

2008/2009
Planact
Annual Report



planact

Identity Statement

Planact is a non-governmental development organisation working mainly in the urban areas of Gauteng. The organisation is committed to local development for the poor within an integrated framework. We aim for strategic interventions in the areas of local government transformation, and community development that can result in social upliftment.

This we do through networking with like-minded organisations, training, technical advice and assistance, research and advocacy at policy levels.

Mission

Planact supports and mobilises community processes that enhance good governance at the local level to improve people's habitable environment in ways that alleviate poverty

Vision

People that lack access to habitable environments will be able to defend existing gains and advance the collective interest of the poor and marginalised.

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[CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP IN BUFFALO CITY]

A message from the chairperson

The need for development does not vanish with the attainment of democracy. The change of government and policies implores us to ensure that the gains and struggles of poor people are realised in the type of development that government brings to them.

The need for development does not vanish with the attainment of democracy.

For Planact, the issues of capacity building for the communities we work with remain a priority. In order to improve the quality of life of these communities, they need to understand the stakeholders they engage with, be empowered to articulate their needs and own the gains arising from their commitment to bring development to their communities. Their challenge of gaining secure tenure, economic vitality for their area, provision of basic health and other social services, continue as more and more people arrive in Gauteng to seek employment. The perceived slow pace for government to deliver on issues such as housing, brings disillusionment and anger to these communities. Our intervention is to assist in channelling those frustrations into viable proposals to authorities on how to partner with communities and bring about development that will be sustained over years and owned by the beneficiaries themselves. Communities continued to raise challenges to the various government spheres to deliver on promised development plans for their communities and the build up

to the national and provincial elections in the year brought this passion for development to the fore. The challenge remains the same throughout, needs that far outweigh the resources available; and government's ability to enter into partnerships with communities into what is feasible within the available resources. The luxury of government to sit and expect that communities understand the lack of resources, is slowly losing momentum and they are counting years since the onset of democracy to make their intentions known.

The scourge of HIV/AIDS continues to affect every single person within the country, either as an affected or infected person. Our partnership with local NGO's is assisting to contribute in a meaningful way to capacitating communities about issues of infection and caring for those infected and affected. We cannot remain silent about the issue as most communities we work with are poor and very vulnerable if not informed about the pandemic. Lack of information disempowers and hinders people to access services that government provides for their benefit. Our intervention is to ensure that people know what to do and thus remove the stigma attached to the disease and gather community support to deal with the issues of HIV/AIDS.

As long as there are poor communities within the country, Planact will continue to raise the flag for meeting of their needs by various stakeholders.

Our work remains incomplete if we do not promote policy development and review around issues of development. Planact will continue to be an advocate for poor people because it is only in doing so, that democracy will be a reality for every citizen within the country and especially for poor people who dream of a better quality of life every day. Our interventions are meant to ensure that the constitutional right of every citizen is realised; they are core participants in determining their future and their right to basic services is fulfilled. As long as there are poor communities within the country, Planact will continue to raise the flag for meeting of their needs by various stakeholders.

My gratitude goes to the Director and staff for continuing the good work and keeping the needs and welfare of the poor on the radar of stakeholders. To my fellow board members, the challenge grows as the year passes, and I am grateful for your support and continued commitment to make Planact a formidable force in fighting for the rights of the poor. To those who have resigned during the year, may I extend my gratitude to your energy in keeping Planact alive and wish you all of the best in your endeavours.

Thank you

Jackie Lamola
CHAIRPERSON

[BOARD MEMBERS: STEPHEN BERRISFORD, JACKIE LAMOLA, REBECCA HIMLIN; MARIE HUCHZEMEYER]





[FACILITATING PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES – COMMUNITY
BASED PLANNING LEARNING EVENT]

Executive director's message

I particularly value being part of a progressive organisation like Planact, that has a heart for the poor communities of the society. It is no surprise that Planact is viewed with high esteem among the society of NGOs as its staff members are highly committed and keen to put a lot of time into the development of the grassroots communities. The organisation's constant reviewing of challenges faced by communities, to seek solutions, also contributes to how Planact is viewed.

Thus the organisation makes an impact on the
communities and other stake holders which it is
involved with.

As I recently joined Planact, I have observed that the organisation puts a lot of effort to facilitate participatory approaches at local government, municipality level as well as the communities at large. Issues that relate to governance, leadership, community development, policy interpretation and research and evaluation take centre stage at Planact. Thus the organisation makes an impact on the communities and other stake holders which it is involved with.

The urban poor struggle to live their lives with hope and I note that as Planact we have to be exemplary and depict the "Planact Way" which has a greater emphasis of 'Making towns and cities work for people'. I realise the challenges

that are faced by the majority of the communities and how inspiring it is to be part of those who are to contribute towards a better life for other people.

