



APEM Organisational Transformation

Review report to Christian Aid

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Background	3
2. Objectives of the review	3
3. Specific areas of concern	4
A) Organisational Development issues	4
B) Programmes	4
C) Other areas	4
4. Methodology	4
5. Limitations.....	4
6. Key Findings.....	5
A) Organisational Development issues	5
Concerns	5
• Milestones	5
I. Reviewed APEM constitution - development of clear Board eligibility criteria, and fair representation on Board of gender, age, experience and capability.....	5
II. Evidence of greater accountability of APEM to its Board.....	5
III. Degree of understanding by Board of APEM vision, mission and its legal responsibilities.....	6
IV. Availability of regular minuted Board meetings with actions recorded and monitored.....	6
Concerns	6
• Milestones	7
V. Ownership of a five-year gender sensitive strategic plan by all staff and stakeholders - i.e. that they know and understand the organisation's vision, mission, aims.....	7
VI. Inclusion of performance indicators and mechanisms for measuring results against indicators.....	7
Concerns	7
• Milestones	7
B) Programmes	9
Concerns	9
• Milestones	9
• Milestones	11
Concerns	11
• Milestones	11
• Milestones	13
• Milestones	13
C) Other areas.....	14
XXVI. Structure.....	14
XXVII. Staff salaries.....	14
7. Recommendations	
8. Conclusion	15
Appendix 1:	16

1. Background

Association for People's Empowerment (APEM) has been a CAID partner for eight years. From April 2002 to March 2005, it received Comic Relief funding to implement the Community Economic Revival and Social Empowerment programme in Pujehun and Kailahun districts of Sierra Leone. Following the completion of the project in March 2005, Christian Aid commissioned an external evaluation of the project by a Ghanaian consultancy firm, CaRoRa Consult. The evaluation focused on Village Development Committees (VDCs) in the operational communities as the lens for establishing the extent to which APEM had succeeded in facilitating self-reliant and sustainable structures actively promoting development in the project area. The evaluation identified a number of programmatic, operational and organisational issues requiring urgent attention.

The concerns raised by the CaRoRa evaluation and others, which were generated through discussions between Christian Aid and other key stakeholders, formed a baseline for an Organisational Transformation process, which Christian Aid commissioned Transform Africa to facilitate for APEM. The initiative was planned to last for 6 months ending in May 2006 and it was to be concluded with a review.

The various OT events, which APEM staff went through, all underscored the importance of staff supervision and support. In addition, through them and staff accompaniment and mentoring, participants were provided with a range of tool kits, which they could use to improve their staff supervision and support skills. What remains to be seen is whether and how they will use the acquired skills and tools.

From interviews with staff and the various records seen by the consultant, it was evident that by the time the OT process started, many APEM staff had benefited from a variety of training opportunities over the past three years. When the OT process started, there was a broad representation of staff participating in the various events. However, all those who facilitated the processes consistently reported staff weakness as a concern. It was evident that quite a big number of those participating in the events were struggling to understand what was going on and thus unable to effectively engage in them. The consultant raised this concern with the Executive Director.

As a follow up of the strategies agreed during the development of the Strategic Plan and weakness concerns raised by those who were facilitating the OT processes, there was re-assessment of individual staff performance and this has led to termination of services of some of them. In addition, it has been agreed that with effect from 1st January 2007, the number would be reduced from 34 to a core team of 9, comprising the Executive Director, a Finance Officer and 4 Programme Managers. An Administrative Assistant, a security and a driver will support the team. Arrangements are under way to give notices to those affected.

Following these decisions, most of the training and transformational processes in 2006 have focused on the core team.

This report is the review of the outputs and impact of the OT processes with regard to addressing the concerns raised by Christian Aid (see Appendix 1) and other stakeholders.

2. Objectives of the review

The overall objective of the review was to assess the progress made by APEM in covering the "milestones" set by Christian Aid in their document titled "APEM Areas of Concern".

