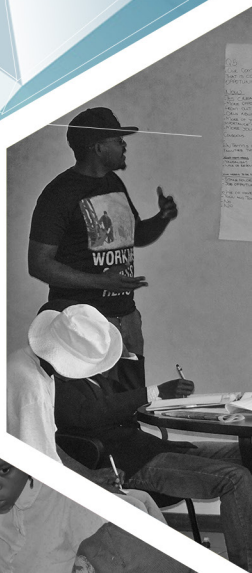
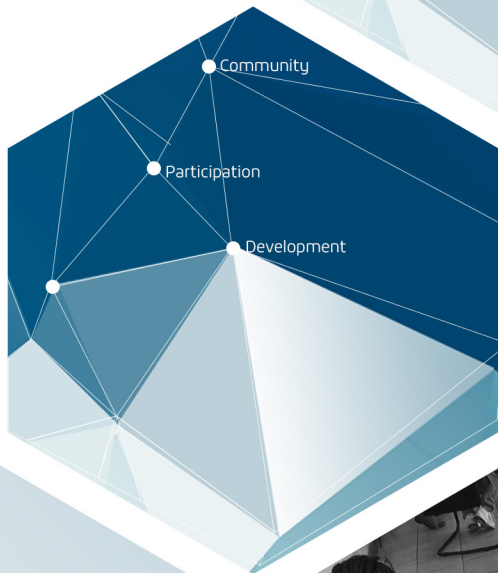


# FROM VIOLENT PROTESTS TO ENGAGEMENTS

## PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN LEANDRA URBAN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



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*Making towns & cities work for people*

Nomcebo Dlamini, Skhumbuzo Mtshali and Hloniphile Simelane

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Participatory Process in Leandra  
Urban Development Framework

Nomcebo Dlamini, Skhumbuzo Mtshali and Hloniphile Simelane

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## PREFACE

Planact is confident that the case study on participatory planning processes in Leandra informal settlement will enhance practitioners' appreciation of community involvement in projects. It will also encourage other communities to exercise their right to participate in projects and shape the future of urban development and services. The case study provides valuable lessons that can be applied in other local settings and is an important contribution to development practice and urban planning.

The audience for the case study also includes marginalised communities confronted with poor service delivery and governance. The term informal settlement is used in this document to refer to an unplanned area which lacks adequate basic services. The case study is also designed for use by other non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations and local municipalities committed to improving citizen involvement in local governance and urban planning.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Planact thanks the residents of Leandra informal settlements for being receptive to Planact's interventions and engagements with local governance issues affecting their lives. Our appreciation also goes to the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit for funding the participatory governance programme implemented in Leandra informal settlement.

Planact furthermore extends gratitude to Leandra Community Centre (LCC) and Leandra community.

The authors also acknowledge the comments of Planact staff member Mike Makwela with regard to the chronology of events and factual accuracy.



## 1. AN OVERVIEW

Planact has been promoting participatory planning approaches since the establishment of the organisation in 1985. Leandra community is one of the communities in Mpumalanga province that have already benefited from the participatory planning approach promoted by Planact under its Integrated Human Settlement Programme. Over the years, the organisation has developed innovative participatory mechanisms from community-based planning to participatory budgeting, training on organisational development and specialised support of local community-based organisations (CBOs). Participation therefore underpins Planact's three programmes: participatory governance, Integrated Human Settlement and Community Economic Development. Planact's integrated human settlement programme promotes a participatory planning approach which allows residents to design their own settlements with minimal guidance from professional planners. The participatory approach is based on the premise that communities know what they need and should be deeply involved in the planning process to prepare a settlement design that caters for their needs. In all the informal settlements where programmes are executed and which lack adequate basic services (water, electricity and proper sanitation) and tenure security, Planact encourages collaboration between communities and municipalities for basic service delivery.

The non-governmental organisation provides social facilitation which is an intervention methodology comprising different components: establishment of community structures, capacity building on municipal processes and administrative procedures, and mentoring. Participatory planning therefore serves as an advanced approach of community involvement in the development of their settlements.