During the past two months I have networked with other NGOs and seen situations of service delivery protests that have rocked the nation. This alone justifies the existence of organisations like Planact who facilitate community involvement in identifying underlying factors that need to be highlighted. Our research unit aims to bring to light the problems as well as community envisaged solutions. We appreciate that, for any interventions to be meaningful to the people, participatory research, case studies as well as feasibility studies have to be commissioned in order to get good results.

It will be an omission if I do not mention the Global Economic Crisis that has impacted negatively on NGOs, resulting in less budget support from the donor governments. We have not been spared by the outcomes of this crisis that has also led to high unemployment in the communities. It therefore stands that Planact has to engage on an aggressive fundraising strategy in order to support its programs and continue to meet the needs of the people we serve.

Lastly I have to thank all our donor partners, board members and all those who have continued in contributing towards the support of Planact's work for its sustainability.

Mpiliso Ndiweni
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PLANACT

**[MPILISO NDIWENI, RECENTLY
APPOINTED DIRECTOR]**





[PRESENTATION ON SOL PLAATJIES, 2008 AGM]

Programme manager's report

Introduction

This reporting period provided valuable opportunities for us as Planact staff together with board members in order to develop and implement strategies to enhance our work in being able to support disadvantaged communities to improve their living conditions through developmental democratic processes. We engaged in an intensive evaluation of our internal and external communication strategies as well as a strategic planning session which allowed us to explore particular factors affecting our work strategy and long term objectives and to look at ways to address these. We specifically focused on the changing socio-political and economic environment; developing new partnerships with government, development agencies, other NGOs and community based organisations; and the development of improved communication and fundraising strategies.

Our specific projects included supportive work with a range of communities largely in Gauteng but also extending our work to other provinces for short term periods. Through our community development and empowerment programme we worked with communities in Vosloorus, Sol Plaatjies, Orlando, Ivory Park, and Meriteng as well as exploratory engagements with the communities of Muldersdrift and Zandspruit. Through the participatory local governance programme, support was provided to community based organizations in Orlando, Protea South, Kliptown, Diepsloot, Ivory Park, and also to ward committee members, municipal officials and councillors in the municipalities of Tsantsabane,

Cederberg, Buffalo City, Kwa Dukuza, Kgetleng, Magareng, Johannesburg, and Steve Tshwete. Our research and evaluation, policy analysis and advocacy components have continued to inform and enhance our work with communities, also enabling us to put forward key recommendations for improved policy changes and improved implementation of policies and programmes particularly related to public participation, good governance and access to land and housing. The following paragraphs provide details of these activities within Planact's four programme areas.

Community Development and Empowerment

Objective: To assist poor, marginalized communities with the information, training and support needed to achieve improvements in the quality of life of residents. This includes facilitating access to housing with security of tenure and basic services in order to create habitable environments and sustainable communities.



Sustainable Human Settlements

Our work in this area has focused on exploring ways of supporting communities to address their needs with regards to accessing basic services and particularly with regards to housing and informal settlement upgrading.

We have been engaged in developing an approach to civic education on the broader issue of sustainable human settlements particularly on issues of housing policy and related citizen's rights. We have started the process of developing a training manual focusing on access to housing, largely focusing on the Housing Chapter in the Integrated Development Planning process as a starting point as well as an introduction to housing policy. Information will also be provided on financing arrangements such as the subsidy application process, incremental housing programmes such as the Enhanced People's Housing Process (ePHP), and informal settlement upgrading and regularisation, and social and rental housing programmes.

[REMOVAL OF TEMPORARY HOUSING IN SOL PLAATJIES]



This manual will form the basis of a training programme to develop the capacity of community members to better understand these policies and processes as well as their related rights and responsibilities so that they will be in a better position to strategically organise to access these opportunities effectively.

As part of our support to the community of Orlando in ensuring public participation in development plans for the area, Planact has been assisting Orlando's Community Development Committee (CDC) in providing input into the provincial government's housing development project focused on backyard rental accommodation in Orlando as part of the government's Twenty Priority Townships' programme (20PTP).

After many years of struggling to purchase land and then fighting for development rights through the legal process, the Muldersdrift Home Trust Foundation (MHTF) finally succeeded in having settlement developments for farm workers in the area approved. The Gauteng Development Tribunal ruled in favour of the MHTF's proposed developments in July 2008 but with conditions that only 150 housing units be developed initially. The community appealed this decision to have the total of 300 housing units approved. Planact provided support to the community by attending the tribunal hearings, contributing to media attention and also joined in on the victory celebrations and launch of the development project in Muldersdrift in October 2008 with a congratulatory address to the community, highlighting the ways in which their struggles and victories have inspired other communities. Planact also provided advice on legal support possibilities and on exploring development options such as the People's Housing Process.

