilitator reports.**
- Facilitators support data collection through attendance registers and participation tracking, photos and video clips.**
- Data is kept secured under lock and key and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to track changes in key indicators.**

Reflections on impact so far

Over the past ten years InsideOut has made significant strides in addressing violence against women and girls, supporting survivors of trauma and transforming harmful social norms in marginalised communities.

Strengthened safety and psychosocial wellbeing, empowerment and leadership development, positive change in family and community dynamics, equipping girls and young women with skills, confidence and knowledge to protect themselves and others, reducing social isolation and improving wellbeing, promoting gender equitable attitudes and practices in families and communities, and strengthened organisational and system-level capacity to respond to and prevent violence

Information systems

The organisation uses a combination of digital and paper-based systems. Surveys are administered using simple digital tools where connectivity allows and paper forms are used for weekly attendance registers. Data is centralised in a shared database managed by the operations team.

Learnings

Strengths or drivers

InsideOut's strengths lie in its trauma informed facilitation, people-centred methodologies, and participatory approaches, which foster trust, inclusion, and meaningful engagement. These are reinforced by strong partnerships with schools, clinicians, and community leaders, enabling coordinated support, expanding access to services, and strengthening the organisation's impact within the communities it serves.

Challenges

Structural barriers such as limited government services, institutional constraints and backlash - for participants affected by gang-related violence, sexual exploitation and socioeconomic instability, backlash can take different forms including intimidation or threats from gangs or exploiters when someone seeks support, reports abuse or leaves a harmful situation. Social exclusion or stigma from peers, family members or the community for speaking out or participating in programs.

Limitations

The organisation's ability to expand and scale its programmes is constrained by limited resources, while gaps in the availability of mental health services restrict referral and support options. Persistent violence and poverty also increase the complexity of communities' needs.

Opportunities

There is a growing recognition of the link between mental health and creating opportunities to scale and influence policy and practice. Strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning systems to generate evidence for impact and relevance. Investment in digital tools and training could enhance reach, data systems and the organisation's ability to deliver and evaluate its model.



Partnership Journey with Ember

Initial assessment

In the initial assessment, InsideOut stood out as an organisation with significant potential for societal impact extending beyond individual healing. Their model demonstrates how community-based mental health support can be integrated with efforts to address broader social challenges, fostering collective healing and contributing to long-term systemic change.

- InsideOut is distinguished by its work to address violence in the townships of the Western Cape. Its approach focuses on mental health, intergenerational trauma, and collective healing. Through community wellness groups, the organisation combines personal development, community building, and organising for social change. This enables communities to recognise and address the trauma they carry, challenge the internalised structures that perpetuate violence, and draw on indigenous and collective healing practices to address root causes and build healthier, more resilient communities.
- At the time of the health check, key priorities for the organisation included strengthening its long-term sustainability and reflecting on how best to operationalise its vision. These efforts were taking place in the context of an ongoing board transition, which created additional challenges for strategic planning and decision-making. Securing stable, flexible funding also emerged as a critical priority, as it would enable the organisation to cover core operational costs and begin hiring young people as community mental health facilitators, expanding both its reach and impact.
- We identified several opportunities for collaboration with Ember. These included supporting strategic reflection on how to translate the organisation's vision into practice, mapping and documenting its model to strengthen implementation and improve communication with external partners, and refining its fundraising narrative and pitch. We also identified opportunities to strengthen organisational wellbeing practices and support the development of stronger internal systems.



Key achievements

Over the course of the partnership, InsideOut made important progress in strengthening its strategic clarity and organisational foundations. One of the most significant achievements was the refinement of its vision. Prior to the partnership, the organisation felt that its vision did not fully capture its long-term ambitions and that its broad scope often led to its work being communicated primarily through activities and deliverables. Through a process of reflection and strategic discussion, including time spent together in Cape Town, InsideOut developed a clearer articulation of its long-term goals. These include establishing an “InsideOut Centre” for young people, expanding the dissemination of its methodology through training, and building a more financially sustainable organisation that is less dependent on project-based funding.

- The partnership also supported the organisation in articulating and documenting its model more clearly. While InsideOut's approach remains highly adaptive and responsive to the needs of the communities it serves, the process helped identify the core principles that remain consistent across programmes. These include a strong intergenerational lens, a focus on transforming harmful gender norms and masculinities, and the use of storytelling and narrative-based approaches to address violence, trauma, and social injustice. Clarifying these pillars has strengthened the organisation's ability to communicate its work and provides a stronger foundation for future growth and replication.
- InsideOut's greatest strength continues to be its distinctive methodology and deep community-rooted approach. The organisation works in communities experiencing high levels of violence and social injustice, translating complex issues such as trauma, inequality, and harmful social norms into accessible narratives that promote reflection, dialogue, and collective healing. This approach enables participants to better understand the underlying drivers of violence and equips them with tools to challenge harmful norms and contribute to positive social change.
- The organisation has also strengthened several aspects of its internal operations. Roles and responsibilities within the leadership team and board have become clearer, supporting more effective governance and decision-making. In addition, the recruitment of a finance officer has strengthened financial management systems and internal controls. InsideOut has continued to build relationships with strategic partners and peers, leveraging connections developed through Ember and other networks to expand learning opportunities and strengthen its ecosystem of support.
- Looking ahead, several areas of opportunity remain. While InsideOut collects a range of quantitative and qualitative data and has partnered with external researchers to evaluate aspects of its work, the organisation recognises that it can further strengthen how it articulates and communicates its impact. Continuing to refine its impact framework and storytelling could support both fundraising and external engagement. There is also an opportunity to invest in communications capacity, including the development of a stronger online presence, to better share the organisation's work and learning with broader audiences.
- Financial sustainability remains a key challenge. The organisation continues to rely heavily on short-term project funding, which often does not cover core operational costs. Securing more flexible, long-term funding will be critical to supporting organisational stability and future growth. Finally, given the emotionally demanding nature of its work, InsideOut continues to prioritise staff wellbeing. Further strengthening safeguarding, reflective practice, and team wellbeing systems will help ensure the long-term resilience of both the team and the organisation.