3. Specific areas of concern

A) Organisational Development issues

- (a) Governance
- (b) Strategic vision
- (c) Organisational culture

B) Programmes Issues

- (a) Monitoring
- (b) Staff capacity
- (c) Programme development
- (d) Programme management
- (e) Resource mobilisation

C) Issues Related to Other areas of APEM's work

- (a) Strategic planning
- (b) Proposal development
- (c) Project Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PPME)

4. Methodology

The review was carried out between 2nd and 20th October 2006 through a participatory process. The APEM Executive Director had a copy of the "areas of concern", which he reported to have shared with the Board and his management team. These concerns were revisited at the beginning of the review process and members of the APEM core team were all given time to reflect on them and make an assessment of where the organisation was in covering the milestones. During the last week of the process, they made a group assessment of the progress made. Their inputs were used together with the consultant's assessment in compiling this report.

5. Limitations

The OT programme normally takes a minimum of two years and it includes an organisational assessment, training, reflection, accompaniment and mentoring. Through those processes, it seeks to build staff capabilities and help them address existing gaps in the organisation's structure, systems and policies, which are the "building blocks" for organisational transformation. It also deals with the "softer" aspects of leadership, gender, self-determination and organisational culture.

This assignment had a time frame of six months to cover processes that would normally take two years. This was a gross underestimation, considering the criticality of the financial situation and staff capacity issues, which were facing APEM at the time. Doing a professional job within the agreed period was thus a challenge to the consultant and at the same time, a key limitation in achieving the desired outcomes. The following inter-related factors contributed to the delay in completing the assignment and not covering some of the milestones:

Firstly, the consultant assumed that APEM was financially sound enough to meet the internal costs for the various events and for that reason the contract covered only his own costs. Whenever it came to carrying out a planned event, finding funds for materials, venue and lunch for participants was always a challenge. In many cases, participants spent the whole day without even a soft drink. In some cases the consultant had to use his own funds to cover some of the costs. In addition,

partly due to lack of funds, it was not possible to organise the event for the four Board members and a planned trip to Kenema to meet the Chair did not materialise because Alie Forna (ARD) who had offered to give the consultant a lift cancelled the trip.

Secondly, the consultant over-estimated staff capabilities. The Transform approach focuses on building capabilities within client organisations to address their own current and future capacity needs. Many of the basic capabilities were found to be lacking in APEM. For instance, analyse, strategic thinking and planning skills were considerably weak. As a result, the production of the five-year strategic plan, which was planned to take not more than ten days, lasted several months as it underwent several revisions before it could be of an acceptable quality.

Thirdly, it was found out that in addition to the many gaps in the "building blocks" for APEM's transformation, there was a greater need than was envisaged to address attitudinal and behavioural aspects in the organisation, which acted as "blockers" for the desired transformation. These required a considerable amount of time to allow staff to reflect on their current beliefs, attitudes and values in order to take courage to challenges them and begin adopting new ways of doing things.

The net effect of all the above limitations was the delay in completion of the processes, which led to the project taking eleven rather than the six months originally planned.

6. Key Findings

This section outlines the findings of the consultant's assessment of the progress made by APEM with regard to the concerns and milestones set for it, following the eleven months of its engagement with the OT process.

A) Organisational Development issues

a) Governance

Concerns

- Relationship with APEM Board - accountability unclear
- Capacity and membership of Board unclear.
- Regularity of meetings and Board minutes not readily available.

Milestone

I. Reviewed APEM constitution - development of clear Board eligibility criteria, and fair representation on Board of gender, age, experience and capability.

The Board, which used to comprise eleven members, has been restructured and reduced to five voting members and APEM constitution has been reviewed. The constitution is made gender sensitive and more structurally laid out reflecting the revised organisational management and accountability configurations. There is now a clear eligibility criteria for Board membership, which reflects gender and diversity sensitivity, experience and capability. The board itself is a range of experiences

Milestone

II. Evidence of greater accountability of APEM to its Board.

An accountability chart has been developed, discussed and agreed by the core team of APEM staff. During the process of drawing up the chart, the issue of to whom the Board was accountable became rather sensitive as it was noted that it should be accountable to the founder

members of the organisation. The current Director being one of the founders of the organisation, who, at the same time is employed by the same organisation, raised a certain degree of concern that this was a potential area for compromising accountability. However, on consultation with other organisations, such as ARD and NMJD, which were in a similar situation, it was recommended that checks and balances could be strengthened within the organisation to get round the problem. These included the change of the title of the current post holder to "Executive Director" and making him a non-voting member.