Planact also provided advice on legal support possibilities and on exploring development options such as the People's Housing Process.

The Zandspruit Community Development Forum (ZCDF) approached Planact for support to ensure their participation in development plans for the area. To this end, Planact has been providing support through liaison and negotiation with the Ward Councillor and the City of Johannesburg in the development of the Urban Development Framework (UDF) for the area.

["URBAN LAND: SPACE FOR THE POOR" LEARNING EVENT]





[VOSLOORUS FOOD GARDENING COOPERATIVE]

In Sol Plaatjies, we engaged in discussing with community based organisations and the Ward Councillor of the area the possibility of bringing together community-based groups to coordinate their activities in a more supportive manner in order to better deal with development challenges facing the community.

In engaging with government directly on sustainable human settlements, the City of Johannesburg's Department of Development Planning has continued to meet with Planact to share information about the City's plans for informal settlement regularization which will involve regularization and in-situ upgrading of various informal settlements identified.

Creating Sustainable Livelihoods

The food gardening project in Vosloorus involving the Rethabile Cooperative and Masizakhe Home Based Care (MBHC) local groups continues to make considerable progress with financial support from the National Development Agency (NDA). Planact staff provided support through project management capacity building training and support for improved governance arrangements. Support was also provided for the cooperative to secure access to additional land which involved an extension to the current area. Through the project, HIV/AIDS families were able to benefit from the distribution of vegetable parcels. More than 30 families were trained on organic agriculture, technical advice and monitoring towards starting their own home food gardens with support from Greenhouse and cooperative members. The cooperative has also been engaged in broader events focused on networking support for cooperatives convened by the Gauteng Provincial Department of Agriculture and also by Ekurhuleni municipality specifically towards establishing a Cooperative Forum in the municipality to represent community based intervention in the local economy.

Through the project, HIV/AIDS families were able to benefit from the distribution of vegetable parcels.

In Sol Plaatjies, the Phumulela Worker Cooperative have continued to focus their efforts on food gardening activities and have received ongoing support from Planact in efforts to finalise their registration process with the relevant authorities.



[ORLANDO SMME WORKSHOP]

In Orlando, as part of the broader project on enhancing community participation in development initiatives for the area, Planact has supported the development of various community sub-committees focusing on local economic development initiatives. During this period, together with World Vision, Planact coordinated a workshop focusing on 2010 SMME (Small Medium Micro Enterprises) opportunities. The workshop was aimed at providing training and sharing information with formal and informal traders about possible economic opportunities during the 2010 World Cup Soccer tournament. The City of Johannesburg's LED Directorate was also invited to share their perspectives on SMME opportunities during 2010.

HIV / AIDS Community-Based Support

This period saw the implementation of the final phase of the close-out strategy of the Joburg Connections HIV/AIDS project which involved a partnership between Planact, the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the City of Johannesburg. In both Sol Plaatjies and Ivory Park the close out strategies included further mentoring support for Jozi Ihlomile volunteers and cooperative members engaged in rolling out HIV/AIDS training based on HIVSA's training modules. As part of the comprehensive evaluation of the project coordinated by the Medical Research Council, the City's Jozi Ihlomile volunteer project managers and NGO members were also brought together to discuss the possibility of establishing a project managers' forum which would enable them to share lessons learned as they continue the Jozi Ihlomile volunteer project. A key recommendation was that networks between various community groups and NGOs needs to be strengthened.

[HIV/AIDS EDUCATION IN SOL PLAATJIES]





Volunteers and cooperative members in Sol Plaatjies were also engaged in a participatory photo project facilitated by the Market Photo Workshop (MPW) and supported by Planact and the MRC. The photo project involved training in basic photography skills and culminated in a photo exhibition held in the community attended by approximately 150 community members. The aims of the photo project were to visually document experiences in the community particularly challenges experienced in order to raise awareness among community members and to generate further thinking around strategies to improve conditions. The photo project was also aimed at developing the photographic abilities of community members to open doors for further training and employment opportunities. The Market Photo Workshop offered four full-time study bursaries for community members to attend the foundation course in photography. The four participants from Sol Plaatjies who benefitted from this opportunity were expected to undertake their project work in Sol Plaatjies further supporting efforts to create a sustainable response to community challenges particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS.

Planact has continued to provide assistance to the Masizakhe Home-Based Care (MBHC) workers in Vosloorus, focusing on the nutritional aspect of the joint food gardening project supported by the NDA. The MBHC was supported in identifying HIV/AIDS affected families and orphan beneficiaries to receive portions of vegetable produce and to establish a mechanism for food distribution to these families.

Organisational Capacity Development

Through the Joburg Connections HIV/AIDS project in Sol Plaatjies, Planact provided organizational development support to the Phumulela Worker Cooperative in Sol Plaatjies and to Jozi Ihlomile volunteers particularly in terms of strategic planning and registration of the non-profit organization, iSizemela.

