ABM EXPERIENCES

20 Lessons Learned from eThekweni Municipality
Durban South Africa
2003 - 2008
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The eThekwini Municipality is committed to help erode poverty and underdevelopment in eThekwini, particularly in those areas where the social and economic impact of apartheid is still keenly felt. To this end, we have embarked on many innovative projects to help tackle the substantial challenges faced in the region.

One of the largest and most extensive of these projects has been the Area Based Management (ABM) programme, which provided a geographic focus on development. This programme, which was funded in part by the European Union, who also provided expert assistance, has gone some way in countering underdevelopment in the five areas selected for the programme.

These five areas are Cato Manor, the South Durban Basin, Inanda-Ntuzuma-KwaMashu (INK), the inner city and the rural areas of eThekwini. In 2003, these five ABMs made their first steps in a journey that has taught us much about optimising approaches to development, economic growth and community participation. As the five ABM offices wind down, they will be incorporated into existing Municipal structures, ensuring the continuation of various long term projects and the passing-on of the institutional knowledge and experience which was gained through the programme.

This book contains many of the lessons learned during the programme’s lifespan. These lessons are of great value, not only in terms of instituting ABM programmes in other areas, but also from a broader developmental and institutional perspective. As such it should be required reading for all management-level employees of eThekwini Municipality. If the lessons learned over the course of this extensive project are incorporated into municipal structures and day-to-day operations, it will help to improve service delivery and provide a better life for all.

Councillor James Nxumalo
Mayor, eThekwini Municipality
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Introduction

In 2003 the eThekwini Municipality announced the adoption of the Area Based Management and Development Programme. Five geographic areas were identified, with the intention of addressing the twin challenges of poverty and underdevelopment and, in turn, improving the lives of the residents. These were also viewed as learning areas in which the municipality could gain experience which could then be applied to other areas in the eThekwini Municipal Area (EMA). The lessons that were learned from the implementation of the ABM programme, thanks to the concerted efforts of the municipality and the European Union which helped to fund the programme, have contributed significantly towards addressing development challenges and helping to improve the lives of all who live in eThekwini. These lessons will also afford other municipalities in South Africa and beyond an opportunity to strengthen area-based initiatives and interventions.

This book seeks to build on the Independent Review of the ABM programme, which was conducted in 2009, and to share the experiences and lessons learned in the implementation of the programme. It is hoped that it will be used as a resource by other municipalities experiencing similar development-related challenges.

Now that the programme is coming to an end, the emphasis has shifted from execution to providing a knowledge base which can inform structured learning activities and facilitate knowledge-sharing between municipalities facing similar challenges, particularly those related to transformation and institutional reform. It is within this context that the municipality formed the Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE) to nurture and grow an approach to knowledge-sharing that is embedded in municipal processes, as well as to share experiences and position the municipality as a learning organization.

It is hoped that municipal practitioners who read this book will be able to use the experiences and lessons learned in the five ABM programmes in order to improve and consolidate their approaches towards service delivery for the betterment of all. The implementation of the programme has shown that the principle of a deliberate approach that is area-based and focused on reducing...
poverty can produce encouraging results that are worth sharing. We hope that the lessons detailed in this book will go a long way towards assisting in the rollout of other programmes that address poverty and underdevelopment.

1.1 About this book

In 2003 eThekwini Municipality took a decision to follow the path of learning-by-doing, an innovative and new approach to local governance. The intention was to explore the potential of direct and focused interventions to drive change in underdeveloped areas with unique developmental challenges. From this starting point, the municipality set about conducting a sustained campaign against poverty and underdevelopment, utilising the resources of all line-function departments in a coordinated manner.

It is important to note that the resultant ABM programme embodies the principles, outcomes and objectives of local government transformation as defined in various legislative frameworks, policies and programmes in the post apartheid era, and thus forms part of the municipality's mandate from national government.

Now that the ABM programme has run its full five-year term, an inventory of lessons derived from the implementation of the programme is vital. Such an inventory provides meaningful insights into the reality of implementing ABMs at a municipal level. We hope that you will use some of these insights to inform the formulation of area-based initiatives and similar programmes within your municipality.

We also envisage that this book will form part of a suite of knowledge products delivered by eThekwini Municipality and MILE to assist practitioners, policy makers and funders of ABMs around the world to improve service delivery and use scarce resources more efficiently, while avoiding commonly known mistakes. These knowledge products will also help to craft responses that fit into a local environment while considering the broader contexts of regeneration, upgrading, renewal, urban management and development in general.

In the absence of an existing knowledge management and learning framework in the municipality, this book is an attempt to capture the ABM experiences in a systematic fashion. It seeks to extend the benefits associated with experience-based learning to development practitioners and political leaders. It further aims to reflect on the work of the ABMs from a knowledge-driven perspective and chart a more formalized path for how knowledge is captured, used, documented and shared.

It is also sincerely hoped that this book will prove useful in helping to model responses that could provide greater insights into how to deal with the condition of exclusion and deprivation in which the great majority of our population still find themselves trapped.
1.2 A Short history of the abm programme

When it was first launched, the ABM programme was loosely described as the municipality’s ‘reconstruction and development network’. It advocated for change by connecting geographic areas to the knowledge, experience and resources needed to help people in those areas build better lives for themselves. Five areas were selected to operate ABM programmes for a period of at least five years (and possibly beyond) and to work with stakeholders in order to address development challenges. The five areas were: Inanda Ntuzuma and KwaMashu (INK), Cato Manor, Rural Areas, the South Durban Basin (SDB) and the inner city (ITRUMP or Inner Thekwini Regeneration Urban Management Programme). It was envisaged that the programmes would utilize and develop the skills of local people, while drawing on the expertise of the municipality and its wide range of line departments to help achieve development goals.

The ABM programme has its “headquarters” in Cato Manor and was funded entirely by the European Union (EU) and the eThekwini Municipality. There were also ABM offices and staff on the ground in the five areas, working with various government departments and local communities to help find solutions to the various challenges faced.

The EU’s focus in South Africa has been on political dialogue, trade and economic cooperation, science and technology, and development cooperation. The establishment of an ABM programme, with its focus on social and economic development and governance programmes, fell largely within the Development Cooperation Programme. The EU provided expert advice, training and financial support for the ABM programme. To encourage development, the ABM programmes were designed to focus on five key result areas, namely: deepening democracy, enhancing economic development, improving the capacity of local stakeholders, improving service delivery, and innovation.

Since 2003, the partnership between eThekwini Municipality and the EU has made a significant contribution to promoting inclusion and equality and addressing poverty in the five areas. Not the least of these contributions is the devising of an institutional apparatus to manage Area Based Initiatives (ABIs). It is important to note that the work being done around the five ABMs included a strong emphasis on exploring an integrated approach towards development. In contrast to other area-based initiatives around the world, eThekwini’s ABM programme has been aimed at reversing apartheid planning by bringing about a participatory approach to transforming the physical, social and economic environment.

Some of the ABMs were based on work already done by previous programmes such as the Warwick
Junction Project, the Urban Renewal Programme (URP) and the Cato Manor Development Project (CMDP). The ABM models varied in size, mandate, orientation, operation and relation. Now that the five-year programme has reached its end, it is safe to say that the ABMs lived up to the hopes of their original proponents, having been assessed by politicians, planners, community leaders, and residents. While the programmes have included both successes and failures, the ABMs have played an important role in the municipality’s approach to development and have had a positive effect on the lives of the people of eThekwini.