The consultant was assured that the draft roles and accountability to funders would be tabled at the next Board meeting for approval. Copies are available on request.

An accountability structure was developed which clarified that the Board is accountable to the Founders and that the Executive Director is accountable to the Board in addition to being its Secretary and a none voting member. There are checks and balances built into the structure, making it imperative that accountability has significantly improve on the APEM.

It was noted that already accountability between the staff and the board has significantly improved significantly over the past twelve months. For instance, the Chair is the principle signatory on all APEM Bank Accounts and all policy decisions have to be approved by the Board.

Milestone

III. Degree of understanding by Board of APEM vision, mission and its legal responsibilities.

At some point in the strategic planning training and designing session which was attended by all members of the Board and the APEM staff, the vision and mission of the APEM was revised and lengthily discussed to the understanding of every participant. The vision and mission of the organisation are now better understood by board and staff members.

During an induction session for Board members (facilitated by a TA staff on the NMJD), members of the Board discussed their roles and responsibilities on the APEM. These roles and responsibilities have been written down and distributed among the founders, the Executive Director and members of the new Board.

Milestone

IV. Availability of regular minuted Board meetings with actions recorded and monitored.

The consultant noted that at the moment, the Board meets on a quarterly basis and minutes are available. It was also agreed that in future, all action points would be extracted and circulated independently in addition to being reflected in the minutes. A format for this was developed and left with the Executive Director for future use.

b) Strategic vision

Concerns

- (i) No recent strategic review and plan.
- (ii) Unclear vision, mission and direction.
- (iii) Lack of broad ownership by APEM stakeholders of its vision, values and purpose.

Milestones

V. Ownership of a five-year gender sensitive strategic plan by all staff and stakeholders - i.e. that they know and understand the organisation's vision, mission, aims.

A noteworthy achievement for the OT process has been the development of a five-year strategic plan (2006 - 2010), which is owned by all its key stakeholders. The plan clearly articulates the organisation's vision, mission, values and what APEM plans to achieve over the next five years. In addition, it has a monitoring mechanism to assess the progress of its planned programmes and the expected impact on the communities.

The Board, at its meeting held in August 2006, approved a final version of the Strategic Plan. Since then, it has been shared with all APEM primary stakeholders and potential funding agencies.

Milestones

VI. Inclusion of performance indicators and mechanisms for measuring results against indicators.

The mentor observed a gender and organisational audits frameworks which were used to establish performance indicators. These have already been used together with various PRA tools to establish baseline progress indicators which will be used to assess future improvements realised.

c) Organisational Culture

Concerns

- (i) Non-inclusive leadership style.
- (ii) Over centralised decision-making.
- (iii) Non-accountability of Director to staff and stakeholders.
- (iv) Poor staff consultation and participation in decision-making.
- (v) Poor information flow to field staff.
- (vi) Resistance to change and learning culture.
- (vii) Lack of transparency.
- (viii) Resistance to support.
- (ix) Culture of isolation and distrust.
- (x) Low gender awareness.

Milestone

VII. Degree of apparent shared leadership i.e. evidence of greater participation in decision-making.

From statements made by various members of staff during the review process, it was evident that most of them are now clear about their overall, collective and specific responsibilities in the organisation and the differences between friendship and collegial relationships. Roles and functions have been clearly specified and delegated. They all agreed to treat and support one another as colleagues although this is still a major challenge since in the past, relationships were informal and, in many cases, bordering patron-client behaviour.

As already stated elsewhere in this report, monthly staff meetings have now been regarded as part of the APEM leadership tradition for making action plans, review reports and check how the organisation is keeping to its strategic directions. Ad hoc meetings are also conducted to make decisions on emergency situations or issues.