The Vosloorus Food Gardening Cooperative was supported through capacity building training focusing on conflict resolution; gender dynamics; financial management; project management; business administration and business planning. Support was also provided for their Annual General Meeting.

Under the leadership of Eventually Afrika t/a Activity Associates together with Soul City, Planact was engaged in a new organizational workshop methodology programme in Meriteng, Rustenburg bringing together more than 300 community representatives from different provinces to build their capacity in understanding organisational theory to address

[MPW PHOTOGRAPHY STUDENT IN ACTION, SOL PLAATJIES]





[LOCAL GOVERNANCE TRAINING WORKSHOP, BUFFALO CITY]

social challenges and development needs. Representatives from the various provinces are to implement the methodology to address social and development challenges within their respective provinces.

Capacity building for participatory local governance

Objective: To contribute to processes that will develop the capacity of organizations of civil society in poor, marginalized communities to have a strong presence in local government planning and development processes, as well as to develop the capacity of local government to engage with communities in a truly participatory, accountable and equitable way.



Ward committee governance training

Through the extended USAID-funded Local Government Support Program (LGSP), we were able to provide training workshops on how local government works and training of trainers (ToT) workshops reaching a total of 353 ward committee members in the municipalities of Kwa-dukuzi; Kgetleng; Magareng; Tsantsabane; Buffalo City and Cederberg. In addition, Planact also participated in a Ward Committee Conference in Kwa-dukuzi municipality in November 2008.

[LOCAL GOVERNANCE TRAINING WORKSHOP, CEDERBERG]



Upon direct request from municipalities, ward committee induction workshops were facilitated in the four regions of the City of Johannesburg and also in Steve Tshwete municipalities reaching a total of 748 ward committee members. This included a Ward Committee conference in Steve Tshwete Municipality where Planact was invited to provide input on local government legislation and related roles and responsibilities.

Various community-based training workshops on governance issues (Local Government, Ward Committee Induction Training; Integrated Development Planning (IDPs), Housing Chapter, Local Government Legislation and Local Government Performance Monitoring (KPI /KPAs) were held during the reporting period reaching a total of 162 community members from Protea South; Kliptown; Orlando; Diepsloot; and Ivory Park.

Enhancing public participation in Orlando

In terms of longer term projects to facilitate engagement between communities and government, Planact continued to provide support to the community of Orlando (also extended to the neighbouring Noordgesig area). The support focuses on enhancing public participation in development initiatives in the area initially motivated by 2010 World Cup developments. During this reporting period, the Community Development Committee (CDC) was established to coordinate the community's participation in development plans and to liaise with relevant government departments, municipal officials as well as government appointed agencies such as the Johannesburg Development Agency. Various sub-committees were also established focusing on local economic development; tourism and heritage; housing opportunities; and community events and campaigns. A community workshop brought various government departments to the area to present their plans for the community. Planact provided further support for a strategic three-year planning workshop for the CDC and a process of ward based planning with support from the Good Governance Learning Network which assisted community members to provide input into the Urban Development Framework (UDF) for the area. Through the structure of the CDC, the community of Orlando was invited to make input into the City of Johannesburg's by-laws process for 2010.

[ORLANDO SMME WORKSHOP]





**[PROVINCIAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
FRAMEWORK - PROJECT TEAM MEETING]**

Evaluating Public Participation in Gauteng municipalities – towards a Provincial Framework

During this reporting period, Planact (as lead partner) and Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) were appointed by the Gauteng Department of Local Government (DLG) to develop a Public Participation Framework for the Gauteng Province. An evaluation of the participation practices of 14 municipalities was conducted and a draft public participation framework was developed including key actions and recommendations for municipalities and the provincial departments. We would like to acknowledge the research management support for this project provided by independent consultant, Lynelle John.

Research and Evaluation

Objective: To improve our intervention strategies and contribute to a continuous learning process within our communities, our staff, and within the broader networks to which Planact is affiliated.



Documenting Planact's history over 20 years

A major achievement during this period was producing a comprehensive publication of Planact's history over a twenty year period entitled, "Making Towns and Cities Work for People: Planact in South Africa:1985-2005. This publication was made possible through a long term process that involved contributions from past staff members, board members,

[PLANACT'S HISTORY CHAPTER AUTHOR - LAUREN ROYSTON]





[BOOK LAUNCH]

fundors, community partners and other NGOs. These contributions were shared and debated at Planact's 20-year anniversary conference culminating in the publication of a collection of 17 articles with the content broadly focusing on Planact's organisational context; democratisation and local government; and land, housing and services. We are indebted to the authors of these articles and to our former director, Rebecca Himlin, for overseeing the successful completion of this process including the launch of the publication held in partnership with the School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University. As indicated in Rebecca's preface, this publication allows us the opportunity "to reach into our past in order to reinforce the key principles and values that have enabled Planact to survive and continue to make a contribution to the development of disadvantaged communities".