The need for development initiatives in each of the designated ABM areas was without question. All of the areas had inadequate services, high levels of poverty and were socially and economically disadvantaged. The ABM Programme was aimed at utilising the resources of the municipality in an integrated manner in order to break the cycle of underdevelopment which pervades much of the eThekwini Municipal Area. Much has been learned during the implementation of the programme. The municipality as a whole now has greater capacity to continue to dismantle the legacy of apartheid in communities living in previously neglected areas. Additionally, the ABM programme has helped to create favourable conditions for these communities to access growth and development opportunities. The essential purpose of the ABMs was to translate the vision of the municipality into tangible activities that guide all stakeholders in achieving that vision.

1.3 Learning from lessons learned

Central to the ABM experience in the eThekwini Municipality is the imperative to learn from the process, and maintain those lessons learned as part of an institutional knowledge base.

By definition, ‘lessons learned’ are experiences acquired in the execution of programmes and projects which can provide value and direction to the formulation and execution of future development and initiatives. The recording of ‘lessons learned’ can act as a powerful Knowledge Management (KM) solution for use by the global family of municipalities.

Municipalities which explore Knowledge Management processes will at one time or another turn to ‘lessons learned’ from both their own past and that of others. ‘Lessons learned’ are motivated by the need to preserve a municipality’s knowledge and to convert individual (tacit) knowledge into Municipal-wide (explicit) knowledge so that when experts become unavailable other employees who encounter conditions that closely match the context of a particular lesson may benefit from applying it to his or her own situation.

As the municipality absorbs ABMs into its mainstream, it is important to consolidate the lessons learned in order to strengthen the integration of the previously “independent” ABM
The experiences obtained from the ABM journey can be usefully applied to other similar programmes in order to avoid the same mistakes or to use methods or practices that have been successfully applied, so that successful results can be passed on.

1.4 Research methodology used for this book

This learning publication is part of a series of Knowledge Management products published by MILE. It is largely an interview-based account of lessons learned, supported by existing reports and available literature. Its value lies in the richness of information, opinions and experiences that people working in the ABMs have shared with the project manager. At the same time, we acknowledge that this approach has limitations in its exclusive use of personal accounts. The level of documentation of projects and processes varied from ABM to ABM and hence this had an impact on our ability to reflect meaningfully on lessons learned in regard to the ABMs in general.

In the course of these interviews, general issues relating to the programme were examined. Specific areas of questioning included: institutional arrangements; communication and implementation; coordination; planning, policy and research; and vision, commitment and leadership. From these interviews, practices and lessons were extracted to illustrate the twenty issues that have emerged from the ABM experience.

1.5 Background to eThekwini Municipality

The eThekwini Municipality was created in 2000 and includes the city of Durban as well as its surrounding towns and rural areas, occupying a total of 2,292 square kilometers. eThekwini’s Mayor is elected for a five year term and may be re-elected with a two term limit. One of 61 municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal, eThekwini is the largest city in the province and the third largest city in South Africa. It has the busiest harbour in South Africa and is also a major tourism centre due to the city’s subtropical climate and generous beaches. The eThekwini Municipal Area has a population of almost 3.8 million people, making eThekwini the biggest city on the east coast of Africa. Its land area is comparatively larger than other South African cities, resulting in a population density of 1,513 inhabitants per square kilometre.

The city is also a gateway to a multitude of national parks and historic sites. It is characterised by a subtropical climate with warm wet summers and mild winters. The metropolitan area is topographically hilly, with very few flat areas, except in the immediate vicinity of the central business district and the harbour. Many gorges and ravines are found within the metropolitan area and there is no true coastal plain.

The eThekwini Municipal Area has a large and diversified economy with strong manufacturing, tourism, transportation, finance and government
sectors. Its coastal location and large port gives it a comparative advantage over many other centres in South Africa in terms of export-related industry. Durban’s mild climate, warm marine current and culturally diverse population also provides a draw card for tourism to the region. There has, however, been little growth in the number of jobs provided by EMA’s formal sector over the past 20 years. The manufacturing sector, which is second only to government in terms of the number of jobs it provides, has been shedding jobs as firms restructure and become more capital intensive. Additionally, high rates of perceived and actual crime have become a disincentive to growth in tourism and many other sectors. Despite a dynamic and growing small and micro business sector, the EMA has very high rates of unemployment, reaching more than 30% in some areas. There are still few economic opportunities in former African township areas such as uMlazi, KwaMashu, Lamontville, Chesterville, Inanda, KwaMakhutha and Hammarsdale.

The CBD has suffered the most in terms of economic decline, crime and rampant decentralisation, with many businesses having relocated, particularly to Umhlanga, where a new CBD has arisen. Efforts have recently been made to attract business back to the city with the new Point development, which includes the world-class uShaka Marine World and a number of new residential and leisure developments. It is hoped that the efforts by the municipality to clean up the CBD, the new developments in the Point area and the legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup will aid in an economic turnaround. The EMA is the main economic driver in KwaZulu-Natal, contributing over half of the province’s output, employment and income. In national terms, eThekwini is the second most important economic complex after Gauteng. Corridors of regional development link Durban to Richards Bay and Maputo in the North, and to Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg in the West.

eThekwini has a long tradition as a port city. Its port is one of the few natural harbours between Port Elizabeth and Maputo, and is also located at the beginning of a coastline dominated by violent seas, which has made it an extremely busy port of call for those in need of ship repairs. It is now the busiest port in South Africa and the third busiest container port in the Southern Hemisphere. The modern port grew around trade and the fact that it is the nearest harbour to Johannesburg, the industrial and mining capital of South Africa. Products shipped from Gauteng to outside of South Africa have first to be loaded onto trucks or railways and transported to eThekwini.

eThekwini is well-served by railways due to its role as the largest trans-shipment point for goods from the interior of South Africa. Transnet operates long-distance passenger rail services from eThekwini to other parts of the country, while Metrorail operates a commuter rail service within eThekwini and its surrounding areas. The city’s prime position as a port of entry into the
Southern African continent has also led to a development of well-maintained national roads. But while eThekwini is an industrial centre, a major seaport, and a year-round resort, it remains surrounded by seas of poverty and underdevelopment.

1.6 Establishment of the programme

Almost 18 years after South Africa’s first democratic election, the country is still recovering from the devastation of apartheid. Before 1994, the conditions of rural underdevelopment and urban exclusion and degeneration were underpinned and managed by a complex apartheid bureaucracy. The challenge facing contemporary South African cities is to create a strong base of good governance on which economic development, social equality and ecological sustainability can be built. Many municipalities around South Africa are failing to meet these challenges and as a result have been unable to build a reliable and permanent bridge with their residents (DPLG: 2006).

At the inception of the ABM programme, the democratic local government system as it exists today in South Africa had been in existence for only two years. eThekwini Municipality embarked on the programme with the explicit intention of enhancing service delivery and addressing spatial and social inequalities, as well as deepening local democracy. The ABM programme was seen as a catalyst and driver for identifying, testing and learning innovative ways of implementing the municipality’s Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The municipality provided the bulk of the capital and operating funding, with support and additional funding made available by the EU over the five years of the programme. National, provincial and other sources of funding were also made available through a variety of mechanisms, including partnerships with the private sector.