Annual review and reflection sessions have been planned for major stakeholders to input into the planning processes,

Milestone

VIII. Evidence of regular staff consultation, of staff encouraged to give views and being listened to.

All staff interviewed during the review process acknowledged the behavioural changes taking place in APEM. There is evidence of processes of transformation taking place in gender relations, self-confidence and determination and leadership. For example staff are now more open and ready to challenge the issues and processes in the organisation. At one of the review meetings attended by all members of the core team, the consultant asked them to comment on the current level of staff participation in decision-making in the organisation. This is what a member of the team said:

Too much! It seems every major decision nowadays has to be done through a meeting. We were not used to this style of leadership; but we feel it is right for important decisions to be taken through a participatory process. Nowadays, we all feel part of the decisions being taken in the organisation.

Milestones

IX. Introduction of effective systems of regular information flow to field staff and community stakeholders.

There was also evidence that sharing was increasing within the organisation. For example, monthly dialogue sessions are conducted with staff, identified CBOs and Board members. This has helped in enhancing the flow of information and promotion of participatory decision-making. The consultant also learnt that a system has been adopted where programme staff in Bo (capital town of Southern Province) and staff who are located in the communities are facilitated to use mobile telephone calls to exchange and share relevant information.

Milestones

X. Evidence of gender mainstreaming and the development and ownership of a functional gender policy and organisational management policy document.

Apart from a systematic mentoring and accompaniment process for the Director and other senior members of staff, who now constitute the core team, APEM has been taken through three key events (leadership and gender transformation and self-determination). These seem to have had a positive impact on the organisation and sowed the seeds of a new culture, which, if maintained, will enable it to achieve its mission and vision.

A Gender mainstreaming policy has been finalised and was developed through a participatory process, using materials provided by Transform Africa, Karen Iles and other sources. Also, as evidenced from the organisation's Strategic and operational plans, gender has been mainstreamed not only in the language used in planning documents, but also in all APEM policy and other management tools.

There is also a growing awareness and gender sensitivity among staff in how they relate to each other and other people.

Milestone

XI. Development and ownership of a HIV workplace policy.

An HIV workplace policy was developed through a process that included consultation and inputs from all staff. It was passed on to Eddie, Christian Aid HIV Officer based in Freetown, for comments. By the time of the review Eddie had not yet sent the comments

Milestone

XII. Organisation able to articulate its strengths and weaknesses.

A worth mentioning achievement for the OT process has been the development of a Strengths , Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the APEM as part of the five-year strategic plan (2006 - 2010), which is owned by all its key stakeholders.

The development of the two-year operational plan and all other planning processes o the organisation are based on these internal and external capacities and threats.

It became clear from interviews conducted that the organisation now has strong capacity to conduct future SWOT for various purposes.

B) Programmes

a) Monitoring

Concerns

- (i) Very weak despite PPME.
- (ii) Lack of baseline
- (iii) Poor co-operation with EDRA.
- (iv) Little evidence of systematic and participatory monitoring systems.

Milestone

XIII. Development of a baseline.

In addition to social / economic / human / political baseline studies in the 8 project chiefdoms, APEM has also developed baseline details on the gender sensitivity and the service delivery capacity of the organisation. The organisation plans to use these materials on the monitoring of progress on the APEM and in the field.

Milestone

XIV. Development of an effective monitoring framework and participatory monitoring system.

As has been observed elsewhere in this report, LFAs, Milestones and Ghant charts have been developed on the five-year Strategic and two-year Operational plans and these will be used to monitor progress on both the strategic and operational plans. In addition, APEM has developed organisational, staff performance assessment and gender audit tools to be used in assessing progress as against established progress indicators. From the consultants observations on these frameworks and tools , it is clear that APEM has developed strong participatory capacities to effectively monitor the impact of activities and effectiveness of staff performance.

Milestone

XV. Evidence of greater capacity of field staff to monitor and report.

There was evidence that there are significant achievements in building field staff capacity for monitoring project outputs and activities in the field.

A baseline survey for sustainable livelihood was carried out in all the eight chiefdoms where APEM works. Following this exercise, an organisational capacity data and charts have been developed. According to staff, these will be used to assess progress and livelihood changes taking place among communities as a result of APEM's interventions.

APEM gender and organisational capacity audits have been conducted using tools developed during the OT processes. It was reported that the two audits were carried out with the active participation of representatives of the field staff, all secretariat staff and two members of the Board.

