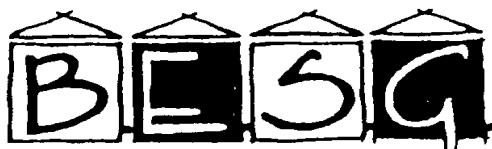


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**THE HABITABLE ENVIRONMENTS  
PROGRAMME**

**EXPERIENCES FROM  
A MUNICIPAL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP  
IN  
SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Built Environment Support Group**

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# 1 What are the key issues being addressed?

The following were identified as key issues.

- The need for the development of alternative models of service delivery that favour the poor and marginalised, but also meet principles of cost-effectiveness and efficiency.
- The development of municipal-community partnerships as a principle of good governance and as an appropriate approach to addressing development and environmental management issues.
- Related to this, the demonstration of the value of a people-centered / community based development paradigm.

The way in which these issues are addressed is through a decentralised service delivery model where the community assumes responsibility for a range of services in partnership with the local authority. An NGO (the Built Environment Support Group) acts as a facilitator.

- The local articulation of appropriate services that respond to local conditions. These are as follows:
  - Cleaning of roads
  - Cleaning of stormwater channels and drains
  - Cutting grass verges
  - Cleaning and maintaining public open spaces and facilities
  - Door to door refuse collection
  - Clearing waste dumps
  - Planting grass and trees on public land
  - Household education
- A need has been identified to extend services into the following:
  - Community Facility Maintenance and Management
  - Water Meter Reading/Delivery of Bills
  - Minor Road Repairs
  - Waste recycling

## 2 What are the contextual factors?

The context in South Africa is one of limited capacity, poverty and scarce resources (though not of a severity generally encountered in other African countries). There is also extensive social expenditure, with an emphasis on impact in the shortest possible time and in a way that is heavily reliant upon the private sector. South Africa boasts a relatively successful housing delivery programme that has delivered some 1 million housing subsidies to

low-income households in the last six odd years. At the same time comparatively little attention has been given to:

- Integrated development (although much policy has been adopted to encourage it)
- Asset management and maintenance of investment
- Environmental management in the context of developing habitable living environments.

Debates about service delivery are played out in very polarised terms. On the one hand public sector delivery is generally regarded as inefficient. On the other privatisation is equated by many public sector workers as resulting in job losses and about the reaping of profits by the corporate sector. There is little space given to other alternatives.

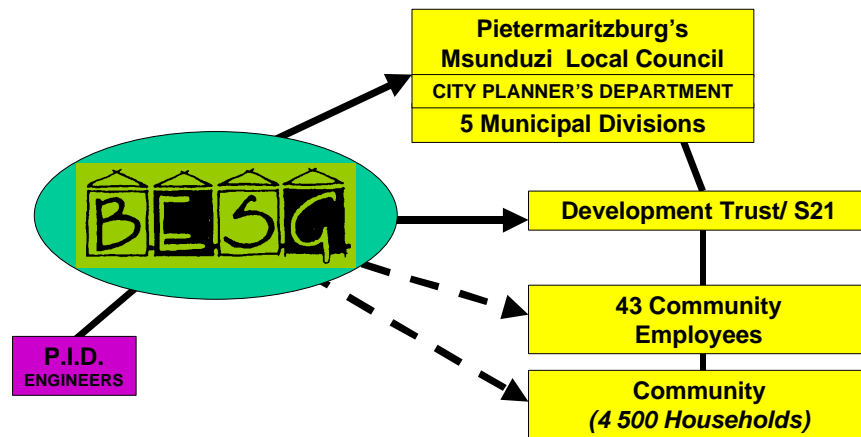
The importance of demonstrating the value of a people-centred development paradigm in South Africa is accentuated by the ascendancy of a neo-liberal economic paradigm that has tended to also shape social and development policy in recent years.

### 3 How do the key issues relate to the theme and sub-theme?

The Programme is designed around a partnership that attempts to integrate different stakeholder strengths in a combined effort to tackle environmental management, poverty and social empowerment of poor and marginalised communities. The model binds these parties through:

- Institutional links (see organogram below): the ward councillors, officials and the NGO participate in regular management meetings. Absence of community representation at certain levels is a concern and efforts are being made to create more scope for their participation through the setting up of a more formal organisation with joint participation from the key partners.

Figure 1: Institutional Arrangements



- Financial links: In the most evolved arrangements the CBO (a formally registered institution) is contracted with the local authority to render services and is paid by the local authority in return.
- Employment arrangements: This was identified as a high-risk area of the Programme. With high levels of unemployment and a resource being introduced into a low-income community the potential for conflict is high.

The CBO contracts workers in the area to undertake the work. In order to avoid disputes the employment process is approached in a very transparent manner.

The process is divided into two stages; the first stage involves the development of criteria for the employment of workers and the issuing of a call for community to apply for the available positions. The next involves short-listing applicants against the criteria and selecting the workers.

The CBO adheres to a very open public process of calling for applications. Applicants are then screened against the agreed criteria through verification at public meetings. Random selection from amongst the qualifying applicants then takes place at a public meeting, by drawing names from a hat. Community responses to this process suggest it has credibility as a transparent and fair approach.

The first CBO to be involved in this programme was of the view that the project should only employ persons who met the following criteria:

- Unemployed persons with no other member of the household employed

- Persons with dependants
- A quota of at least 50% female representation
- Persons who had not been previously employed in community development projects
- Persons who were physically able to carry out maintenance and environmental management tasks.

The Programme has since adopted these criteria in the replication phases.

The recruitment of supervisors was handled more conventionally with applications, short-listing and interviews. CBO leaders were disqualified from applying or would need to resign from their leadership role if they were selected.