Led by small specialist teams operating within each area, the ABM programme opened up an opportunity to integrate the development and management initiatives of different spheres of government, line function departments, civil society and the private sector in order to achieve ‘good-practice’ approaches to the regeneration of urban and rural areas. The programme expanded the space available for bringing creativity and innovation to development approaches and created a platform for meaningful partnerships and citizen action. Although each area has its own vision and approach, all five ABMs contain elements of these overarching objectives.
The five ABM sites were selected as ‘experimental sites’ for building innovative approaches to service delivery, leading to a new way of doing business across line function departments in the fight against poverty and exclusion. The sites were – and still are – apartheid-engineered areas of ‘exclusion by design’, characterized by racial, social and economic exclusion.

In all the areas where the ABMs existed, economic growth is slow and poverty and inequality persist. The asset base of communities is very low which in turn prevents any rapid economic development. These areas have limited access to financial markets and other vital resources such as property rights and infrastructure necessary for social and economic growth. Additionally, these communities are marginalised from participation in the broader economy – because poor people face greater labour market risks, entrepreneurship activities are seldom embarked on. This is despite the fact that the municipality spends millions annually in these marginalised areas.

After nearly two decades of democracy, the ABM areas still depend on the adjacent previously ‘whites only’ areas for almost all their jobs, goods and services. As a result, money does not circulate in the ABM areas, and is thus unable to stimulate any new economic activities. Incomes are ‘spent back’ almost entirely in the adjacent previously ‘whites only’ areas.

The five ABM areas chosen all displayed a set of common features that resulted in a relatively similar developmental agenda. These features included:

- Persistent poverty and high levels of crime
- Neglected physical infrastructure (eg. roads)
- Shortage of both formal and informal housing
- Inadequate operational and maintenance budgets
- Low internal economic opportunities (less so in the South Durban Basin)
- Low education and skill levels of residents
- Poorly linked to surrounding neighborhoods
- Apartheid-era town planning
2.1 Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu (ink)

The Inanda, Ntuzuma, and KwaMashu (ink) ABM area houses almost half a million people, representing about 18% of the EMA’s population (Cogta, 2007). The area consists of 9,423 hectares and is one of the largest low-income residential areas in South Africa, effectively constituting the country’s second largest township settlement.

INK’s closest boundary is 20 km from the Durban CBD. The area consists of 15 municipal wards, with a large number of informal settlements, limited basic service infrastructure, inadequate recreational facilities and a shortage of social facilities. Although only Inanda and KwaMashu were declared presidential nodes as part of the nationally mandated urban renewal programme (URP), the municipality saw a need to include the adjacent Ntuzuma settlement into an integrated urban development.

INK has a high unemployment rate. One in every five unemployed people in eThekwini lives in the area. Nearly 50,000 households consist of informal dwellings which house nearly 45% of the total population. Housing backlogs in Inanda and Ntuzuma are particularly severe, representing almost one-quarter of the backlog in the Municipal Area. Economic growth is very weak, and poverty and inequality continue as defining aspects of life for most residents.

Given that the INK area is located some 30 kilometres north of the CBD and is home to half a million people with almost no economic opportunities or even tertiary education facilities, it was important to consider this area as an ABM site. The focus of the INK ABM was both to generate economic activity, and to revitalize residential and community areas.
UKUHLUKUMEZA
ABESEFAZANE
KUYASITHUNAZA
Real Men Don’t
Abuse
Report Crime
SAPS : 031 361 0000
eThekwini : 031 361 0000

ASIYEKE UBUHLOVA
CRIMINALS
BE WARNED
You are being
watched!
Report Crime
SAPS : 10111
eThekwini : 031 3610000

ASIYEKE UBUHLOVA
CRIMINALS
BE WARNED
You are being
watched!
Report Crime
SAPS : 10111
eThekwini : 031 3610000

UKUTHENGA IZINTO
EZEBIWU KUYICALA
Buying Stolen
Goods is Crime
Report Crime
SAPS : 10111
eThekwini : 031 3610000
2.2 Cato Manor

Cato Manor covers a geographical area of 1 800 hectares. It is situated approximately 10 km from Durban’s city centre and is home to an estimated 93 000 people who settled in the area during the mass invasions of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Cato Manor had been left vacant since the 1960s, following the forced removal of an estimated 150 000 people by the apartheid government. Today, Cato Manor’s residents include some of the poorest of eThekwini’s urban poor, despite the successes of the Cato Manor Development Programme (CMDP) which preceded the Cato Manor ABM.

The area remains characterised by a high unemployment rate and social fragmentation. At the same time, Cato Manor residents are increasingly taking the initiative in the development of the area and there is a high level of community organization and citizen action and participation. The Cato Manor ABM sought to work with these strengths and build on the existing platform of social engagement. The ABM concentrated its efforts on post-infrastructure development and consolidation processes such as social upliftment, responsibility and cohesion; community planning and participation; and economic and skills development.

The focus in this ABM was on economic and social development due to the damage wrought by forced removals and the resettling process.
2.3 South Durban Basin

The South Durban Basin (SDB) area stretches from the port of Durban in the north to uMngeni in the south and inland as far as the South Coast Road corridor. Its eastern boundary is bordered by an environmentally sensitive coastal strip, but it is also the city’s key manufacturing and industrial zone, contributing 30% of eThekwini’s Gross Domestic Product. The area is the second biggest industrial heartland in South Africa and provides 10% of the country’s manufacturing jobs. At the same time, it is home to approximately 100 000 people and is an important residential node.

The historical legacy of apartheid, which juxtaposed polluting industries and residential areas, has given rise to a tense relationship between residents and industry. As such, one of the biggest challenges was to improve lines of communication between the municipality, industry, community organizations and environmental groups. In addition, the SDB programme aimed to improve residents’ access to social, recreational, economic and environmental facilities. Another challenge was the redevelopment of deteriorating infrastructure, which is key to ensuring that the SDB is able to attract and maintain investment and jobs.

Here the aim was to regenerate the industrial base, creating cleaner and greener industries while improving the lives of people who live in the area.
2.4 Inner eThekwini regeneration and urban management programme

The Inner eThekwini Regeneration and Urban Management Programme (iTRUMP) area is essentially Durban’s inner city, which extends from the Umgeni River in the north to the Point in the east, the Victoria Embankment in the south and Warwick Avenue and Umgeni Road in the west.

The iTRUMP ABM was established as a response to the urgent need to prioritise the regeneration of the city centre. iTRUMP placed the strategic value of the inner city at the core of its business and sought to maximize multiple opportunities. It focused on six outcomes, namely: increasing economic activity; reducing poverty and social isolation; making the inner city more viable; effective and sustainable urban management; improving safety and security; and developing institutional capacity. The programme’s approach was to be proactive rather than reactive, working to stimulate interest from the private sector while satisfying the needs of individuals that use public spaces.

iTRUMP was a central driver of urban regeneration and management in the city during the course of the ABM programme. The programme dealt with a complex range of issues, from reversing office flight to the suburbs, to dealing with the needs of the urban poor. These various challenges required an innovative and interdisciplinary programme to create a sustainable city in the new South Africa, and iTRUMP was substantially successful in delivering the goods.
2.5 Rural Areas

eThekwini’s rural areas consist of a 1 500 square kilometre hinterland located northwest and southwest of the city, including the peri-urban areas alongside the N2 and N3 corridors. Containing less than 5% of eThekwini’s population, most of whom live on communal land, the areas comprise 67% of the city’s spatial footprint and fall beyond the ‘urban edge’ of the city. They are largely defined by geo-spatial features such as hilly, rugged terrain, dispersed settlement patterns in traditional dwellings, and communal land holdings registered under the Ingonyama Trust. The areas are also characterized by severe poverty and unemployment, with many households reliant on localised social assets such as community networks and organizations. Another challenge is the environmental vulnerability of the areas due to heavy reliance of households on the natural resource base. The situation is exacerbated by fragmented service delivery, unresolved land tenure, a shortage of substantive information, and a legacy of lack of planning.