A Logical Framework (Logframe) was developed during the strategic planning process, using inputs provided by Karen Iles, a consultant from Christian Aid and Transform Africa. If used, this will be a key tool for the tracking and monitoring of progress and impact of APEM's work over the next five years.

In addition to the Logframe in the Strategic Plan, Gantt charts, Milestones and a Logical Framework Analysis (LFA) have been developed through a process that has involved all members of the core and field staff for the two-year operational project. If the project is funded, APEM plans to use these to track and monitor the progress of planned activities and assess the impact of the project on the lives of the beneficiary communities.

The field staff have received in house training and accompaniment from programme staff in field monitoring, gender audit and staff performance assessment tools.

Milestone

XVI. Evidence of action reflection.

At some point in the Strategic Planning process, APEM committed itself to becoming a learning organisation and set aside a considerable percentage of its time for sharing and learning. How this will be turned into practice is still a challenge. However, the consultant made some input into the development of a framework that would guide the use of the time and offered to give more support if it would be needed.

The consultant was also able to observe minutes of monthly staff meetings for the months of May, June, July, August and September 2006. The minutes stated dates, list or numbers of people present, the agenda, and action points reached for each meeting. Each minute carried the signatures of the secretary and chair. All the meetings were chaired by the Executive Director. Though not quite perfect, the quality of the minutes was assessed to be impressive to some extent. I was able to see evidence of action taken on the resolutions of the meetings with the exception of the training of all programme staff in computer word processing which as explained 'was not done due to lack of funds'.

b) Staff capacity

Concerns

- (i) Monopoly of training by secretariat staff.
- (ii) Little evidence of training being passed on to field staff.

- (iii) Low capacity.

 **Milestone**

XVII. Evidence of effective in-house training of all staff in PPME, PRA, Gender, PSIA, HIV, and advocacy.

In-house field staff training reports were observed for events conducted in participatory monitoring, evaluation, PRA tools, training of trainers on Stepping Stones and grassroots advocacy. Compared to staff low capacity at the start of the OT process, the consultant was able to record significant improvements in general staff performance.

c) Programme development

Concerns

- (i) Little evidence of adaptation to changing Sierra Leone context.
- (ii) Over reliance on service delivery.
- (iii) Slow to take forward recommendations with respect to programming.

 **Milestone**

XVIII. Development of a clear analysis of poverty and its causes.

Part of the process to develop the Strategic Plan included building a capacity in APEM for staff to be more analytical and able to articulate poverty and its causes in Sierra Leone. This is not a simple task, especially in an organisation where the majority of staff are not university graduates. However, the level of analysis in the plan is an indication of the progress is made in this area.

APEM staff were also able to conduct the sustainable livelihood baseline studies, although this was done with considerable external support. The consultant was able to see baseline study charts and data representing the status of the socio-cultural, economic, political and human capital as observed in February 2006. He also saw the analysis of poverty, its causes and how it affects various groups in the communities. These are indications that a capacity for quality programme development is gradually being developed in the organisation.

I observed a Sustainable Livelihood Analysis framework developed for future use on the APEM. In addition to the Gender Transformation and Diversity Training event and accompaniment from TA, it was apparent that this has been made possible by courtesy of contributions received from a TA contact person on the NMJD, and as a result of technical inputs from Karen Iles and Christina of CAID who had conducted training events on Gender mainstreaming and Risk Assessment respectively. This framework assesses the capacity, vulnerability, and livelihood constraints of communities. The framework also analyses how various external or internal stakeholders create shocks, seasonalities, and trends that affect the living situations of local communities through their policies, institutions, ways of configuring society, and processes for decision making or action taking. The framework seem to be understood by the programme staff and the executive director, but its effective use is yet to be seen when APEM has funds to implement projects in the coming year.

 **Milestone**

XIX. Development of realistic programmatic strategies for transformation.

During the final weeks of its engagement with APEM, the consultant facilitated a process whereby APEM developed a strategy of working with CBOs to improve the sustainability and

cost effectiveness of their project interventions with communities. This strategy will not only enable the organisation to maintain a small but effective and professional staff, but also help it to make a shift from direct service delivery to becoming a true capacity builder. This is further evidence of an organisation, which is willing to change its ways working and ready to improve its programme development capacity.