NGO Advocacy in the People's Housing Process (PHP)

For a long time, our reports have referred to Planact's involvement in the PHP reference group advocating for improvements in policy and implementation. This period saw the successful completion and publication of the documentation of this process of civil society advocacy which contributed to the approval of a new policy in July 2008 – the Enhanced People's Housing Process (ePHP). Valuable lessons are drawn for NGOs, government and other stakeholders in terms of advocacy and policy dialogue processes. Our gratitude goes to Susan Carey for documenting this process, and to Rooftops Canada and the Good Governance Learning

Network (GGLN) for contributing towards producing this document titled, "Success at a Price: How NGO advocacy led to change in South Africa's People's Housing Process".

Good Governance Survey

Together with Afesis-Corplan, Planact was involved in the implementation of the Good Governance Survey (GGS) in five local municipalities in Ehlanzeni District Municipality (Mpumalanga Province) to investigate public perceptions of governance practices in the municipalities. Planact staff played a lead role in the on-site activities including planning



[ACTION RESEARCH REFLECTION WORKSHOP ON PARTICIPATION]

with municipal officials; awareness raising road-shows to municipalities; training and supervising local fieldworkers; conducting interviews for the actual survey with over 1300 respondents; and presenting the key findings to a range of stakeholders.

Research on participation and development

Planact has embarked on a major research project to investigate participation and development from the perspective of the poor through a process evaluation component and an action research process considering a range of case studies. The action research component involves two case studies where Planact has played a direct supportive role – Vosloorus and Orlando. The research process involves in-depth discussions with community members, government representatives, and NGOs involved in the projects to explore aspects of community participation in development planning at the level of these projects and in the public sphere and will also seek to implement recommendations on how to improve participation through these projects. This is a long term project continuing until February 2010 with financial support from the Ford Foundation and research support by Stephen Greenberg and Claire Benit-Gbaffou.

Policy Analysis and Advocacy

Objective: To impact government policy in the interests of poor, disadvantaged sectors of the population, through direct engagement with policy making processes at local, provincial and national levels, and contributing results of relevant research to decision-makers.



Community-based advocacy on urban development

Planact hosted a community education and advocacy learning event on the topic "Urban land: Space for the poor in the city" in September 2008 with funding secured from the GGLN. The event was aimed at sharing findings of the research study on Land Management and Democratic Governance (Planact and Wits University, 2007) with community members and further developing the capacity of community members to engage in advocacy strategies for more progressive land management practices and democratic governance. The City of Johannesburg's Department of Planning and Development was represented at the event with a presentation on the situation and plans around the City's development plans to upgrade and regularize some of the informal settlements in the city. Community representatives from Diepsloot, Ivory Park, Kliptown, Muldersdrift, Protea South, SolPlaatjies, Thembelihle and Zandspruit as well as GGLN representatives participated in the event.



[SOL PLAATJIES COMMUNITY MEETING]

Advocacy for improved health facilities in Sol Plaatjies

The community of Sol Plaatjies was assisted in their advocacy attempts for better access to health facilities particularly to have the clinic re-opened. The clinic had been closed largely due to housing developments in the area pointing to poor coordination between government departments. The clinic had been closed for four months without consultation with community members. Together with representatives of the Jozi Ihlomile volunteers taking this process forward, Planact provided support in submitting a petition signed by approximately 800 community members to relevant officials in the City of Johannesburg's Health Department and those serving on health and housing portfolio committees. Planact also supported the community representative in discussion with the Regional Health Department assigned to deal with the matter. As a result, the clinic was re-opened in August this year.

The clinic had been closed largely due to housing developments in the area pointing to poor coordination between government departments.

Input on government policy

As part of the People's Housing Process (PHP) reference group made up of various NGOs and CBOs, Planact has continued to advocate for more progressive changes to the PHP policy. As a result, the new policy – the Enhanced People's Housing Policy (ePHP) – was approved in July 2008. We have since been involved in providing input into the implementation guidelines for the new policy forming part of specific task teams set up by the National Department of Housing.

**[URBAN LAND ADVOCACY
LEARNING EVENT]**





[COMMUNITY BASED PLANNING LEARNING EVENT]

The City of Johannesburg's Department of Development Planning has continued to engage Planact for input and sharing on development initiatives such as community based planning; informal settlement regularization and upgrading; and spatial development planning. Planact also attended the City's Stakeholders Forum held at NASREC to get input from residents and organizations on service delivery progress and the Integrated Development Plan.