## 2. A SUMMARY OF THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Participation can be considered a prerequisite for development in contemporary urban planning. It encourages solutions which respond to the priorities and needs of affected individuals and marginalised communities, thus, refraining from a technocratic-driven approach. It is therefore a departure from planning for the people to planning with the people (Carmon and Fainstein 2013). Chapter 2 of the Constitution (1996) – Sections 151(1) (e), 152 and 195(e) – stipulates participatory requirements in South Africa. The benefits of a participatory development planning process have been extensively documented. In urban development, participation enables residents to voice their needs to local officials and brings government closer to the people. It also enable residents to form cooperative partnerships with diverse stakeholders where they are able to identify, own and manage the outcomes of decisions directly

impacting on their lives and settlements (The Housing Development Agency, 2015). Participation gives communities a voice which leads to better quality decision-making and programmes that are relevant to their needs. Planact (2016, p.20) argues that ‘voice, impact and accountability are what citizens seek generally in the process of participation with government’. This suggests that citizens desire engagements that influence the decision-making process and bring change to development programmes implemented at community level. Participation is also meant to change existing relationships between the various actors and sectors that operate at the local level (Craig 1995). The relationship between the statutory sector, social partner sector and community sector is a factor that determines their successful co-operation.

Community participation is not the same as consultation (Kornienko 2014, Burns et al 2004 and Watson 2002). Many organisations often claim to have a community participation strategy when they only have a consultation strategy (Burns et al 2004). Community participation means that communities are playing an active part and have a significant degree of power and influence. It is generally observed that participation brings inclusivity of marginalised communities in political and economic processes. Christopher Alexander (1985) observes that participation is “inherently good” and that it brings people together in creating and making decisions about their environment.

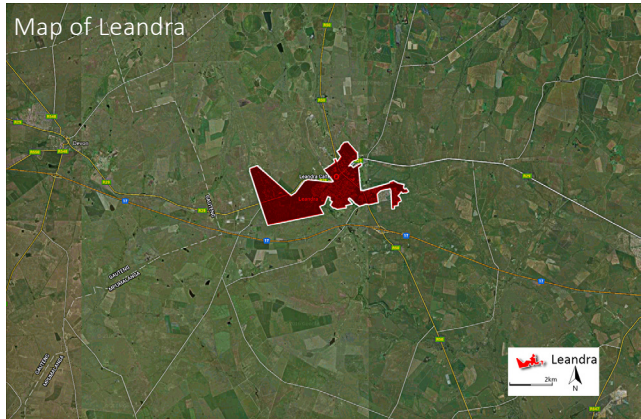
Planact’s programmes encourage participatory process in governance and housing settlements. Planact further facilitates participatory partnerships with the public and private stakeholders, as well as communities and their representatives in different informal settlements to build consensus and obtain development outcomes with inputs from all pertinent stakeholders. The difficult in getting people to participate in their own development demands strategies to mobilise them (Jiwane 2015). Mobilisation is therefore an important component of Planact’s programmes. Under the Governance Support Programme (GSP), which was coordinated by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Planact partnered with Leandra Community Centre (LCC) to mobilise and guide the community in informal settlement upgrading.

### 3. THE CASE STUDY: LEANDRA INFORMAL SETTLEMENT

This case study covers the experiences of Leandra community during process of formulating an Urban Development Framework (participatory planning) which commenced in 2010 to 2014 guided by Planact's Urban Planners. It discusses the different stages that were undertaken and reveals the opportunities identified by the community during the process.