A Right Based and Sustainable Livelihood focussed two year operational plan has been developed for implementation in 8 chiefdoms selected in the south and east of Sierra Leone. This project will address the structural causes of impoverishment in the villages and makes use of community empowerment approaches.

Milestone

XX. Clear evidence of mainstreaming of gender and HIV into programmes.

The consultant was able to observe and assess documented Gender Mainstreaming Programme developed on a gender sensitive Logical Framework Analysis complete with Milestones of strategic outputs and a Ghant chart showing a time scale of achieving activities. From my assessment of the results of a self conducted gender audit, I have a feeling that the organisation has achieved significantly on mainstreaming gender .

A gender unit headed by a Gender Programme Manager (Mariama) is being developed on the APEM. Whilst she seem prepared and very eager to learn, the consultant is of the opinion that the organisation needs to provide adequate space and support for Mariama to be able to fill her current education, experience, knowledge and skill gaps for effectively delivering the roles and responsibilities of her desk.

It is observed that the languages and directions of both the five-year strategic plan and the two year-operational plan are quite gender sensitive. Also, from commitment statements made at the end of the Leadership training and accompaniment events, and from personal observations made on the level of concrete outlook, attitudinal and behavioural changes made by staff, one can now confidently ascertain that APEM is indeed displaying seriousness in mainstreaming gender within the organisation.

Apart from a systematic mentoring and accompaniment programme facilitated by TA for the Director and other senior members of staff, APEM has also been taken through key best practice training events on HIV prevention by Christian Aid (Stepping Stones, Peer Education, Like Skills, and STAR¹). There seem now to be a great opportunity mainstreaming HIV prevention on the APEM, which, if nurtured and utilised, will enable the organisation to achieve its aspirations for a poverty free Sierra Leone in all its forms (including a reduced HIV situation). There is also a growing awareness and sensitivity among staff on the HIV challenge in Sierra Leone. HIV is obviously mainstreamed on the APEM.

c) Programme management

- (i) Weak work planning.
- (ii) Poor supervision and support.

¹ **ST**epping Stones **And R**egenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques

 **Milestone**

XXI. Existence of monthly work plans for all staff and quarterly objectives.

Programme and field staff monthly work plans were seen for the months of May to September, 2006. The work plans included Name of month, quarterly objectives, monthly planned activities , time table for activities , location of activities, and a list of resources required

 **Milestones**

XXII. Maintenance of monthly supervision records with staff.

Record keeping of monthly monitoring mission reports is limited to computerised word processing files a few of which were not operational due to virus infestations on systems that have taken up to four year and more. The organisation is developing a hard copy backup system filed in cabinets and paper files. Though greatly improved, the record keeping systems require additional work; i.e. the computers need to be replaced with new ones as a matter of urgency and all files to be put into appropriate folder or sub-folders. A guide was developed, discussed and left with the Executive Director and his core staff team. It was also advised that hard copies of all computer files be printed and backed up for reference.

 **Milestones**

XXIII. Evidence of monthly reflections and planning sessions in field offices.

Minuted field staff monthly reflection and review meeting were conducted in all field locations in July , August, and September 2006.. No minutes were seen for the field staff meetings said to have been conducted in May, 2006 in all field locations on the APEM. In addition to meetings for July, August and September conducted and verified in all field locations, field staff in the Pujehun district , also presented minutes for meetings conducted in June and July, 2006.

d) Resource mobilisation

- (i) Over dependency on Christian Aid funding.
- (ii) Low quality proposals.

 **Milestones**

XXIV. Development of a realistic proposal reflecting APEM's vision and the changing Sierra Leone context.

APEM has written a project proposal to be implemented in 8 chiefdoms for the next two years. Although the consultant facilitated the process, made specific inputs for its design and read the final draft for quality control purposes, the actual writing and preparation of the budget were left to the core staff team. It was agreed that since Christian Aid was the only funding partner, its format would be used. It was also felt that, if Christian Aid agreed to fund this project, this would be a smooth conclusion of the OT process as APEM would have the opportunity to put into practice what it has learnt and test out its new approach to community empowerment.