- Facilitation and monitoring: As in many municipal-community partnerships, there is an NGO that is facilitating the overall process of programme definition and implementation.

## 4 How is the gender issue being addressed?

BESG, as the facilitating NGO, has been quite open about the importance of securing participation from various interest groups, an important one of which is women. It has also stressed that this needs to occur at all levels (i.e. including leadership). Where committees have needed to be established these points are put on the table. If necessary the significance of this issue from the perspective of government and funders is also introduced.

With respect to workers the majority of people recruited are already women and the process can usually just run its course.

## 5 What are the results/conclusion of the research, practical experience or case study?

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The value of partnerships is demonstrated. Additional capacity has been leveraged into a situation where the municipality had all but concluded that it was unable to respond the situation. Results are summarised below:

### 5.2 MEASURABLE OUTPUTS IN TERMS OF OBJECTIVES

#### A HABITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

##### **Overall visual aesthetic improvement of the area**

- Trees planted and maintained
- Grass planted and erosion arrested
- No dumping areas

- Streets are clean
- No blocked drains
- Refuse bins cleared regularly
- Public open spaces and facilities cleared of litter
- Infrastructure/services are being maintained
- Systems working without threat of collapse
- Entire area clean and well maintained

#### DEMONSTRATION OF A COMMUNITY BASED MODEL

##### **Cost effective**

- Costs on par with SMME option
- Significantly cheaper than municipal service provision

##### **Smooth implementation of model**

- Project has progressed smoothly
- Ease of incorporation of new areas

#### DEMONSTRATION OF COMMUNITY BASED MODEL

##### **Staff performing maintenance tasks**

- Work schedule developed and monitored by supervisors
- CBDO established and functioning
- CBDO meets regularly
- Minutes verify its functioning

##### **Interest shown by other role-players, including:**

- Local government
- Other CBDOS
- NGOs
- National Government
- Donors

#### PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES

- Project is implemented and specified services are delivered
- Services have met and exceeded performance standards

#### POVERTY REDUCTION

##### **Local economic development**

- All participants earning money are from within the community

##### **Workers employed from community**

- 39 staff and 4 supervisors are employed and paid fortnightly
- Workers are recruited from disadvantaged sector of community
- Selection procedure successful
- Targeting the unskilled, with dependants, and no other breadwinner in the household
- Unemployment insurance and worker's compensation in the event of injury (with state facilities)

## ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITY

### **Ensure women also secure employment**

- 28 out of 43 employees are women
- Women active in decision-making structures
- Women play key roles in the CBO

## FORGING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

### **Local government adopting a more participatory approach and co-operative style**

- Local government co-operating with civil society to address their needs
- Local government has contracted the community to provide services
- Local government embracing alternative approaches to key challenges

## BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

### **Observed behaviour modification through participation**

- Workers challenge residents who dump refuse
- Workers monitor and report damage to infrastructure
- Residents are afraid to participate in anti-social behaviour that could undermine CBDO's work, hence an absence of dumping of waste

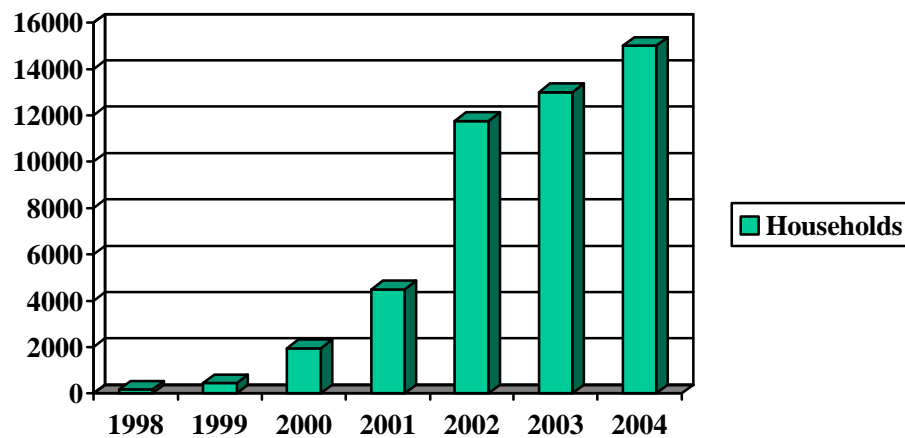
### **Spontaneous efforts by participants to find solutions to problems**

- Participant employees volunteered to build retaining walls to stop erosion
- Community initiated voluntary clean-up campaign
- Work carried out on a voluntary basis during periods in which funding was suspended
- Shift from confrontational to co-operative relationships.

## 6 What are the lessons learnt?

A thorough piloting process can make an invaluable contribution to the design of programmes that can then be replicated relatively quickly and at scale. The programme has evolved from a small base to one that now operates at considerable scale (see figure below).

Figure 3: Actual and Projected Annual Growth of the Programme in Terms of Households Reached



In a context where civil society participation has waned and the private sector is seen as the dominant partner with government, the programme has had an important impact. There is now support from national government to replicate this experience. A guidebook and other support material is being developed to assist people in this objective. The programme has been a finalist in two national and one international award programme, and is held up by many as a model to be promoted.

Through the careful design of participative processes and a joint management strategy highly conflictual situations can be avoided. Resources need to be managed and introduced into areas with clearly defined parameters, or conflict will quickly ensue.

## 7 What are the points of discussion?

Does this model have resonance/ applicability in other developing countries?

Could these employment arrangements be used elsewhere? If not, why?

What are some of the model's benefits?

What are some of its risks?

If seen as relevant, how can such experiences be taken forward and replicated?

*Note: A Slide-with-Text format (in MS-PowerPoint) is to be used in verbal presentation at the Conference. Copies of this +- 50 slide presentation are available on request at a cost of: \$5 + mailing.*