The Rural ABM aimed to develop alternative approaches to the delivery of basic services, build effective institutional arrangements and development processes, and expand the range of income-generating opportunities for people in the areas. These interventions were aimed at facilitating access to basic services, enhancing economic livelihoods and improving systems of governance in rural areas.

The focus here was on addressing poverty and bringing integrated development into areas that had historically received very little support from the apartheid government.
In 2009, the ABM programme had been in place for more than five years. At this point the municipality initiated a review of the policies and practices of these development interventions. In this chapter, we provide insights into the lessons learned from the practices that have emerged from the overall programme. These lessons have been extracted from interviews with ABM employees and are presented at a programme-wide level.

3.1 Vision, Commitment and Leadership

1. The importance of a collective vision

It was important for the ABMs to have a vision that was clear, coherent and hopeful in order to motivate people to take action and commit to the success of the ABMs. A key lesson learned from the eThekwini ABM experience was that despite engaging in visioning exercises, there was still insufficient mobilization of line departments to share in the ABM vision.

A strong focus of the ABMs was on the alignment of line department activity. This stems from the integrated development approach adopted by the municipality. This meant that there needed to be extensive coordination between line departments in order to engage effectively in ABM activities. While much of the ABM programme’s management time was devoted to such coordination and facilitation, a key challenge was to build a vision capable of capturing the imagination of various line departments.

The lesson here is that coordination is not simply an administrative task. It is also about negotiating a commitment from relevant line departments to dedicate human and financial resources to ABM areas. That means that the process needs to be led by a vision that excites the imagination of officials and stakeholders alike.

2. The importance of champions

ABMs need to be championed from planning stages all the way to completion. They require a great deal of coordination and need to be moved through
various stages of decision-making, while at the same time engaging with existing bureaucracies and systems. It is essential that a champion be dedicated to each ABM in order to undertake the task of managing the flow of planning, design and implementation, and to attend to any issues and blockages that might arise. One person should take on this responsibility for each ABM or ABM project. There are numerous instances where champions have made the difference between success and failure.

3. Ongoing commitment is a key ingredient

Although champions are important, the success of an ABM was not entirely dependent on a single personality. It was also vital to obtain full commitment to the programme from key members of ABMs and line departments. Such commitment required a number of elements to be in place:

- Service level agreements between the line departments and ABMs. Contractual, political and institutional mechanisms were needed to ensure the commitment of the line departments to the ABMs. Service level agreements and performance contracts stated that department managers were required to deliver on ABM projects.

- Political support and deployment of key figures. A willingness of political partners to impose pressure on line departments and bureaucratic structures was necessary in order to ensure delivery.

- A Programme Office to coordinate regular meetings, report-backs, follow-through and monitoring of progress, as well as knowledge management.

- Institutional arrangements for the forums to which the ABMs report to meet regularly, to be attended by decision-makers, and to have streamlined decision-making processes.

- A network of contacts and relationships between key persons in the municipality, NGOs, community-based organisations and the consulting teams that support projects. More specifically, there needs to be strong relationships between ABM managers and key political, administrative and technical managers.

- Community participation mechanisms in which ward councilors play a key role, but which are also linked to a wider base within civil society.
3.2 Communication and Co-ordination

4. The choice of ABM areas needs to be communicated to all stakeholders

It seems that the introduction of the ABM programme in 2003 was unexpected in the broader municipality, and that the rationale for the programme as a whole, as well as the selection of the individual ABMs areas, was not clear to many. The issues that arose regarding the announcement of the programme related to the preparedness of the municipality to roll out the programme and around the programme’s objectives, the EU funding, and access to guidelines for implementation.

Planning was difficult, particularly without knowing whether dedicated funding would be allocated for the programme or existing budgets utilised. The reasons for the selection of the five areas were unclear in the minds of certain people and led to political concerns. While it was conceded that all the selected areas have serious ongoing social and economic challenges, it was suggested that the seriousness of development issues in other areas outside the ABM programme areas could not be ignored, and that these areas also warranted ABM status.

In this regard, political concerns were expressed over the apparent preference given to the ABMs. Politicians felt that, while there were real needs in the chosen ABM areas, there were other areas that the municipality should have prioritised. In their view, areas such as uMlazi, Clermont, KwaDabeka, Mpumalanga and Hammarsdale also deserved priority attention. It was generally acknowledged, however, that the INK and the rural areas ABMs were deserved of their ABM status by virtue of their severe underdevelopment.

The lack of effective communication contributed to an inability to inspire and mobilise officials, politicians and the public to support the ABM programme. There was no space created to deal with antagonism and rivalry from stakeholders who believed that other areas were more deserving or were anxious that resources would be redirected away from their areas to the ABM programme effort.

Looking back, the municipality was not adequately prepared to take on the functions necessary to implement the programme. The lead time required to establish planning and implementation structures for ABMs is extensive under any circumstances. With the high levels of leadership, expertise and commitment required for the programme from line departments, lead time needed to be even longer.

The important lesson here is that tensions around the announcement of the ABM programme should be anticipated and managed. This requires special communication efforts to all stakeholders in order to encourage buy-in, and to reassure
constituencies who may be excluded from ABM benefits that they will not experience negative effects as a result of the programme.

5. The need for clear lines of accountability and reporting

The ABM Programme is geographically focused. This means that lines of responsibility are sometimes duplicated. Conflict may arise over funding or the responsibility for monitoring the progress of implementation. Several ABM managers pointed out that these sorts of overlaps raised issues of territoriality amongst ABM and non-ABM officials in the municipality. In order to avoid a duplication of efforts or a resistance to implementing ABM projects, clear lines of accountability must be set up. These lines need to ensure two-way accountability between ABM structures and line departments in order to build a balanced relationship between the parties. The Programme Office was widely viewed as being set up mainly to comply with EU conditions, and was seen as not being involved in the day-to-day activities of the ABMs.

6. Coordination between ABMs is essential

Monitoring and evaluation is not an activity that happens at the end of a programme. It is important that ongoing learning be undertaken as the programme progresses in order to make adjustments where necessary. A growing knowledge and information base helps to enrich the programme and to empower officials and stakeholders engaged in the programme. It also enables ongoing tracking of successes and failures.

Monitoring requires that parallel learning take place during the implementation of programmes and projects. This means that regular strategic reviews of ABMs needed to be conducted by people working on the programme. But the ABMs have been subject to only limited monitoring processes, and for the most part they have failed to benefit from the learnings taking place in other ABMs. This reduced the possibilities for reflection and learning in spite of the close management that occurred in some of the projects. It also means that few lessons of the ABMs have been documented on an ongoing basis. Coordination between ABMs did not occur in any active way.

Once systems are in place to enable ABM programmes, it is important to sustain momentum and maintain ongoing support from all stakeholders. A failure to deliver in one area can lead to poor publicity and undermine the efforts of the ABM. In fact, delivery problems in even one area can bring the public image of the ABM, and ABMs in general, into question.