 **Milestone**

XXV. Evidence of approaches to funders.

Serious concerns had been raised about APEM's over-reliance on Christian Aid for funding and the low quality of proposals written by the organisation. These issues were continually discussed during the whole OT process and strategies were developed to address this

- Discussions are underway to establish a funding partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) for an integrated community empowerment programme in one of the eight project chiefdoms (Tonkia). The consultant was briefed on this and advised APEM to ensure that the terms of the relationship are properly discussed and agreed by both parties, following which a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should be signed by the relevant parties.
- Handicap International (HI) has identified APEM as a Leadership Transformation technical training resource for their staff and project beneficiaries. A concept paper and an MOU are jointly being developed.
- APEM is currently working with Action Aid International (Sierra Leone Programme) on a three-year HIV and AIDS prevention project. This project is expected to close by December 2007. The consultant found out that the project was poorly negotiated and there is no binding signed agreement between the two organisations. As a result, it appeared that, apart from catering for field staff, the costs of senior staff involved in the project were being subsidised from other sources and therefore draining the meagre financial resources of the organisation.

C) Other areas

Milestone

XXVI. Management Structure

Concerns and milestones regarding strategic planning, proposal writing and project planning and monitoring have been reported on under the various sections above. However, the OT process identified APEM's management structure as a critical "building block" for APEM's transformation, which needed to be addressed urgently. At the beginning of the process, the management structure was unclear and quite confusing. Most of the staff used to see the organisation as bits of projects. For instance, when the Action Aid HIV and AIDS project was taken on, it employed its own field staff and its costs were not included in the overall budget for the organisation. Yet these staffs were reporting to the same Programme Managers whose costs were being solely met by Christian Aid.

The structure has now been streamlined with clear reporting responsibilities and staff job descriptions are being reviewed to reflect this. The organisation's budget structure too has been redesigned to reflect the oneness of the organisation.

Milestones

XXVII. Staff salaries

Through Christian Aid support, salaries for all levels of staff were raised in 2006 and are paid regularly. However, according to staff interviewed by the consultant, APEM salaries are still the some of lowest paid by non-government agencies in the region of the country. In view of the proposed restructuring, it is hoped that when funds become available, the issues of revising staff salaries and other conditions of service will be among the high priorities of the organisation.

8. Recommendations

- a) Although APEM has made a significant progress in covering the concerns and milestones in the past eleven months, it should be noted that organisational transformation is a process, which requires a considerable amount of time and financial resources. The organisation has demonstrated its commitment to learn from past mistakes and improve. Currently, staff are experiencing tremendous financial hardships and are uncertain about the future of the

organisation. It is strongly recommended that Christian Aid should continue with the partnership with APEM, especially through this difficult period when it is seriously looking for additional sources of funding.

- b) Related to recommendation "1" above, is the need for the current accompaniment of APEM to continue for at a least one more year. This will allow the seeds of transformation, which have been sown to take root. Transform Africa is committed to continuing with the process and has suggested a very moderate budget to be included in the proposal, which has been submitted to Christian Aid. In addition, Transform Africa has persuaded its partner, ARD to join it in building APEM's capacity in micro-finance management and provide it with accompaniment and mentoring support on a more regular basis since it is locally based.
- c) APEM's greatest challenge is to translate what it has put on paper into action and real behavioural change. Although its current plight is understandable, the core staff team has to realise that no external agency owes APEM a living. They should continue showing the same level of commitment and willingness to change as they have done over the past eleven months of the OT process. They should be ready to work as a team to deal firmly with weaknesses within the organisation. Most importantly, they must work on their relationships in a gender sensitive way and regard each other as colleagues rather than friends.
- d) The core staff team identifies the following training and facility needs and the consultant strongly feels they are genuine and to be addressed as a matter of urgency:
 - A least two new desk-tops and a laptop.
 - Computer training, especially in word processing and spreadsheets and using the internet.
 - Training in the Quick Books financial accounting software for the Finance Manager.