#### Profile of Leandra

Leandra is a small semi-rural agricultural town in Gert Sibande District Municipality in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa. The township is comprised of the former Eendrag and Leslie communities, and the name is made of the two words, Leslie and Eendrag. Leandra has a population of



approximately 80 000 residents, it is mostly inhabited by black Africans and the dominant language is Zulu. It is located 45 kilometres east of a small town called Springs, approximately an hour's drive from Johannesburg. In terms of demarcation, it falls within Govan Mbeki Municipality which has 32 wards, and four of these wards make up Leandra (wards 1, 2, 3 and 6). The community is characterised by a high unemployment rate as a result of job scarcity and poor economic infrastructure. Those who are employed mainly provide labour for the surrounding mines and power stations. The community has inadequate access to proper schools and other key amenities.

This community was established in 1904 by people coming from different farms around the area and in 1909 black people were issued with freehold titles by the government. In 1970, the land was expropriated by the government and residents were instructed to relocate to a homeland called KwaNdebele. Due to discontent, the community started the Leandra Action Committee (LAC) which was opposed to the forced removals and one of the mandates of the LAC was to mobilise the community and negotiate with the government.

The community operated on a traditional system ruled by three chiefs. According to Haysom (1986), there were several leaders who were active within the community.



Chief Ampie Mayisa was one of the strong traditional chiefs who was later killed by vigilante groups who wanted to destabilise the community. After his death and the subsequent attacks on other leaders, including the burning of Mr Nkabinde's house (the former Ward Councillor in Govan Mbeki Municipality for Ward 2), the LAC collapsed. Despite these events, the struggle continued through the work of different formations such as the Leandra Community Centre (LCC).

The LCC is a non-governmental organisation that provides paralegal advice/human rights awareness, home-based care and youth programmes to the residents of Leandra. In the 1990s the community had a town centre and farms that were a source of employment. However, in the mid-2000s most factories, farms and the railway line closed down, causing stagnation in the economy of the town. However, the empty dilapidated structures show that there was once an economic vitality which has since diminished.

### **Before involvement with Planact: How Leandra community responded to lack of service delivery**

For many years Leandra community has been suffering from economic, environmental, social and spatial challenges. At a regional scale, like other lagging municipalities, Mpumalanga is faced with developmental challenges coupled with socioeconomic problems such as unemployment, job creation, education, HIV prevalence, basic service delivery, inequality, poverty, economic growth, sectorial dependency and economic distribution.

Disgruntled with the above conditions, in 2010 the community of Leandra embarked on service delivery protests, accusing the local municipality of failing to provide basic services to the community and include them in decisions on service delivery. The protests became violent and the protesters burnt some of the Municipal Council's offices: Figure 1 shows the flames from the offices.



**Figure1:** flames from the municipal council's offices. Ever since 2010 there has been discontent amongst the community members, and this has culminated in protests. Figures 2 illustrates this.



**Figure2:** Protesters barricade roads due to poor service delivery in Leandra. Source: (Borain, 2014). The picture to the left shows barricading of roads by the discontented protesters. This exercise lasted for a week, and cars could not pass through. In many ways, the above pictures reflect the high level of dissatisfaction with service delivery and some of the negative effects.

Concerned with the violent protests, the LCC initiated a dialogue between the community and the municipality, aimed at improving social cohesion and communication between the municipality and local citizens. LCC requested Planact to provide facilitation to improve meaningful public participation in Leandra. The social facilitation consisted of strengthening community-based organisations to be able to effectively influence local democracy and local development planning. The GIZ provided financial support to the process. As part of the social facilitation process, Planact supported the compilation of the urban development framework from 2013 until 2014.

## 4. Initiating the participatory process in Leandra and its objectives

### The role of Planact

The support which Planact offered to the community of Leandra rested on three primary objectives. Firstly, it contributed to improved meaningful public participation through strengthening community-based organisations to be able to effectively influence local democracy and local development planning. This is important because communities have to learn about alternative methods of engaging the state and refrain from using the conventional ones which are sometimes destructive. Secondly, coordinating the formation of a capacitated and multi-stakeholder coordinating representative forum. This forum, which was made up of various formations such as women, youth and businesses, was responsible for the overall operation of the project and had to engage with the local municipality. Thirdly and lastly, it was responsible for compilation of a development urban framework for the area which the local government would acknowledge and implement. This was a joint process between the community structures and the local municipality. Among the key responsibilities were prioritisation of development activities and understanding the outcome of these activities.