The efforts required to ensure that delivery takes place at a sufficient rate and scale in these high profile ABMs include: timely and sufficient fund mobilization; expedient approval of business plans; adequate capacity to implement;
appropriate policy frameworks; political support; efficient procurement processes; prompt financial payments; and, particularly at times when difficult decisions need to be taken, sufficient inter-departmental and inter-agency co-operation.

The systemic nature of management, where many issues have to be considered simultaneously and where one issue affects other parts of the programme, requires a holistic and strategic focus by those responsible for implementing ABMs.

3.3 Planning, Policy and Research

7. ABMs need to be guided and supported by existing municipal strategic plans

The choice of ABM areas was motivated in terms of the strategic vision laid out in eThekwini’s Integrated Development Plan (IDP). As a result, the ABMs demonstrate a clear relationship to the key programme objectives and social and economic needs expressed in the IDP’s focus areas.

It is important that ABMs support the development vision of the municipality. Where the implementation of projects is not mandated by an existing municipal plan, the prioritisation of projects can become political. Just because an ABM project has political or social merit does not mean that its implementation should automatically override any other long-term strategies which have been similarly mandated through a participatory process. On the other hand, there is a danger that initiatives prioritised through ABM efforts can be overlooked or delayed in favour of projects defined for political ends.

The key lesson here is that ABMs need to be guided by a coherent vision and strategy located within the context of national, provincial and municipal mandates. The selection of ABM areas must be defensible in terms of such a strategy. The strategy also needs to be given impetus through cascading business plans that link aims and objectives to deliverable projects. Some of the initiatives established by the ABM programmes, such as interventions in economic development and education, are necessarily long-term projects. Such projects may run for a decade or more or even be generational. The longer term projects, in particular, need to be located within a strategic plan that embraces a long-term, carefully prioritised vision for the area.

The alignment of ABMs with the IDP process is important to ensure successful development. Physical planning is an essential tool for ABMs. It is a critical component of the strategic planning required to implement sustainable programmes. In this regard, ABMs did not build a well conceived spatial planning framework. A spatial framework is necessary because the structuring of transportation and land use affects the viability
of settlements and the functionality of services.

Investment in infrastructure development will also influence patterns of private investment. A spatial framework helps to give order and coherence to interventions, regardless of whether they are physical, social or economic. Physical restructuring of areas that is not thought through properly will have a negative impact on areas that are already fragmented and scattered. This means that many opportunities for creating integrated, vibrant settlements have been lost. Spatial development frameworks, supplemented with more detailed local area plans or precinct plans, is both desirable and necessary in order for ABMs to be optimally effective.

8. The need for a tighter policy framework

While the ABMs were aimed at improving living conditions and promoting development in local areas, they were also directed at piloting initiatives that fulfill the social and economic development goals of eThekwini’s IDP. The strategic direction that is required for achieving these intentions should have been assisted with a set of policy guidelines and principles from the municipality or from the ABM Programme Office.

No such guidelines were made available to the ABMs, and ABM managers indicated that they had little access to policy or theoretical guidance. This led to many missed opportunities to pilot new innovations in the ABMs, which might then have been extended to other areas, broadening the multiplier effects of the projects, and making the entire ABM programme more effective.

The absence of an overarching ABM policy and of principles to guide development also weakened the monitoring of the ABM initiatives. The reporting on ABM progress becomes largely progress reporting, rather than reporting against milestones determined by overall policy. That said, while a framework of principles is clearly of great importance in guiding implementation, these cannot be rigidly applied in local contexts. Adaptation to local contexts is always necessary, and guidelines need to be fluid and dynamic.

9. Setting incremental achievable objectives brings credibility to a project

A number of long-term objectives were stated in the initial ABM planning exercises. While such objectives are important, they can also pose a danger in that they may be perceived as too large in scale to be taken seriously and may be quickly abandoned in favour of projects that are more easily implementable. Looking at some of the objectives of the various business plans illustrates the ambitious and often open-ended nature of many of the projects’ aims.

It is necessary for objectives to be measurable and specific. They also need to be translated
into deliverable projects. The establishment of ‘outcomes to be achieved’ also permits the ongoing monitoring of projects against targets. This is necessary for tracking performance and for decision-making.

The lesson here is that setting incremental, achievable objectives brings credit to a programme and makes it seem more feasible. By contrast, developing overly ambitious objectives sets a project up for failure and diminishes any achievements that have been made, no matter how substantial. eThekwini’s ABM programme was flawed in setting overly ambitious targets and objectives at its inception.

There were some programmes that were highly successful but did not meet the objectives they set out to achieve. This does not mean that their success was not real or relevant. ABM areas have inherited extreme difficulties and it is not possible to turn everything around in a few years. As many countries have experienced, it is usually far more difficult to dismantle a social system than it was to build it in the first place.

The truth is that each solution brings a new set of problems. For example, relocating an informal settlement and creating new housing in the Cato Manor ABM, created all sorts of problems around disruption, affordability and relocation. The response from the ABM was to identify smaller areas and roll-out initiatives area by area. It is seen as preferable to set up smaller structures and to deliver on real needs. Once the satisfaction of those needs has been achieved and the capacity of the ABM structure is established, new demands can be added and the delivery structure can grow more organically.

10. Preparation takes time

In several of the ABMs the first two years of development were predominantly committed to institutional development, including the building of effective community relationships, planning and design, fund-raising and getting buy-in from the relevant stakeholders. Proper implementation is impossible without these factors being in place. However, as a result some of the ABMs struggled to deliver during the start-up period. Furthermore, they have often – and understandably – been judged in this early phase in terms of delivery and spending rather than in terms of their effectiveness in establishing institutional structures that would ensure ongoing service delivery.

The achievements and challenges of the first two years of the ABM programme illustrate the sheer size of the tasks of setting up planning processes, building institutional capacity and engaging stakeholders, all of which needed to take place before any substantial delivery was possible from the ABMs.
11. Research should be an ongoing function

The value of research, both at the outset of ABMs and as an ongoing function, cannot be overstated. It should be central to the functioning and structure of the ABMs. For example, it is essential to have a baseline of conditions against which to test the effectiveness of interventions. Additionally, research into particular areas is necessary for the development of projects that will address the actual needs of an area or a target group of beneficiaries.

Research outcomes impact on the nature and scale of resources committed to a project. They provide an understanding of the degree of need and the availability of capacity to address these needs. This provides a crucial tool for locating development opportunities in the hands of local communities. The monitoring and evaluation undertaken in a programme can only be as good as the research that has been conducted.

12. The importance of Business Planning

A general lack of planning leads to crisis-management. The key to timeous and comprehensive programme management is a thorough development of a business plan ahead of time, with all stages and costs thought through before implementation.

Business planning needs to be rooted in well-developed systems and procedures. These need to be set in place at a broad level for all of the projects within an ABM. Funding flows are the life force in the management system and timeous application for funding and financial controls must be in place in order to ensure efficient implementation.

In addition, approval mechanisms for business plans must be properly secured. The level of approval, the time allocated for approval and the ownership and accountability of each project needs to be resolved at an early stage to ensure successful implementation. Generally, effective programme management also requires that the all agreements and mandates surrounding projects be in place, and that the delegation of powers be properly decided.

All of this requires substantial management skills and a high level of experience of municipal processes. It is necessary to have an intimate knowledge of the municipality, to have institutional memory embedded into ABM and municipal structures, and to be able to align the municipal system with the priorities of the ABMs.

