

- Can understanding of context spur innovation?
- Can research identify and track factors of upward mobility and turn these into social and commercial strategies?
- Can research facilitate a cost-effective dialogue between a diverse range of communities and the stakeholders they engage with?

YES! If information is a commodity, distributed without favour or prejudice

Centre for Democratising Information (CDI) leads ongoing, contextual, community-based research that stimulates appropriate engagement between communities and their stakeholders. The objective of this project is to democratise information by giving more people, living in under-developed areas, a voice that is relayed to relevant stakeholders and decision-makers - be that governments, companies, civil society and/or institutional bodies. CDI is rethinking and redesigning research methodology, research costing and research distribution to give more people more access to solid, wide-angle, information.

How is this done? Members of the community are screened, recruited and trained in research and communication techniques.

They then form a comprehensive network that acts as a conduit of information flowing between the local community and their stakeholders.

Using principles of job creation rather than research, costs are significantly lowered to enable a viable and sustainable continuous information channel. This channel feeds contextual insights on the lives people live, their communities, the ways in which they operate and the markets they can realistically sustain to a wide range of stakeholders. This is done through print, community radio, workshops, blogs, websites and events (for example forums at the Gordon Institute of Business Science).

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Why do we do this? CDI aims to address information shortages hampering the progress of under-developed areas. How does it work? By distributing information without favour or prejudice, insights become a commodity drawing appropriate attention to opportunities and risks in under-developed areas.

* CDI offers insight

into how people feel about and manage their money, general shopping behaviour, product choices, media usage, circles of influence, technology exposure and usage, as well as their views of happiness, health and education, their feelings around safety and the country, and the influence of cultures and traditions on their lives.

Africa is not a problem to be solved. It is an opportunity that looks different

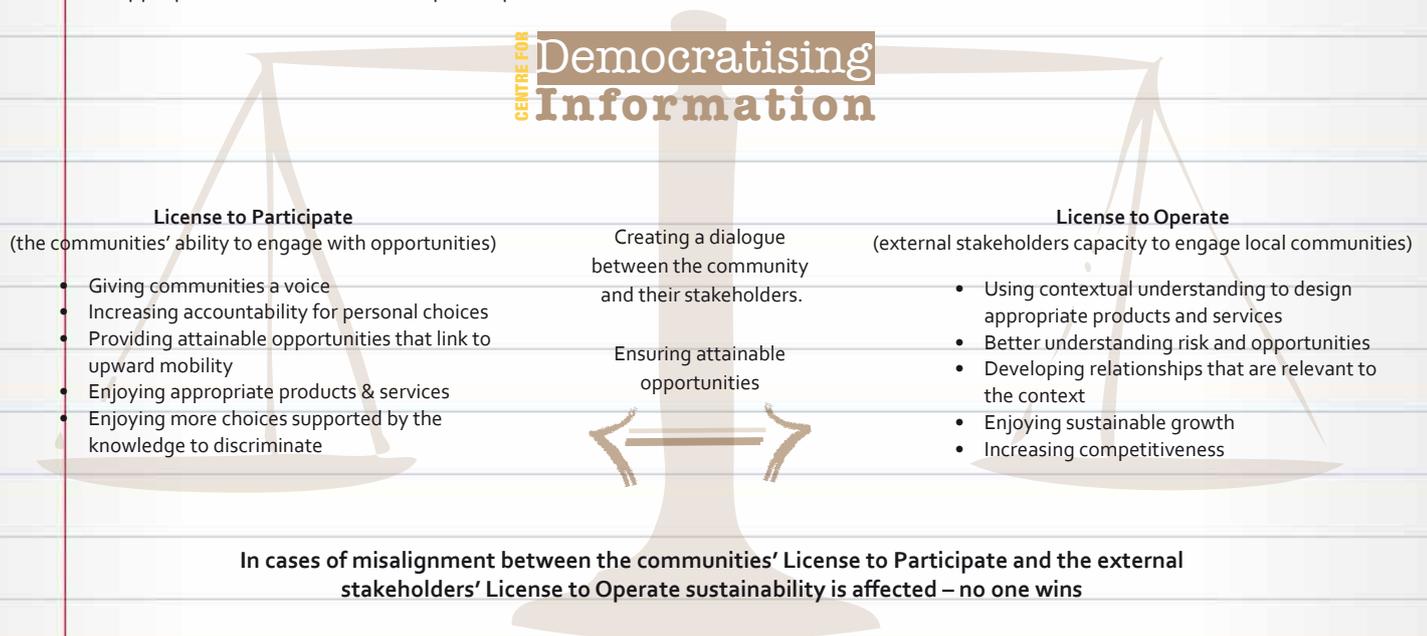
What do we want to accomplish?

We are serious about providing balanced insights that can make markets work for the poor, rather than make markets out of the poor. Success stories indicate that the countries (mostly in Latin America and East Asia) that have succeeded in lessening poverty, have focussed on adapting markets so that they provide the right conditions to allow people to participate in their own development. These conditions include access to jobs, attainable opportunities and recognising people as human first, and secondly as viable and discerning consumers of appropriate products and services. In essence, they made their markets work for the poor of their nation and statistics show that these countries now have FEWER POOR PEOPLE.

Addressing information shortages in Africa can assist in making these markets work for the poor by ensuring that the needs of under-developed communities are addressed via a balance of social and commercial intervention in a new world order where social and commercial connect. This sparks a process towards more freedom, greater equality, more participation and a more just economy.

The ultimate goal:
self-directed
development

What is this about? Via the insights obtained from the contextual studies, CDI seeks to facilitate a more appropriate, equitable balance between the License to Operate of stakeholders and the License to Participate of local communities. Insight into the context of community life assists with reality-inspired decision making ensuring relevance in the developing areas and the opportunity for communities and stakeholders to jointly mobilize around issues that benefit both parties in a more sustainable way. For example: attracting more opportunities to the community provides community members with freedom to choose what is appropriate for their own development path.



In summary: We partner with communities to generate data and make information and insights accessible to attract stakeholders' attention towards factors that stimulate upward mobility in under-developed communities

This project has been piloted over the last 4 years and detailed evidence of value is available on request. This project is governed by an expert advisory committee.

THE PILOT PROJECT

- Minimum of 500 previously unemployed community members screened and trained as field-agents
- Minimum of 5 000 quality-controlled, door-to-door survey interviews per month for 2 years - covering 6-8 metropolitan townships
- Triangulation through in-depth interviews and focus groups to unpack insights
- Integration of research insights with client strategies
- Minimum of 50 contract research projects commissioned to further explore brand relationships to themes - references available
- Sharing information (as clients allow) FREE OF CHARGE with SMMEs and NGOs

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