

Durban's Local Agenda 21 programme: tackling sustainable development in a post-apartheid city

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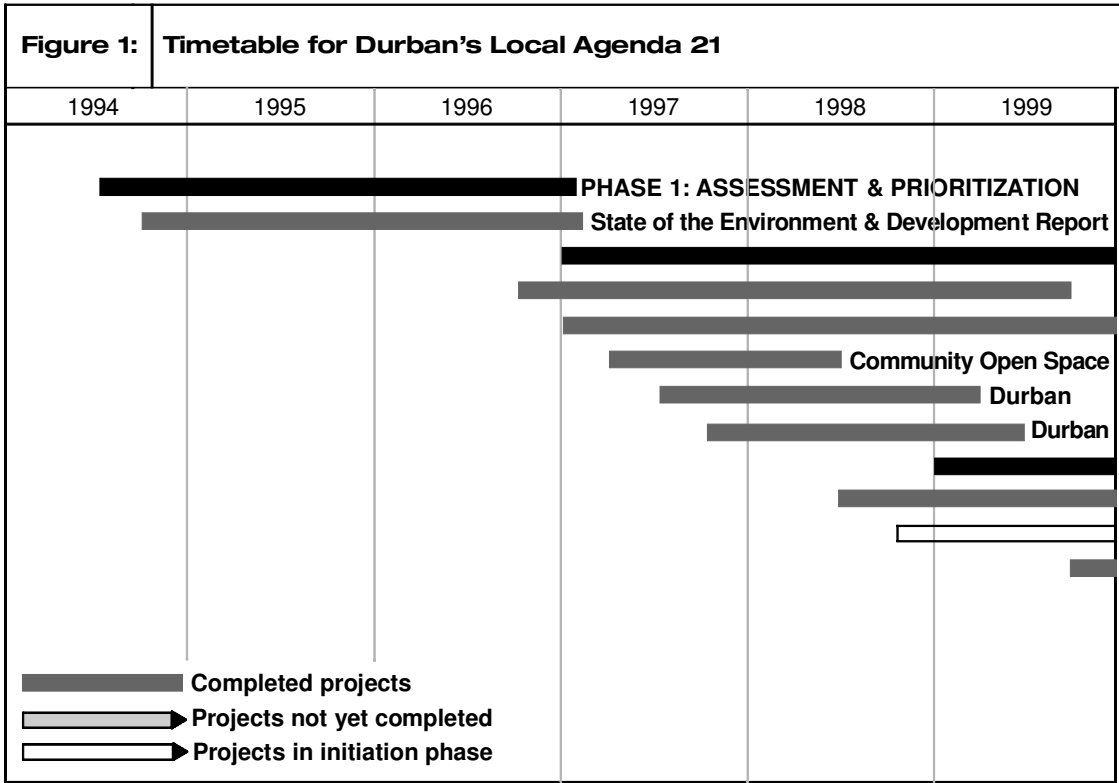
SUMMARY: *Durban's Local Agenda 21 programme has been at the forefront of the Local Agenda 21 movement in Southern Africa since the mid-1990s. This paper describes the first four phases of the programme, 1994-2001. The paper also outlines the difficulties faced in localizing the sustainable development concept in Durban. Key amongst these challenges was the initiation and development of the programme during a period of local government transformation and restructuring. The perception that Local Agenda 21 has a "green" focus and is "anti-development" (due to its location within an environmental department) has also resulted in a lack of proactive and sustained political support. These problems have been exacerbated by limited human and financial resources, which have restricted the programme's capacity to build support and consensus amongst stakeholders. Durban's Local Agenda 21 programme has, however, helped keep sustainable development on the city's agenda and has provided a mechanism through which local stakeholders can interact with local government around environmental management issues. The paper concludes with a section on the lessons learned and factors required to ensure future progress.*

I. INTRODUCTION

IN 1994, DURBAN became the first city in South Africa to accept the Local Agenda 21 mandate as a corporate responsibility. Since then, Durban has been at the forefront of the country's Local Agenda 21 movement. The main message to emerge from Durban's experiences is that Local Agenda 21's implicit promise of improved sustainability often obscures the real difficulties encountered in realizing this goal. These challenges include: the lack of substantial political support; the tendency to view sustainable development as a "green" issue; the lack of resources to build broad-based consensus; administrative power struggles; and the difficulty of directing external resources in a way that serves local rather than donor interests. Frankness about these difficulties is essential if the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 is to become a forum for realistic and focused debate and is to produce meaningful change in the twenty-first century.