13. Clear management strategy

Initially the ABM Programme Office was conceived as having a leading and coordinating role. As time evolved it focused more on administrative support and reporting compliance. Because of this arrangement, the ABMs focused
on running as independently as possible. This meant that a management strategy connecting ABMs to working cycles and budget processes was also needed. The Programme Office also had to champion or lead an active Knowledge Management function effectively and not be limited to an administrative function. The role assigned to the Office had a significant impact on the effectiveness of the ABMs at a programme-wide level. ABMs identified activities and projects and this Office was empowered to assist in the provision of a strategic direction or effective management backup and support. The Office’s activities were extended to ensuring reporting and compliance, and provide a supporting role in procurement, financial oversight and human resource management.

3.4 Implementation

14. ABMs development approach should focus equally on infrastructural and human development

All the ABMs focused on both human development and infrastructure initiatives. However, there was a general bias towards either infrastructure or human development, rather than a balance between the two. ABMs tended to focus more on human development in the first few years of the programme, with the focus shifting as large-scale infrastructure projects began to unlock development. The SDB was perhaps the most balanced with regard to addressing both infrastructure and human development needs.

There are many factors that may give rise to an infrastructure bias in ABM areas. For example, the municipality’s Procurement and Infrastructure Cluster do not generally require the authority of an ABM to undertake infrastructure projects. Another reason is that many of the social programmes within the ABMs needed to be initiated by the provincial sphere of government. For various reasons, this sphere has been significantly passive in certain areas, most notably iTRUMP.

Then there is the fact that social projects generally take a considerably longer time to implement than infrastructure projects. They also show returns some time after implementation, in some cases only after generations, and their success is not easily measured in quantifiable terms. Infrastructure projects, on the other hand, demonstrate immediate benefits in an area. The funding for infrastructure projects may come from various sources, but is usually not as complicated as sourcing funding for projects that require ongoing subsidisation.

In iTRUMP, an infrastructural bias was evident in the ABMs’ creation of facilities for Local Economic Development (LED) opportunities prior to any programme for LED having been implemented. This was considered unfortunate and indicative
of an ABM that was overly ambitious in its expectation that infrastructure provision would lead to entrepreneurship.

Only in the INK ABM was a human development bias evident. Here the motivation was to put people (at the level of the individual) at the centre of development. It is a focus that sees the ABM merely as an agent to stimulate internalised processes of development in the community. This approach stems from a developmental philosophy that centres around maximizing personal development opportunities for each person, and by extension, for the community as a whole. It is not an approach that offers a set of solutions or resources. Instead it focuses on the concept of citizens taking primary responsibility for their lives, with the municipality providing support. Solutions are thus developed from within a community rather than imposed on them. The success of the INK programme suggests that infrastructure should be geared towards supporting human development efforts, rather than leading them.

From a developmental perspective, it is important that all ABM projects, whether infrastructural or socially oriented, seek to maximise human development potential when considering their design, implementation and long-term impact. Infrastructure projects need to stimulate job creation, community empowerment and citizen participation, ensuring the long-term affordability of services.

Human development projects, on the other hand, cannot exist in an infrastructural vacuum. For example, without basic needs and emergency services, the physical health and safety of a community is at risk. Additionally, infrastructure that promotes access and mobility is critical for the effective functioning of social networks and services, as well as for employment, trading and economic growth. In general, it is important to strike a balance between the provision of infrastructure and human development, both in ABMs and in individual projects.

15. Timelines must be established and adhered to when implementing ABM initiatives

There is a prevailing belief that speedy delivery must automatically lack depth, and that delivery with depth must automatically be slow. Where projects are fast-tracked, the participation and community empowerment are not necessarily achieved. Participation, on the other hand, can impede delivery because the process of stakeholder engagement can be time-consuming.

And yet it should not be assumed that communities favour lengthy processes over fast track delivery. It is important that time delays are minimized when implementing projects with a high level of community involvement. The staying power of communities to endure lengthy processes is limited and community representatives tend to lose their credibility when there are long periods of no actual delivery.
A focus on fast-track projects was particularly evident in the early stages of the ABMs. These projects were selected because they addressed an emergency health and safety situation, or because they facilitated buy-in and helped to build the credibility of the overall programme. Such projects range from road signage to the greening of parks, the development of sporting facilities and emergency water provision.

While this approach has continued in some areas, it is the long-term projects that are more likely to turn areas of decline into areas of opportunity. Without attention to longer term projects, there is a danger that the ABM programme will not focus on addressing the deep-seated structural needs of an area and that it will tend instead towards providing piecemeal interventions.

It is clear now that the establishment of ABMs as ongoing, sustainable entities or processes cannot be achieved within the confinement of a five-year period. The deadlines for delivery and for turning an area around were unrealistic for poverty-stricken areas that suffer from deeply entrenched institutional, social, economic and spatial problems as a result of apartheid-era town planning.

16. Thinking ahead about financial sustainability

During the life of the programme, implementation of projects was generally hampered by low levels of resources, including both a lack of ABM institutional capacity and a lack of funding. It is difficult to motivate stakeholders when the resources allocated to the programmes are as yet unknown.

In order to streamline tender and procurement processes, it is necessary to have project cycles planned well in advance. It is important to have a five-year plan for all projects as well as for the overall programme. This helps to streamline the procurement and tendering processes that often delay implementation. But this is only possible if there is some degree of certainty regarding future funds.

Access to financial resources is a key source of power in ABMs and ABMs should have focused their attention on gathering funding commitments for future initiatives. While sourcing such funding can be an onerous process, successfully doing so means that the project’s objectives can be realised and resource commitments obtained from local sources. Most ABMs have been developed in a context of limited additional resources with no dedicated funding for projects. This has meant that planning cannot be done in a competent and efficient manner.

17. The need to establish internal networks

While major institutional structures are required for the overall organisation of ABMs processes, they do not provide all the relationships that are
needed to make an ABM and its projects successful. It is critical to establish contacts with people who ‘make things happen’. This includes officials in various line departments who are responsible for various aspects of implementation and may also include outside stakeholders, NGOs, consultants and community leaders.

It is necessary to establish a network of experienced individuals who are senior in their department or organisation and who are motivated around the particular ABM. The building of these relationships is very important, since much of an ABM’s success depends on people working beyond the ordinary call of duty. It is thus important to allocate senior personnel – people who can make decisions – to tasks where such decisions might be called for.

3.5 Institutional

18. Capacity building also needs to take place in line departments

It is important not to underestimate the additional burden that programmes such as the ABMs place on municipal officials. ABM-related activities are often carried out over and above day-to-day activities, and don’t appear on the performance scorecard of officials who are dealing with the activity. ABM budget allocations were often small compared to those of the municipality, yet line departments were required to report on each ABM project. The result was that they found it difficult to reconcile the additional load with their day-to-day work.

While it was important that these ABMs received special attention, they also needed to be given the proper management and institutional support to enable them to implement projects without being seen as burdensome to the municipality. This meant that additional capacity needed to be built into the municipality and its line departments.

19. Mentoring, capacity and leadership development

Successful ABMs require a blend of hard technical skills and a range of social, interactive and personal abilities. The value of twinning appropriate managers with people with sufficient experience and technical ability was underlined in the ABM programme. Equally, the role played by the use of specialist managers – usually from the private sector – needs to be noted. The relatively young age of most ABM managers, and thus the limited extent of their experience, reinforces the view that mentoring should play a vital role in strengthening management processes. The support of foreign donor agency personnel in the rollout of the programme is to be commended.