8. Conclusion

Working with APEM has been a very rewarding experience for Transform Africa. The organisation seems to have sprung up from a state of near chaos to one with a potential to act as a technical resource for facilitating the transformation of other local NGOs and CBOs in the country. Above all, the level of staff enthusiasm and commitment to change has been astounding. To sum up their sentiments about the OT process they have gone through, the Executive director made the following comment:

I was very upset when the concerns and terms of reference were presented to me and Transform Africa was commissioned by Christian Aid to carry out the Organisational Transformation processes. I thought this was a plan by Christian Aid to dump us. After eleven months of going through the various training events, accompaniment and mentoring processes, I feel we need to apologise to Christian Aid and, in particular Lynda, who initiated the dialogue on the organisational transformation process. Her argument that the weak programmes and capacity of APEM were not empowering communities was valid. This process has been wonderful and inspiring. APEM is different today, with a Board and staff that are accountable and liberated in their outlook and attitude.

I wish APEM good luck in its efforts to achieve it vision and mission.

Appendix 1 : The TOR

APEM

Areas of Concern

A) OD issues

a) Governance

- Relationship with APEM Board - accountability unclear
- Capacity and membership of Board unclear.
- Regularity of meetings and Board minutes not readily available.

Milestones

- Reviewed APEM constitution - development of clear Board eligibility criteria, and fair representation on Board of gender, age, experience and capability.
- Evidence of greater accountability of APEM to its Board.
- Degree of understanding by Board of APEM vision, mission and its legal responsibilities.
- Availability of regular minuted Board meetings with actions recorded and monitored.

c) Strategic vision

- No recent strategic review and plan.
- Unclear vision, mission and direction.
- Lack of broad ownership by APEM stakeholders of its vision, values and purpose.

Milestones

- Ownership of a five-year gender sensitive strategic plan by all staff and stakeholders - i.e. that they know and understand the organisation's vision, mission, aims.
- Inclusion of performance indicators and mechanisms for measuring results against indicators.

d) Organisational culture

- Non-inclusive leadership style.
- Over centralised decision-making.
- Non-accountability of Director to staff and stakeholders.
- Poor staff consultation and participation in decision-making.
- Poor information flow to field staff.
- Resistance to change and learning culture.
- Lack of transparency.
- Resistance to support.
- Culture of isolation and distrust.
- Low gender awareness.

Milestones

- Degree of apparent shared leadership i.e. evidence of greater participation in decision-making.
- Evidence of regular staff consultation, of staff encouraged to give views and being listened to.
- Introduction of effective systems of regular information flow to field staff and community stakeholders.

- Evidence of gender mainstreaming and the development and ownership of a functional gender policy and organisational management policy document.
- Development and ownership of a HIV workplace policy.
- Organisation able to articulate its strengths and weaknesses.

B) Programmes

a) Monitoring

- Very weak despite PPME.
- Lack of baseline
- Poor co-operation with EDRA.
- Little evidence of systematic and participatory monitoring systems.

Milestones

- Development of a baseline.
- Development of an effective monitoring framework and participatory monitoring system.
- Evidence of greater capacity of field staff to monitor and report.
- Evidence of action reflection.

b) Staff capacity

- Monopoly of training by secretariat staff.
- Little evidence of training being passed on to field staff.
- Low capacity.

Milestones

- Evidence of effective in-house training of all staff in PPME, PRA, Gender, PSIA, HIV, and advocacy.

c) Programme development

- Little evidence of adaptation to changing Sierra Leone context.
- Over reliance on service delivery.
- Slow to take forward recommendations with respect to programming.

Milestones

- Development of a clear analysis of poverty and its causes.
- Development of realistic programmatic strategies for transformation.
- Clear evidence of mainstreaming of gender and HIV into programmes.

d) Programme management

- Weak work planning.
- Poor supervision and support.

Milestones

- Existence of monthly work plans for all staff and quarterly objectives.
- Maintenance of monthly supervision records with staff.
- Evidence of monthly reflections and planning sessions in field offices.

e) Resource mobilisation

- Over dependency on Christian Aid funding.
- Low quality proposals.

Milestones

- Development of a realistic proposal reflecting APEM's vision and the changing Sierra Leone context.
- Evidence of approaches to funders.