## The different stages of the participatory process

The next section discusses how Planact encouraged the involvement of the residents of Leandra in the development process. Planact pursued different stages including the establishment of the coordinating representative forum, situational analysis and mapping of the settlement layout plan. Overall, this process demonstrates that it is possible to involve communities in all stages of the development process. Please see Figure 3 below.

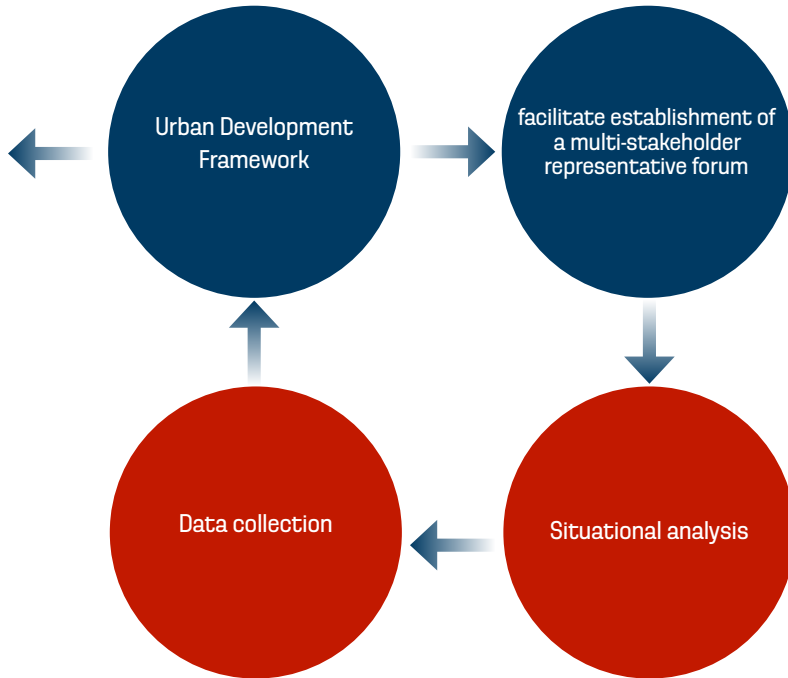


Figure 3: Stages of the development process

### Stage 1: Coordinating the representative forum (Siqalile Development Forum)

The first step, as indicated in the previous section, was to establish a coordinating representative forum, the Siqalile Development Forum (SDF). The process of establishing a representative forum took into consideration the following aspects:

- The need for equal representation of organisations to avoid a situation where one structure dominates the coordinating forum and outcomes unequally represent the interests of all stakeholders and parties.
- The need for gender and age balance, especially the involvement of women

and the youth.

- Reporting and feedback mechanisms to avoid the loss of information, miscommunication between members of the forum or the reporting of information through unrecognised channels.
- A long-term development strategy clearly formulated and stated in the Urban Development Framework.
- The vision and mission had to capture the desire for community members to live in a habitable environment.
- A discussion on institutional management and sustainability of the forum, and the role of the LCC in supporting the SDF.

## **Stage 2:** Situational analysis

One of the preliminary activities in the development process is the undertaking of a situational analysis (Philip, 1998). Accordingly, the SDF conducted a situational analysis of the area. The aim of the analysis was to understand the multi-dimensional nature of the community including poverty, condition of the infrastructure, gender-based violence, unemployment, skills gaps, health issues, crime and socio-economic dynamics in the community. The SDF planned and conducted a number of capacity-building workshops which included the following themes:

- Municipal budget process
- Integrated development plan
- Performance management system
- Public participation methodologies
- Lobbying and advocacy strategies
- Organizational development.

At this stage the forum was able to operate with minimum support from Planact. Fieldwork, which included a transect walk (walkabout) in the neighbourhood, exposed the team to a number of economic, environmental, social and spatial challenges facing Leandra.