Local and international networking and advocacy opportunities

Planact staff engaged in a number of Good Governance Learning Network (GGLN) related activities which included representing the GGLN at the DPLG's roundtable discussion on Multilingualism in Local Government; participating in regional learning events hosted by Afesis-Corplan and The Project for Conflict Resolution and Development (PCRD) focused on municipal transparency and pro-poor information dissemination; and participating in the Logolink Southern Africa Roundtable exploring the state of citizen participation in local governance in the region.

With regards to our international networking membership with Habitat International Coalition (HIC), Planact's director was invited to participate in the African networking workshop in Ethiopia in May 2008. The workshop attempted to strengthen networking among HIC members across Africa to learn from each other and to advocate on a larger scale.

[REGIONAL HIV/AIDS & HOUSING WORKSHOP, KENYA]



Planact has also been building a continuous relationship with Urban Landmark by participating actively in a number of their events focusing on access to urban land by the poor, informal settlements upgrading, land rights and property markets, and debates on the second economy.

During this period, Planact has also become more involved in the activities of a core group of NGOs led by Afesis-Corplan and supported by Urban Landmark to develop strategies towards promoting the 'LANDfirst' concept which focuses on managed land settlement by making land available for the poor as the basis for incremental settlement development.

On the issue of informal settlement upgrading, the School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University together with *Abahlali baseMjondolo* and Development Action Group (DAG) organized a roundtable discussion where participants including Planact staff were able to share experiences and lessons learnt in informal settlement upgrading and relocations/evictions; to review national policies applicable to informal settlements; and to network with other role players including communities, government officials, NGOs, academics, lawyers and consultants involved in informal settlement upgrading.

Together with the Medical Research Council (MRC), we were able to share the evaluation findings of the Joburg Connections HIV/AIDs Project with a range of stakeholders at a seminar hosted by the MRC focusing on Local Government, HIV/AIDS and Informal Settlements.

Other events and activities in which Planact participated include the following:

- The Poverty Hearings in Johannesburg organized by the South African Council of Churches in collaboration with SPII (Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute) - Planact was invited to do a presentation at the event and facilitated the participation of community members from Kliptown, Diepsloot, Ivory Park, Zandspruit, Protea South, Thembelihle and Vosloorus.
- Planact was invited to do a presentation on the land management and democratic governance research study (2007) particularly focusing on the Diepsloot case study for the Global Studio Orientation Symposium (an international student programme coordinated by the University of Sydney)

**[INFORMAL SETTLEMENT REGULARIZATION
COURSE, IHS, ROTTERDAM]**





**[REGIONAL HIV/AIDS & HOUSING
WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, KENYA]**

- The World Bank Conference on Land and Spatial Development
- The HIVOS Consultative Workshop focused on their Knowledge Building Programme in Sub-Saharan African countries
- The Informal Settlements Indaba organized by the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) focusing on the struggle for land where Planact's researcher was invited to do a presentation on our recent Land Management and Democratic Governance Research Study.

Planact staff have also been able to develop key skills through the following events which served the dual purpose of capacity building and networking opportunities.

- The Regional HIV/AIDS workshop in Kenya was organised by Rooftops Canada in February 2009 to share insights gained from an assessment of HIV/AIDS work in the region conducted in September 2008 and to further share experiences from organizations involved in developing and supporting community based strategies to HIV/AIDS. Planact's senior project officer participated in the event.
- IDASA and CIVICUS jointly organised and hosted a Peer Learning Event on Participatory Governance in December 2008. The event brought together government and civil society representatives from the SADC region including Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe with the objective of enhancing the understanding and capacity of participatory governance practices and practitioners in Southern Africa. Planact was represented at the event by the Director.
- The Institute of Housing Studies at Erasmus University in Rotterdam hosted a one month course on Land Management and Informal Settlement Regularisation during August 2008. A sponsorship from Cordaid allowed for the participation of Planact's programme manager. The course focused on developing an understanding of the underlying causes of informality and acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to design programmes and influence policies in this regard. This learning was further facilitated by a sharing of the experiences of different countries as presented by participants from fourteen different countries.

Acknowledgements

As staff members, we wish to take this opportunity to also thank our student interns and volunteers who supported our work during this period including students from the School of Architecture and Planning at Wits University (Boitumelo Matlatla and Sazi Maqokolo) as well as Victor Tshikotshi in his personal capacity; the International Human Rights Exchange Programme at Wits University (Morwa Kgoroba and Julia Cohen); Devanne Brookins from Columbia University in the US; and from the volunteer placement agency - Visions in Action (Rebecca Schorr from the US).

We thank the Market Photo Workshop students from Sol Plaatjies for their photography services including some of the photos used in this report

We also wish to acknowledge the support of all our project partners and consultants for their contributions to our work. Finally we thank the board members for their guidance and support, and in particular we thank our former director, Rebecca Himlin, for her leadership and dedication and commitment to Planact's work over the years.

