

# CHAPTER FOUR

# Through the Looking Glass

Observing and understanding organisations

“ Understanding human needs is half the job of meeting them ”

Adlai Stevenson

HI THERE! I'M KIKI...

This chapter is an eye-opener, really! Full of different “windows”, stories, and practical guidelines for helping us understand our organisations, how they grow and develop, and where we can assist if they need to change.



## LOFTY TELLS THIS STORY...

My very first contract as a young freelance organisational development facilitator, began with a phone call from the Director of a local Cape Town NGO. He called me in and told me he was experiencing difficulties with his Admin Team. In his eyes they were underperforming and he wanted me to interview them, find out what the problems were and write a report with recommendations to help “build their capacity.”

So I started by interviewing everyone to find the problems. After a while a pattern started to emerge. It seemed to me that the problem lay much more with the Director and his relationships with staff, and very little, as he had supposed, with the staff themselves. He was erratic and sometimes abusive. He sometimes shouted at them and one even burst into tears at the memory. None knew what was really expected of them and they were too afraid to ask. I could see that they felt on edge and undermined, leading to low confidence, silly mistakes, petty resistance and high turnover. I spoke to some of the field-staff and much of what they had said was confirmed.

*“It seemed that the problem lay with the Director!”*