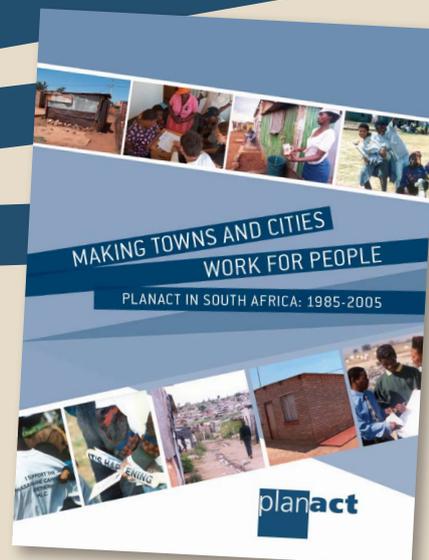


# MAKING TOWNS AND CITIES WORK FOR PEOPLE

PLANACT IN SOUTH AFRICA: 1985-2005



This book is a robust collection of recollections and commentary on issues of democratization and urban development in South Africa, from the perspective of an NGO that has thrived through more than 20 years of dramatic political and socio-economic change.

Through all of these changes—from the idealistic days of the struggle against apartheid, to the thrilling but tense transition to democracy, and the slow consolidation of a new state apparatus—Planact has strived to be a resource for disadvantaged communities attempting collectively to take charge of their own development, as well as a place for debate, experimentation, and innovation in developing pro-poor, people-centred approaches to urban policy and practice. Planact has continued to be involved in putting policies into practice, and testing the conditions in which they can be made workable as well as exposing the barriers that make them unworkable.

Planact is but one organization, but, together with other NGOs, its influence can be felt at many levels in South African society. NGOs and civil society organizations have faced an uncertain environment in the post-apartheid years, yet they have played a critical role in transformation, a role which continues to be significant and which should be more widely recognised. The book, in part, seeks to stake a claim for the permanent role of organizations of civil society in the development of the country.

In its 17 chapters, this volume explores a slice of Planact's history, including perspectives from its networking partners such as the Urban Sector Network. It will appeal to leaders in government and civil society, development practitioners, scholars, and all readers interested in South Africa's development path.

In *Making Towns and Cities Work for People*:

*"...[Planact] is truly an organization of its time, progressive in the true sense of the term. It has always been open to other perspectives on the issues of a socially just future in the pursuit of egalitarian possibilities. It is this openness and desire to act in ways that acknowledges different roots into the struggle for equitable rights of the City that is Planact's most defining legacy.*

--Ahmedi Vawda, development practitioner

*"...the struggle for justice, democracy, for the sustainability of our planet is a marathon, it is not a sprint. And those of us who have been privileged and touched and been given an opportunity to participate in those struggles have to recognise that our calling is a lifetime calling because these issues are going to be with us for time to come. Part of how we can keep our morale and energy up, when so many things are against us, is to keep a long-term vision. We need to keep a sense of optimism. The process of capturing memory is a political exercise; it is an important exercise – and, hopefully, it will inform the next 20 years of Planact and many other NGOs working in South Africa."*

-- Kumi Naidoo, former secretary general of CIVICUS

For more information, contact Tshidi Morotolo at  
Planact, 011-403-6291 or  
e-mail: [tshidi@planact.org.za](mailto:tshidi@planact.org.za).  
Website: [www.planact.org.za](http://www.planact.org.za)

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