**[STAFF AND INTERNS,
DIRECTOR'S FAREWELL]**



[MOSAIC OF STAFF SYMBOLS]





[PROVINCIAL PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
FRAMEWORK – TEAM ENGAGEMENT]

Perspectives

Thoughts on Meaningful Engagement from an NGO perspective

By Becky Himlin

The concept of 'meaningful engagement' is actually at the heart of what NGOs like Planact are working to achieve, and yet it is an elusive concept, perhaps one that is under-appreciated in a society in which is under pressure for the quick fix in the face of serious delivery challenges and under-development. It is often easiest to identify by its absence, but what goes into making its presence possible? One thing for certain, there is no set formula, no handbook, no technical solution that can guarantee results in the area of meaningful engagement and there is a wide spectrum of possible circumstances that might be considered to fit the description. Fundamentally, it's about human communication, as difficult and coded and messy a business as any you can think of. And then layer that with the imperatives of creating a democratic society, which starting point is the belief in self-determination-- that we all have the right to influence the decisions that affect our lives, that we all have the responsibility to contribute to the development of a society in which all can realize their potential.

So let's first think about the question, when does the need for 'engagement' arise, where engagement is defined as direct interaction between citizens and their government? Apart from elections, in which the government is constituted, the next obvious choice is in the formulation of policies, plans and programmes

that will influence the decisions that are made and the opportunities that are created for improvements in the way society functions. But when does 'engagement' actually often arise?In the context of contestation or conflict about decisions that have been made that are perceived by a particular group to negatively affect their opportunities, aspirations, and even means for survival. Whereas the first circumstance may appear somewhat removed from the daily lives and experiences of most people, the second is a case where the crisis is evident and demands a resolution.

But is a situation of conflict the best circumstance in which meaningful engagement can be achieved? Why weren't people interested when the government was drawing up their plans and filing notices for public comment? Why are they objecting now that they find that the logical conclusion to those plans puts them at a disadvantage? How can they suddenly expect government to go back to the drawing board and make a renewed effort to involve them in decision-making? And doesn't government have the final authority, anyway, and the responsibility for doing what's best in the 'public interest' ?

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These kinds of questions commonly characterize defensive reactions by decision-makers when it is apparent that engagement has NOT been meaningful, though it must be acknowledged that at times difficult decisions are necessary. But to begin to think of engagement in positive terms, as a starting point, it may be useful to frame a certain set of principles or an orientation that may be helpful in creating the conditions for meaningful engagement, at any point in which the need for engagement might arise.

1. The first principle is that, in order to be meaningful, the opportunity for engagement must always exist; communication channels must be open.
2. Engagement is not one-way communication, it is a series of conversations during which both parties need to be able to listen and endeavor to understand the points of view presented.
3. While it is difficult in a situation of conflict to facilitate a situation in which this form of engagement is immediately possible, in many cases the conflict itself can be viewed as the opportunity that ultimately makes it possible. In other words, conflict can be an integral part of an eventual solution, and *avoidance* of conflict is not what the focus should be, the focus should be on what is the conflict telling us about the issues and consequences involved, and therefore the considerations that need to be taken into account to make the best decision possible.
4. Inclusion is an important principle for meaningful engagement. If only select groups or individuals are aware of the engagement process, or certain groups are specifically excluded from it, despite the fact that the issues affect them, it cannot be said to be meaningful—or practical, as problems may occur at a later stage that subvert any agreements reached.
5. Another principle is that it is necessary for government decision-makers to anticipate



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the various advantages and disadvantages of a course of action for the various groups that have an interest in its outcome—in fact, it would be irresponsible not to do so; but this ‘analysis’ does not take the place of a PROCESS in which the various citizen groups are part of developing and communicating their own perspectives on the issues. Enough *time* for such a process to take place, therefore, is imperative. It is often more time consuming in the long run to neglect the importance of this process.

6. Meaningful engagement depends on access to relevant information—this, too, is not a one-way (government to community) process. Much of a process of engagement is actually concerned with establishing an information base about the factors and conditions that should or could affect the decision, and communities and citizens often have relevant information that would otherwise not come to light. It is also important that the relevant information is transparently available to all involved.
7. Meaningful engagement requires that it must be possible for affected citizens to Influence a decision, even after it is already technically ‘made,’ particularly if the engagement leading to the decision has NOT been meaningful as so far defined. The correct orientation to parties involved in meaningful engagement is that alternatives are always possible.
8. For engagement to be meaningful, it needs to be effectively channeled to those parties that CAN actually make decisions on the issue. Nothing is more de-motivating (for ALL parties involved) than wasting time on a process of engagement where no one is able to take responsibility for making things happen.