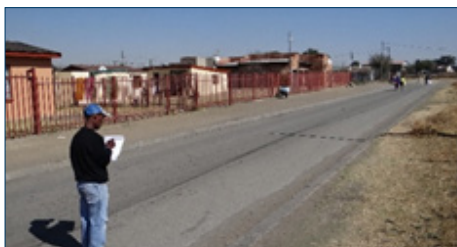


Figure 4 and Figure 5: Transect walk with Squalile members and Planact representatives.

Like most peri-urban areas, Leandra has a high rate of unemployment. The participants discussed this phenomenon. They asked why this was the case when previous studies showed that Leandra is located around mines and close to the towns of Secunda and Springs. Most of the residents of Leandra are unemployed, only a few are employed locally in Secunda or are self-employed. The second identified challenge is the housing backlog in Leandra, and to date this remains a huge problem. The existing housing typology in Leandra is varied. The dominant housing typology mainly consists of zinc and bricks. The brick houses are mostly RDP houses which in most cases have been extended by families either with brick layering or corrugated iron, usually to accommodate members of the extended families. Figures 5, 7 and 8 show different housing typologies and use of materials.



Figure 6: Wood structure



Figure 7: Brick houses



Figure 8: School

## 5. Methodology: the data collection methods used in Leandra's participatory process

### Visual observation through a walkabout

Visual observation is a critical method of qualitative analysis which is used to understand a research object or phenomenon in its natural setting (Kawulich, 2005). Prolonged engagement with the environment or locale usually yields more accurate results. The transect walk was mainly to give a better understanding of the spatial

condition of Leslie Township which is located in Leandra and also to be able to interact at a personal level with the residents of Leandra. The focus was primarily on the environmental and infrastructure aspects of the area. Collection of data took place on the 4th – 5th of September 2013, when the Planact team took part in a walkabout with the LCC team to gather information about the area of Leslie Township. The preliminary key information was intended to assist with the compilation of the Urban Development Framework (UDF) of Leandra. The Planact team was able to get adequate information required to compile a comprehensive report for the UDF, made possible through the support of residents of Leandra.

The first day of the walk focused primarily on understanding the existing environmental and infrastructural aspects of the area to be able to determine the needs of the community. The participants observed new developments, churches, schools, shops, taverns and recreational spaces within the area. The following observations were made:

- Huge competition for space and conflict emanating from different uses, especially between churches and taverns, as they were closely built next to each other. Please see Figure 9 below. The different churches found within the area were Zion Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church and Methodist Church.



Figure 9: Church structures located close to each other

- In terms of taverns, these were distinguished from one another by the type of liquor that was sold at the tavern. A tavern that sells home-brewed beer was mostly frequented by the older age group and a tavern that sells processed beer was mostly frequented by consumers mainly under the age of 40 years.
- The participants continued to Extension 16 of Leslie which comprises the informal settlement and the established township. The houses found in the established township were built through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and these were the first houses to be built in Leandra.

Comparing the two places where the team walked, one can easily distinguish the difference within the communities. Leslie community is well developed in terms of infrastructure while Extension 16 and the established township have minimal development and relatively less infrastructure.



Figure 10: Leandra community members conducting a transect walk.

### Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were used as another method of collecting data necessary in designing the settlement. Interviews are useful in getting factual information from participants about their personal experiences (Maxwell, 2013, and the Planact team conducted interviews to hear the Leandra residents' experiences and their opinions on issues of development.

Twenty interviews were done to acquire input from people who were not able to attend focus group meetings. Interviews were conducted with business people from some shops in the town. A set of questions was formulated and informal/unstructured interviews were conducted, to deepen an understanding of the area and also to get first-hand information with regard to the existing issues. The statement below demonstrates interests of some of the community members.