II. DRIVING FORCES FOR CHANGE

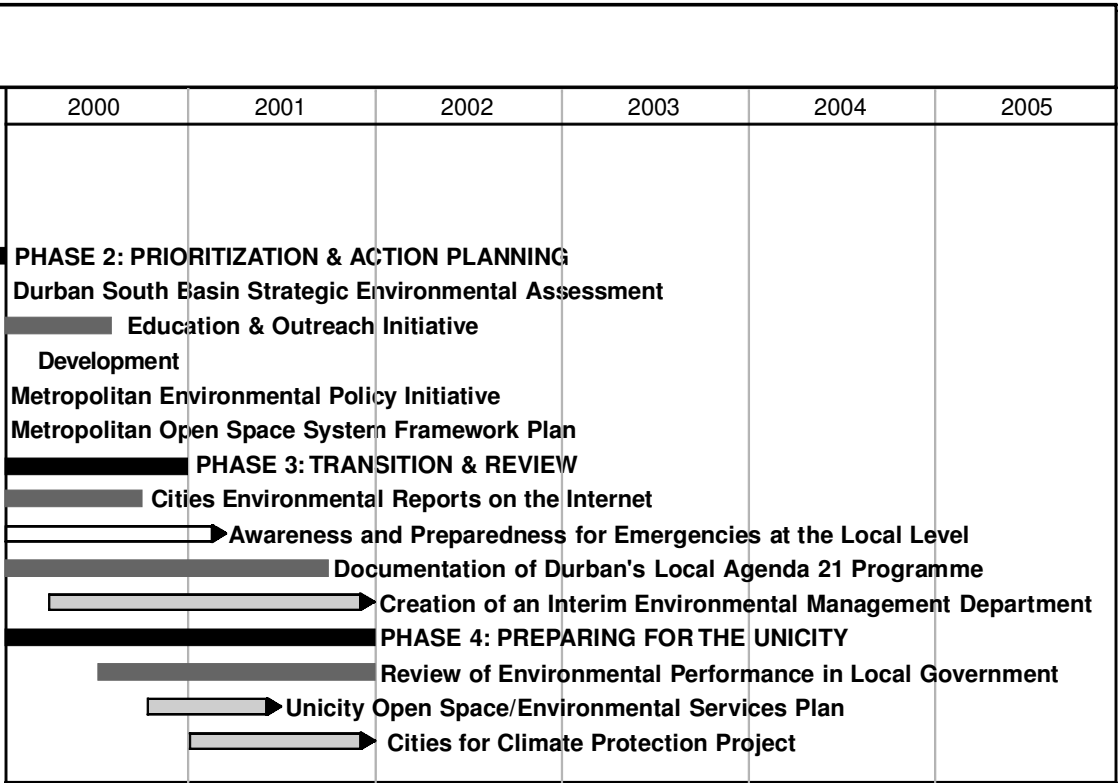
IN ORDER TO understand Durban's Local Agenda 21 experience, it is necessary to understand the context within which it has taken place.



Durban's commitment to Local Agenda 21 is the result of three important factors. At the global level, Agenda 21 and the 1992 Earth Summit prioritized sustainable development internationally and highlighted the importance of local action in realizing this goal. At the national level, post-apartheid⁽¹⁾ democratization created a "window of opportunity" for new concepts to be debated and accepted by previously conservative governmental structures. At a local level (i.e. Durban) these national and international trends were accompanied by the establishment of an Environmental Management Branch (EMB) that subsequently became the Local Agenda 21 champion within the city.

The visible and vocal role played by the EMB in Durban has influenced the programme's successes and failures. It has, for example, helped keep Local Agenda 21 and sustainable development on local government's agenda but it has also contributed to a situation where a strong and dedicated political champion has not yet emerged. This situation has been exacerbated by the perception that Local Agenda 21 is a "foreign" concept largely concerned with "green" issues. This lack of "political mainstreaming" poses serious challenges to the programme's long-term sustainability. A further complication is that local government in South Africa has been in a state of continuous transformation since 1994. The high levels of uncertainty associated with this process have impacted on the development of Durban's programme and necessitated a phased approach to implementation. To date, three phases have been completed and a fourth, Unicity phase, is in progress (due for completion in 2002).