The ABM management team was relatively inexperienced in local government, which presented a challenge for the programme. As the programme unfolded, on-the-job learning
occurred, although ABM staff also had access to training. There was, however, no formal mentoring process from experienced officials. Some informal mentoring did develop, based on personal relationships or professional association, but on the whole the absence of mentoring has had a negative impact on the efficacy of officials, and limited the transferability of their experiences, which tended to focus exclusively on communities, rather than on linking communities and local government.

On the other hand, the ABM programme ensured that line function departments are able to work in areas where they previously had limited experience and little local knowledge. This has had a positive impact on communities in terms of enhanced services and integrated development. Additionally, due to the nature of the ABM programmes, ABM staff have had opportunities to experience an extensive cross-section of government in action. ABM staff were exposed to administration procedures, technical expertise and project management skills, and have gained experience that could position them as future leaders in the field of community development. By assisting the municipality to achieve its broader municipal objectives, the programme also created opportunities and innovations in institutional spaces, as well as increasing capacity and improving connections between people.

The role and mandates of ABMs was not sufficiently understood or appreciated by eThekwini’s councilors, which led to complex and tense relationships in some cases. At the same time, the ABMs created effective platforms for discussion, communication and consultative planning processes. Councilors and traditional leaders were able to get involved and understand how the municipality implements its mandate and core functions. As the programme unfolded, councilors did get involved in issues, assisting the ABMs with needs analyses and the prioritisation of projects.

It has, however, been a major programme-wide challenge to improve the extent and quality of engagement between the ABMS, councilors and political structures. There was limited ongoing strategic engagement with political leadership with respect to the programme. Instead ABMs tended to engage individual councilors on individual projects.

20. ABM offices need to be fully equipped.

There have been instances of ABM managers struggling with a lack of basic infrastructure (such as office facilities, computers and stationery) which has prevented them from working effectively. The lesson here is that ABM managers need to do everything in their power to ensure that the ABM delivery teams are equipped to function to the best of their abilities.
4.1 Achieving an effective ABM

ABMs represent an institutional mechanism through which service delivery can be focused and accelerated in key areas, in the process enabling integrated implementation and mobilizing resources towards delivery. ABMs are a mechanism designed to strengthen capacity in order to improve the provision of basic services and stimulate local economic development.

The programme responded to overall development imperatives relevant to the challenges facing the eThekwini Municipal Area. It achieved success at different levels and across various institutional structures and enabled the involvement of the public sector and civil society. Success was achieved through projects that were defined by the needs of the beneficiaries. However, the programme’s long term success has been constrained by its limited time frame and lack of resources.

Donor funding, supported by technical resources, was a vital catalyst in gaining the release of municipal and other funds, and was extremely useful in supporting the broader ABM programme. The commitment of EU funding on a multi-year basis was most beneficial, particularly since access to such funding gave the programme unquestionable leverage in the context of the municipality and its line departments.

The key function of a visioning exercise for ABMs is that the vision created should be one that can motivate people and put resources behind their efforts. It is important to inspire people into taking action and committing to the success of the ABM programme. As such, the vision needs to be clear, coherent and deliverable.

A strong focus of the programme was on the alignment of the activities of line departments with the ABMs, which required extensive coordination and facilitation. While the complexity of these tasks cannot be overestimated, it is also vital to create a vision capable of capturing the imagination of various line departments, as well as officials and other stakeholders. The establishment and sustaining of a programme vision will help to motivate people on an ongoing basis (UNISA, 2010).
The ABM programme was intended to provide significant turnaround in areas of need in a relatively short space of time. This required that processes be streamlined and that delivery takes place at a high level of sustained momentum. Fast track service delivery required an overall plan, which guided the direction of the programme. It was also important to obtain buy-in and identify the actions that were required in order to proceed.

The institutional structure of the ABM programme needed to be carefully designed so that all parties took responsibility and were accountable for their obligations. It was also critical to populate the programme with competent officials who could play leadership, management and monitoring roles in the individual ABMs and their projects.

In several ABMs, the first two years of programme development were predominately committed to institutional relationships, planning and design, fund-raising, and getting effective buy-in from stakeholders, without which very little implementation is possible. The ABM programme struggled under pressure for delivery during this start-up period. As such, it is important to judge the effectiveness of ABMs during this period not in terms of delivery and spending, but rather in terms of how well they established institutional structures to ensure delivery.

It was important for the ABMs not to be isolated programmes – they needed to be located within the planning frameworks and processes of the municipality. ABMs are not themselves implementing agents and they rely on line departments for implementation. A link between ABM plans and the municipality’s IDP and Spatial Development Frameworks (SDFs) was crucial. These provided context, meaning and substance to the planning processes within the broader municipal process.

The ABMs were weak on Knowledge Management and research through the life of the programme. The value of ongoing Knowledge Management and research cannot be overstated. It is essential to have a baseline of conditions against which to test the success of interventions. There is little point in monitoring and evaluating a project if the initial baseline research has not been thoroughly conducted. In addition, research is necessary for the development of projects that will address the actual needs of an area or group of beneficiaries. Research outcomes impact on the nature and scale of resources committed to a project. They provide an understanding of the degree of need and the availability of capacity to address development challenges, and help locate opportunities for development in the hands of communities.

This approach to integration should not be confined to municipal operations. Public forums for integrated participatory processes should be created and facilitated to encourage participation by local communities. These forums should
reflect the key organizational mechanisms that are required for implementation while their organizational structures should ensure political accountability and technical coordination. Decisions need to be made regarding the size and regularity of meetings. The Municipal Systems Act requires municipalities to communicate to communities information regarding the availability of such mechanisms, processes and procedures, in order to encourage and facilitate community participation (Municipal Systems Act: 2000). However, these processes should not replace any existing municipal structures, but should rather be one of several mechanisms through which citizens can participate in their own development and that of their communities and help to influence municipal decisions.

ABMs were faced with the complex task of coordinating and aligning functions of line departments with ABM structures, leading to a sometimes tense relationship. Such tensions may have arisen from the perception among line department officials that a selected project is not appropriate, with the resulting lack of commitment contributing to passivity from line departments.

Each ABM champion needs to fly the ABM flag within the municipality. It is critical that an ABM has a certain status, derived from its position in relation to other line departments. If the ABM is close to the Mayor and City Manager’s office, it is likely to enjoy a greater profile and enhanced authority within the municipality and thus receive the necessary recognition and commitment from line departments. Such a positioning further ensures that the ABM is able to establish a database of contacts with senior officials who are responsible for various aspects of implementation and decision making in the municipality. This can then be extended to include other stakeholders who are sufficiently motivated to work beyond the call of duty around ABM activity.

The ABM programme sometimes duplicates lines of responsibility, causing tension and hampering service delivery. For example, the authority of an ABM Manager who is responsible for a specific geographical area might overlap with the authority of a line department manager who has projects in that area. Conflict may arise over other issues such as funding or progress monitoring. In order to avoid duplication of efforts and to minimise resistance to ABM programmes, it is critical that clear lines of accountability be established. ABM structures should be accountable to municipal departments, while departments should be also accountable to ABMs in terms of work delivered.