*"I would be very happy if we could have a recreational centre for the youth and all groups to avoid drugs and pregnancy" (Resident 2013).*

### Narratives

Storytelling was also one of the methodologies that were used to gather information. The team was convinced that more information would be gathered from people's

narrative about their area if they were not following structured or semi-structured questions. A number of discussions were held with people who narrated their experiences in Leandra. Each story told gave an insight about the different activities that took place and are still taking place in Leandra.



Figure 11 and Figure 12: Residents of Leandra sharing their experiences about Leandra

### Example Narratives

- **Resident 1 stated:**  
*“I have been living in Leandra for more than 10 years, it is sad that the community has deteriorated in the last couple of years. The main library has drainage problems which make it hard for students to use it.”* (Resident, 2013).
- **Resident 2 observed:**  
*“Leslie had good entertainment spaces for the youth before 2010 when the protest arose. It was a crime-free township, but people have underutilised and vandalised public spaces which has left the township with a number of dilapidated buildings and unpleasant spaces.”* (Resident, 2013).
- **Resident 3 lamented with concern:**  
*“Leslie (township) had so many open spaces and parks that hosted a number of family events and youth parties. One park which was always utilised by the public has been converted into a taxi rank, leaving the community with no spaces for entertainment or leisure.”* (Resident, 2014).



## Focus group discussions

This was a controlled environment where a specific group of people (30) were invited to participate in a guided group discussion. Certain groups such as women and youth were targeted specifically as they are in most instances marginalised. This was done with the understanding that development is viewed differently by different groups in society. The process was done in consultation with different focus groups: women, youth and the business sector. They discussed the community's challenges and the improvement they would like to see in the area. Interacting with these different groups was successful as it enriched the project with much information. Various ideas were discussed, thus keeping the participants engaged. This process was a huge success as communities came out in their numbers to assist and expressed their views regarding their desired liveable space.

*"An overnight trauma centre for abused children/men/women is what we need in Leandra as we have a lot of cases of abuse and most victims do not feel safe spending the night with the abuser" – (Mme Dorothy, 2013).*



Figure 13: Focus group discussion



Figure 14: Participants writing ideas on paper

## Mapping exercises

Mapping was done as part of the UDF development to help participants discuss what exists in different locations and develop new plans. This exercise complemented the walkabout by confirming some of the things observed but also highlighting potential spaces.



Figure 16 and Figure 17: Mapping session with community residents

## 6. Expanding the participatory process into a Urban Development Plan

Findings and summary of existing conditions

The above discussed methods of research revealed the challenges faced by the community of Leandra.

- Poor storm water drainage system: water puddles could be seen on the streets, which showed that the drainage system was in a bad condition. Due to the low maintenance of the area by the municipality, the public realm was filled with filth, thus, making it difficult for children to enjoy the outside environment.
- The contaminated spring which flowed alongside the houses was alleged to have caused skin infections for the residents residing within its vicinity.
- Lack of entertainment/recreational facilities for mostly the youth, and other groups. A resident complained *“Leslie youth was previously involved in a number of sports activities, namely chess tournaments, cricket, rugby and soccer, unfortunately none of these sports are taking place because all facilities have been vandalised and further development takes place around open spaces and street furniture”* (Resident, 2015).
- Lack of street furniture (streetlights, pavements, trees, benches, dustbins).
- Lack of open spaces utilised as parks.
- Overcrowding in households, schools and the clinic.

In addition, Leandra community lacks recreational and street furniture. One of the residents explained that with the lack of recreational facilities, it becomes difficult for artists to showcase their talent to their peers and community. *“We had good sports facilities (grounds) in which we used to entertain crowds but with the vandalism of property in this community we have not been able to do any performances in a while”.*

- The Planact Team also observed that the community has one library which is deteriorating. The library has sewer and infrastructure problems, which makes it very hard for students to access or even use the facility.
- Leandra has the potential for new development. The area has many open spaces that can be developed and be of benefit to the community. One of the community members stated that *“the problem with the municipality is that they have no idea which land belongs to them. In most cases development takes place on council land without the knowledge of the municipality.”*

