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Helping communities to help themselves : the case of Eleos.

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Abstract

Current literature asserts that recipients of social services in South Africa are characterised by their history, race and ethnicity (Pharoah, 2007; Scheurmans and Visser, 2005). This study attempted to either confirm or challenge such assertions, based on the experiences and strategies implemented by Eleos, a unique non- profit organisation that is entrenched in communities that are diverse. The primary aim of this study was to explore the ethos of Eleos, in its interventions to address poverty in underprivileged communities. The study drew from two groups of participants. The first sample of eight participants was drawn from the two beneficiary communities of Eleos. One project is located in Booysens West and the other in Danville. The second group of participants were key informants who were drawn from the management committee as well as representatives of the individual projects. The research instruments took the form of two different semi-structured interview schedules with open-ended questions. One for key informants and another for beneficiaries. The research design that was used in the study was the case study design and was exploratory in nature. The collected data was transcribed and analysed using 'thematic content analysis' or 'conceptual analysis'. Main findings indicated that donors seemed to impose a more radicalized view of the world, more so than the beneficiaries and organisation it self.

Key words: developmental non-profit organisation, white poverty, beneficiaries, donors