

**Poverty Reduction in City Development Strategies:
The case of Johannesburg, 1999-2001**

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CONTEXT AND DISCLAIMERS

The overall hypothesis of the research run by GHK for the Cities Alliance DFID on poverty reduction and City Development Strategies, which informs what I will be saying today, was:

*“the greater the extent and the more effective the participation of the poor, the greater the beneficial impacts of a City Development Strategy (CDS) on the poor”.*¹

Before I go any further, based on the Joburg experience (Box 1), I need to say that I don't fully agree with the hypothesis.

Box 1: Reasons from Joburg that suggest participation of the poor in a CDS is not a guarantee of pro poor outcomes

- Pro poor outcomes sometimes derive from factors outside the participatory process, such as a pro poor legal framework.
- Even when every effort to include the poor in the participatory process is made, the balance of forces among stakeholders may mitigate against pro-poor outcomes. This may be as much the product of conflict between poor groups who have different interests, as it is of elite capture of participatory processes.
- The poor may gain more from a boycott of the CDS participatory forum than by participation in it, when by implication they legitimate the process and its outcomes.

I would therefore situate the pro-poor opportunities of participation, especially at the city scale, in the context of other key elements of a CDS. These might include:

Dimensions of a pro-poor CDS in a middle income metro	Accurate understanding of the causes, dimensions and dynamics of poverty and inequality within the city.
	Financial and human capacity to implement the pro poor strategies identified in the CDS.
	An enabling legal framework to achieve poverty reduction at the city scale.
	Technical systems to design and implement and monitor pro-poor strategies within the city.
	Political and administrative will to reduce urban poverty.
	Participation of the poor in the conception, design and execution of the CDS.

¹ An electronic version of the original report prepared for GHK is available from the conference organizers and a hard copy from the GHK stand at this workshop.

THE CDS PROCESS IN JOHANNESBURG

Against these disclaimers I am going to use the next 10 minutes to explore the Johannesburg CDS participatory process from the viewpoint of the poor.

The emergence of a democracy in South Africa in 1994 and the creation of a comprehensive system of local government for the first time in the history of South Africa meant that the context in which the Joburg CDS evolved was one of institutional fragility and uncertainty.

- As in many other transitional democracies, issues of devolution, the clarification of local government powers and functions relative to funding sources, plus administrative and institutional reorganisation infused the introduction of strategic urban planning.

What is more, the 'Johannesburg' municipal area contributes 13 percent of the country's GDP. But the Council's record in transforming conditions in the large African townships of Alexandra and Soweto are perceived as the political litmus test of the pro-poor objectives of the post apartheid government.

- In other words, the competing imperatives of promoting growth and reducing poverty have dominated the Johannesburg CDS process.

So – an awful lot was expected of the Joburg CDS. Expectations focussed on the participatory process as the mechanism that would deliver a consensual, negotiated settlement on the future of Joburg's governance.

The World Bank's ambitious definition of a City Development Strategy (CDS) as "*...both a process and a product that identifies ways of creating the conditions for urban sustainability along dimensions of liveability, competitiveness, good management and governance, and bank ability*" is a useful starting point for reflecting on the Johannesburg CDS experience.

The CDS process in Johannesburg extends over at least two years and had diverse outcomes, some of which have been implemented, none of which have been explicitly evaluated for their impact on the poor, other than through a Peer Review undertaken through the South African Cities Network.

- My focus here is therefore not on the pro-poor outcomes of the CDS, but on the extent to which the poor were able to effectively voice themselves within the participatory process.