It is essential to locate ABM offices close to the target area, since it allows the ABM to be completely in touch with the issues on the ground, to be accessible to the community, and to focus directly on the work at hand. Similarly, line department functions should be integrated to serve one geographic area. This geographical focus commits resources and planning attention
to the ABM areas in a coordinated and integrated manner. This approach ensures that a dedicated team of specialists and officials can help to build synergy in the governance, planning and implementation of developments in a specific area. It should be noted that where there has been a strong show of commitment from the municipality – usually expressed by establishing offices in the area – private investment tends to follow infrastructure investment.

This approach is not without its management complexity. Tensions do arise between the relative freedom of ABMs and the demands and constraints of line department functioning. While this approach is palatable to those departments with a spatial or geographic focus, it is difficult to get buy in from non-spatial departments.

Sourcing the financial resources for the programme and its components forms the backbone of an ABM programme. Feasibility of delivery depends on resources being procured timeously. It is critical to establish processes and procedures for accessing financial support. In addition, streamlining the procurement processes is necessary to ensure the steady progress of development, which again depends on timeously provided funding.

The administration function of an ABM needs to be managed properly and monitored by the Programme Office. This helps in tracking problems, monitoring progress, auditing and contractual reporting, reporting to funders and authorities and in attending to any legal issues that may arise. A good secretariat and registry function is important.

4.2 Outcomes and Sustainability of ABMs

Outcomes

The benefits of community involvement on projects are well known and are reinforced by the experience of the ABMs. The management of ABMs has ensured that community members were involved in projects in terms of job creation, decision-making and planning. In this way, communities have been empowered around the management and execution of projects. This has provided them with insight into the complexity of the management and supervision required in community-based initiatives. Community involvement attracts people motivated around community issues and maximizes the skills and experience that individuals and communities can bring to projects taking place in their area.

The ABMs also used consultants or service providers in an expert capacity. However, in areas where specialists have not been used, the programme has nonetheless succeeded in building capacity within existing municipal structures.

One of the problems encountered was that the
programmes have limited life spans and there is consequently no clear long-term commitment to processes begun by ABMs. It is possible to deliver a huge amount within five years, but an area cannot be turned around entirely within this period, and development is always an ongoing process. What has been possible in the five-year period is to set in place some of the catalysts for that ongoing process. It was also possible, with funding and high-level expertise, to deliver substantial infrastructure and social development programmes.

**Sustainability**

The ABMs relied heavily on municipal revenues and did not attempt to attract further funding from other sources. This created a dependency on the funding from the EU. During the EU funding period, ABMs had a degree of flexibility regarding their development spend, which was allowed to roll over between financial years. This allowed them a greater degree of freedom in decision-making. Continued delivery of value-added services within the framework of more limited resources can only be done with innovative practices and planning processes. Additionally, a process of prioritisation, which is protected from political interests, is also needed, as is an efficient and transparent delivery system that is able to implement development in cooperation with stakeholders.

Another issue is that, although beneficiaries of ABM projects can be identified, they are not quantifiable and the impact on beneficiaries is not clear due to a lack of baseline and outcome indicators. At the beneficiary level, the programme enhanced the ability of the municipality to provide services in previously neglected areas. Without the programme, line functions would have been forced to provide these services.

Competition for scarce resources in an ABM area can result in resources being used in the pursuit of narrow political interests. The institutional capacity of ABMs can be enhanced through the development of guidelines or manuals that outline an overall strategy for engaging stakeholders around decision-making. Other important activities include carefully defined criteria for projects, the inclusion of appropriate stakeholders and the provision of publicly available information.

The five-year time period has resulted in insufficient time for strategic reflection, for understanding the alignment of the ABMs functions in relation to broader municipal priorities, and for general activities and delivery. There could have been greater strategic engagement from the ABMs with the municipality's budget and planning cycles. Furthermore, ABMs need to dedicate resources in order to create standards and systems of service delivery. The general point here is that the programme should have been extended to at least 10 years.

Although the municipality has chosen to discontinue the programme as an institutional
mechanism, former ABM programme activities continue to be incorporated into municipal structures. It is important to note that the benefits and development spin-offs of many of the ABM interventions were sustainable at a programme-wide level due to the sense of ownership engendered in beneficiaries. The ABM programme is replicable for the purposes of service delivery and the upgrading of infrastructure, provided that the necessary resources and capacity are available.

The institutional sustainability potential of ABMs varies, and is dependent upon the needs of a specific area and the resources required to satisfy those needs. At a programme-wide level, the benefits and development spin-offs of ABM interventions are sustainable.

4.3 In Summary

The ABM programme was rolled out over a period of five years. In this book, we identified issues and lessons which cut across the programme. We learned that ABMs should be characterized by a clear vision and inspired leadership which can motivate people to take action and commit to the success of projects by placing resources behind initiatives. ABM champions are required to manage any issues or blockages that might arise during the implementation of projects. The choice of ABM areas and projects needs to be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

It is essential that clear lines of accountability and reporting be established between the various line departments and ABMs. Monitoring and evaluation should be an ongoing process throughout the implementation of the programme. ABMs need to be guided and supported by the municipality’s IDP. This should occur within a defined framework of social, economic and developmental goals. ABM objectives should be measurable and specific and defined in terms of incremental achievements rather than ambitious end-goals. ABMs cannot be developed overnight and, as such, the first two years should be focused on institutional development and building stakeholder relationships.

Research as an ongoing function is essential to establish baseline conditions for interventions. A Programme Office needs to be established and empowered in order to provide strategic direction and effective management, backup and support.

When implementing projects, ABMs need to focus equally on infrastructural and human development, whilst ensuring fast track service delivery. Resources need to be mobilized to ensure successful implementation and delivery. A network of contacts needs to be established to ensure smooth decision-making and delivery. Successful ABMs require a blend of technical, social, interactive and personal abilities. A balance of these abilities will ensure that the delivery team can function at their best.
4.4 Future Research

While this publication highlights many learning points in the programme that would benefit other municipalities, it is not always clear whether some of the issues that have arisen are universal in nature or are related to factors specific to eThekwini Municipality, and the municipality needs to consider further research. This does not mean that municipalities cannot benefit from the lessons learned, the general ABM experience and examples of good practice. What is most important is that municipalities that are implementing similar programmes reflect on their projects from time to time if they are to be assured of success.

Using Mile’s Resources for your Municipality

Municipalities should interact with the ABMs beyond the parameters of individual projects. Teams from both ABMs and their municipalities should meet and share their experiences. This can be done through the Municipal Institute of Learning whose details are available below.

Physical Address
Intuthuko Junction
750 Mary Thipe Street
Cato Manor
Durban
4001

Telephone
+27 (0)31 - 3224513

Email
mile@durban.gov.za

Website
www.mile.org.za
Resources and further reading


6. eThekwini Municipality (2007) Innovations: Good Practice from the eThekwini Municipality, Corporate Policy Unit, Durban, South Africa


Abbreviations and acronyms

ABI      Area Based Initiatives
ABM      Area Based Management
ABMDP    Area Based Management and Development Programme
CBD      Central Business District
CMDP     Cato Manor Development Programme
EMA      eThekwini Municipal Area
EU       European Union
IDP      Integrated Development Planning
INK      Inanda, Ntuzuma, KwaMashu
iTRUMP   Inner eThekwini Regeneration and Urban Management Programme
LED      Local Economic Development
MILE     Municipal Institute of Learning
PO       Programme Office
SDB      South Durban Basin
SMME     Small Micro Medium Enterprises
URP      Urban Renewal Programme