## 7. The Urban Development Plan

Urban Development Plans, which usually coordinate the efforts of local authorities’ representatives, private stakeholders and local residents, are at the centre of

development. The plans are aimed at improving the living conditions and the livelihoods of every member of the targeted community. In light of this, Planact together with all pertinent stakeholders managed to develop a 5-year urban development framework (UDF) in line with the municipal spatial development framework. Consistency and coordination between sectoral plans, local plans/frameworks and the SDF have been identified as critical components for coherent and sustainable development. The UDF identified socio-economic and spatial opportunities with which the SDF can engage. It was established that Govan Mbeki Local Municipality does not have plans for Leandra in their spatial development framework and this is seen as an opportunity for the community to influence the local municipality's plans.

The UDF was developed in collaboration with all stakeholders in the representative forum. The aim of the UDF was to promote consistent urban development policies, strategies and actions of all stakeholders in the urban development process and to steer them towards the achievement of a collective vision. The UDF aims were:

- To analyse the status quo of Leandra, which is classified as a semi-rural town in Mpumalanga.
- To align the urban vision and the municipal SDF.
- To identify socio-economic and spatial opportunities that the SDF could further explore.
- To consider the recommendations given by the community during the situational analysis process that was conducted during the previous phase of the project.

## 8. Challenges, lessons and recommendations

### Challenges

Getting the people to understand what the UDF is about was a challenge as most residents were reluctant to express their views in the focus group discussions. They believed that the Planact team was affiliated with the municipality therefore their views and needs would not be given serious consideration, let alone be implemented. For this reason, some of the residents did not attend the meeting to discuss the development framework. Mobilising people was the main problem that Planact faced, in particular retention of some participants. Despite the challenges, the UDF process was well received and successful.

Community participation, during presentation of the project, was adequate as all age groups and different stakeholders were always present for meetings. The contributions and ideas that were collected from the residents were useful and have formed part of the final report of the UDF.

The compilation of the UDF was completed in March 2014 and the Sigalile Development Forum engaged in advocacy strategies to sell the plans to the municipality and to the business community/private stakeholders. These were considered potential partners in development other than government.

## Lessons

In essence, the UDF process was worthwhile and the process could be transferred to other parts of the municipality with a variation of the conditions of the local context within which it is adapted. This process was documented, and below are the three primary lessons learnt.

- First, the need for continuous capacity-building for community members and the SDF cannot be undervalued. The SDF can only engage with municipal planning processes if they are empowered sufficiently to understand the intricacies of technical language and concepts such as municipal budgeting, zoning, environmental impact assessment, spatial development plans, development frameworks, land patterns, costing, design, housing options, legislation, and process of accessing land.
- Second, the development agencies need to anticipate and understand community dynamics and community protocols which may include groups / individuals displaying negative characteristics that may derail the development process. Planact has no doubt that communities can effectively contribute to the compilation of the UDF and are able to understand the involved processes.
- Third, the community mobilisation must always take into consideration the integration of social, economic and political factors. The community problems are indeed multifaceted and complicated. The response must therefore take this into consideration, and the corresponding approach must be flexible enough to recognise this diversity.

## Recommendations

Finally, for the Leandra community, a number of recommendations were made by Planact.

- There must be a political commitment from the local government for these kinds of processes to be successful. This entails the local government providing resources such as dedicated officials to work on the UDF, a budget, and allowing a dedicated space within the municipal office for the carefully nominated team to use.
- Correct measures of carrying out public participation should be sought and constantly evaluated.
- Community-based organisations should be recognised by local government

- and they should also be involved in all their development deliberations.
- Consideration should be made to consciously link the community-based organisations to already existing government structures such as ward committees to avoid duplication of development planning efforts.

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**Physical Address:**

Maths Centre  
28 Juta Street  
Braamfontein 2001  
South Africa

**Contact Info:**

E-mail: [info@planact.org.za](mailto:info@planact.org.za)  
Tel: +27 (11) 403 6291  
Fax: +27 (11) 403 6982  
Fax: +27 (86) 567 1239