Elements of the Joburg CDS process

	iGoli 2002 (October 1997 –2000)	iGoli 2010 (Research and Forum process 2000)	2030 Vision (Launched February 2002)
Context	Fiscal crisis and interim local government structure	Consolidation of metropolitan structure in final phase of interim local government	Post apartheid metropolitan government in place
Strategy Drivers	Provincial and national government, leaders who make up the iGoli 2002 Emergency Committee	Transitional Metropolitan Council, Stakeholders and external consultants	City Managers Office – endorsed by Mayoral Committee
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 year revenue-led budget, credit control • Institutional rationalisation – creation of metropolitan structure • ‘Privatisation’ and other restructuring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data gathering • Linked focus on economic growth, competitiveness and basic needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An African World Class city • Economic growth – increased GGP through skills development and crime reduction
Participatory process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Councillors • Represented not elected appointments on Emergency Committee • Council negotiations with municipal unions • Appointment of 2010 Steering Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Councillors • Extensive process of consultation through a survey, stakeholders’ forum, focus groups and city summit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected Councillors workshop • Public forums, specialist workshops and a ‘people’s assembly’
Ideological emphasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced economic growth, efficiency and poverty reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic growth

What emerges from this overview of the Johannesburg CDS process is that:

- that there were specific opportunities as well as constraints that were imposed by the post apartheid restructuring of local government – but these are far from unique and relate to devolution, fiscal crisis and other changes in city management evident elsewhere in the world.
- the Council and civil society were, perhaps overly, ambitious in the Joburg CDS participatory process – but because of its scope there should be lessons for others seeking to set up a CDS participatory process.

LESSONS AND OBSERVATIONS FROM THE JOHANNESBURG CDS

Strengths of participation in the Joburg CDS

1. The views of the poor were included in the CDS through diverse forms of participation – including surveys, panels, single purpose steering committees, summits. The Johannesburg experience suggests that the voices of the poor are lost when they are included with other stakeholders and no separate opportunities are created for gathering their views and priorities. Creating specialist technical support can overcome some of the problems of the poor.
2. Dedicated mechanisms were established for consultation of the poor to ensure their inclusion in the identification, design and implementation of 2010. For example, when the 2010 Steering Committee proved to be unrepresentative, focus groups were run, with the City making a particular effort to reach poor areas.
3. Within the focus groups the format that was followed was to ask each person in the group to answer each question to ensure that all voices were heard.
4. Elected representatives of the poor dominate the Council and were able to engage directly with officials, making substantial pro-poor revisions to 2030. This highlights the importance of building party political expertise on city scale issues such as PPPs, planning, economic debates etc.
5. A technical support structure for citizens with different interests was created – to enable their participation in the CDS and to assist NGOs and CBOs in defining their priorities. However, its brief was fairly narrow and the technical team got embroiled in wider politics around the CDS that undermined its’ legitimacy. What the technical support highlighted was the inability of civil society that is organised at the community level or along sectoral issues, to readily engage in city scale debates without specialist support.

Problems in the Participatory process Joburg CDS

1. There were a number of areas where the technical details of the participatory process were found wanting (e.g. in incomplete lists of civil society representatives; budgeting for an extended participatory process etc.).
2. National political debates cast a shadow over the overall ideological path local government should follow in the CDS. This included the imposition of internal party discipline over discussions around the content of the Joburg CDS.
3. The demands of the fiscal crisis that meant that Johannesburg was unable to sequence its’ CDS as it might have preferred, with data collection preceding strategy formulation.
4. The intergovernmental structure within which the CDS must be framed and executed raises problems of jurisdiction and boundaries. An example would be in the area of crime prevention – which in South Africa is not a local government competency but emerged out of the participatory process as a key area of action.
5. No indicators of successful outcomes of the participatory process were defined.
6. There are parallel structures of political parties and organised civil society that both represented the poor in the CDS process. At times in Joburg these structures were in conflict with each other and whereas the participatory process was designed primarily for civil society involvement, urban NGOs and CBOs are not organised at the city scale - and so did not always serve the interests of the poor effectively on the CDS.

CONCLUSIONS

Both because of weaknesses inherent in participatory process and because participation needs to be situated within the wider context of the political, financial and administrative capacities of the governance regime of a city, participation cannot be seen as the panacea for driving the poverty reduction agenda within a CDS. Nevertheless, the poor can use participation as an effective device for influencing city scale strategic planning. But the Johannesburg experience suggests that while there are some general pointers for success, such as ensuring that civil society understands urban poverty and is able to engage at the city scale, how the poor participate in a CDS process should not be predetermined and must be appropriate for local political realities.