What does all this have to do with an NGO?

A community facilitator, of the kind of that Planact endeavors to produce, is exactly the ingredient that can help create the conditions for meaningful engagement. A third party that does not have a direct interest in the outcome, but which is guided by principles and practices such as those described above, as well as experienced in facilitating processes of engagement at community level, can be the difference that makes the process of engagement between communities and government meaningful or not.

However, the community facilitator must also be clear about his or her role and honest about the biases that they bring to the process—no one is entirely neutral or ‘objective’ but that does not diminish the important role that the skilled facilitator can play in supporting a process of communication that can lead to a solution or plan of action that gains widespread support. It is also true that such a facilitator may NOT be appropriate in all cases. But where it may make a difference, a critical factor in that success is the extent to which the facilitator can make space for reflection by the various parties about what has happened and why it is happening, what the quality of the participation has been and what has influenced it, and what is required in order to correct or enhance a process of engagement. In other words, TALK about the process in a directed way.

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Planact is involved in just such a process in some of the sites in which its community facilitators are involved, which is informed by the principles of *action research*. We felt it was necessary to become more *conscious and explicit* about what the various views or interpretations of actions or events have been, particularly as they affect the quality of participation, and to individually and collectively discuss these and determine what these mean for a future course of action. The process thus far (which has taken place in a period of less than a year), has yielded information and perspectives that could otherwise have remained hidden, and has directly influenced how Planact has interacted with the communities concerned. In addition to this action research, several case studies focusing on participation, where Planact is not involved, are being undertaken. We hope to share the results of this process, which is being extensively documented, to make a contribution to knowledge on this contentious issue of just what constitutes meaningful engagement.

**[PLANACT COMMUNITY
FACILITATOR, AGM 2008]**





Financials

Planact

(Association incorporated under section 21)

(Registration number 1994/001660/08)

Annual Financial Statement for the year ended 31 March 2009

Balance sheet

	Notes	2009 R	2008 R
Assets			
Non-Current Assets			
Equipment	2	41 414	44 431
Current assets			
Trade and other receivables		642 715	246 783
Cash and cash equivalents	3	1 234 588	1 118 653
		<u>1 877 303</u>	<u>1 365 436</u>
Total assets		<u>1 918 717</u>	<u>1 409 867</u>
Equity and liabilities			
Equity			
Growth and development fund		687 891	638 382
Operating funds		327 913	177 297
Retrenchment reserve		308 413	256 395
		<u>1 324 217</u>	<u>1 072 074</u>
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables		203 165	144 490
Deferred grant income	4	275 776	139 645
Bank overdraft	3	115 559	53 658
		<u>594 500</u>	<u>337 793</u>
Total equity and liabilities		<u>1 918 717</u>	<u>1 409 867</u>

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Annual Financial Statement for the year ended 31 March 2009

Detailed income statement

	Note	2009 R	2008 R
Revenue			
Grants received	5	3 292 883	3 134 414
Sundry income		31 746	7 573
Training, facilitation and research		1 116 074	743 156
		<u>4 440 703</u>	<u>3 885 143</u>
Other income			
Interest received	7	199 060	136 008
Total income		<u>4 639 763</u>	<u>4 021 151</u>
Operating expenses			
Accounting fees		2 384	514
Administration costs		38 769	22 460
Advertising and publicity		11 722	658
Affiliation fees		975	532
Annual report		31 246	30 063
Auditors remuneration	9	37 000	39 700
Bank charges		14 736	12 467
Computer expenses		52 012	44 972
Conferences, meetings and workshops		94 087	129 474
Consultants' fees		320 546	507 597
Depreciation		32 495	29 452
Employee costs		2 749 240	2 426 413
Group life insurance		55 969	51 277
Insurance		34 897	32 327
Lease rentals on operating lease		269 609	224 024
Legal expenses		26 020	13 462
Materials development and printing		159 702	145 207
Monitoring and evaluations		-	21 496
NDA project		124 899	46 743
Repairs and maintenance		1 112	5 241
Resources		2 430	-
Staff development		23 917	28 020
Stationery, postage and photocopying		23 375	33 638
Subscriptions		4 281	3 098
Telephone, fax and e-mail		34 625	34 496
Travel		293 590	228 665
		<u>4 439 638</u>	<u>4 111 996</u>
Profit (loss) for the year		<u>200 125</u>	<u>(90,845)</u>

The full Auditors report is available at Planact's offices

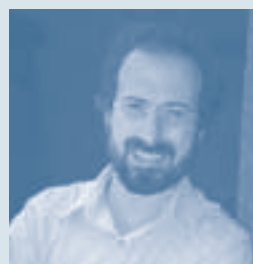
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for change to realize a just society*

**Katholische Zentralstelle
für Entwicklungshilfe e.V.**



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