1. Apartheid policies created a society divided along racial lines and exacerbated the economic gulf between the wealthy, advantaged minority and the poor, disadvantaged majority.



III. PHASE 1: ASSESSMENT AND PRIORITIZATION (1994-1996)

THE AIM OF Durban's Local Agenda 21 programme is to develop an environmental management system (EMS) that will ensure that social, economic and ecological concerns are integrated into all planning and development processes within the city. From the outset of the initiative, it was clear that the lack of information on the city's environmental status was an obstacle to realizing this goal. The preparation of Durban's first State of the Environment and Development Report (SOE&DR) was therefore undertaken as the first step in EMS development.

A participative approach was taken in the planning and execution of the SOE&DR project. This included the establishment of three participative fora to engage communities, business and industry, and local government stakeholders in discussions around the project, and the initiation of case studies in selected local communities to probe environmental and developmental priorities. The resulting SOE&DR highlighted the sustainability challenges and opportunities in 17 key environment and development sectors⁽²⁾ in the city. These were prioritized through a community-based process and resulted in five environment and development issues emerging as the top priorities amongst Durban's communities:

- promoting peace, safety and security in the metropolitan region;
- improving water and sanitation management;
- developing an integrated housing policy;
- establishing a structure to coordinate land use, transportation and environmental planning in the metropolitan area; and

2. Terrestrial resources, atmospheric resources, freshwater resources, marine resources, urban form, housing, transport, water supply and sanitation, waste, energy, economy, education, health, violence and peace, governance, city finances and the legal framework.

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- institutionalizing the integrated environmental management procedure of the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.



Box 1:	Local Agenda 21 develops understanding
<p>Case study interviews were undertaken in communities with different racial and socioeconomic profiles during the State of the Environment and Development study. The findings of these interviews challenged the widely held assumption that given choices between environmental and developmental issues, the poor would prioritize development while the affluent, having met basic developmental needs, would give greater weight to environmental needs. The study suggested that there is a far more complex understanding of the inter-dependencies of environmental and developmental issues amongst local communities in Durban. It appeared that the wealthiest and the poorest shared an awareness of the need for environmental protection, the former because they have met other needs and the latter because so few of any of their needs have been met. This awareness was found in all the communities studied and was present in the thinking and views of both leadership and residents. Several community leaders acknowledged that environmental issues had been severely neglected in the past due to the need to focus on political changes but that with the new prioritization of developmental needs, the importance of environmental issues had become increasingly clear. This perspective was not, however, uncontested as many people from all sectors continued to stress the dichotomous relationship between environment and development, with development being regarded as of greater importance than environmental issues.</p>	

IV. PHASE 2: POLICY FORMULATION AND ACTION PLANNING (1997-1999)

A CLUSTER OF projects was initiated during Phase 2 of the Local Agenda 21 programme to begin addressing the priorities identified during Phase 1. These projects focused primarily on policy formulation and planning, and aimed to develop a framework within which stakeholders could act or contribute towards improved sustainability.

a. Durban Metropolitan Environmental Policy Initiative (DMEPI)

New legislation,⁽³⁾ promulgated as part of the local government restructuring process, assigned the coordination and planning of environmental management in Durban to metropolitan government, and implementation to local-level authorities. This acknowledged (for the first time) the need for a strategic and coordinating environmental management function that was distinct from the already existing operational activities of local councils and their line functions. The emergence of this new, strategic metropolitan-level environmental management function (together with increasing legislative requirements contained in emerging national and provincial environmental and planning law) made it clear that a restructuring of the environmental function within the city was necessary. In order to initiate this process, the Durban metropolitan council approved the development of Durban’s first environmental management policy and related institutional framework. The development of the policy represented the first building block of the city’s environmental management system and informed the thinking around options for an appropriate and supportive institutional framework.

3. Schedule 2 of the Local Government Transition Act [No 209 of 1993].



b. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Durban South Basin

The Durban South Basin is an environmental “hotspot” containing areas

of heavy industry and residential development located in close proximity to one another in a topographically contained region. It is the economic "heartland" of Durban and is South Africa's second most important manufacturing centre. Over the past several decades, the South Basin has become a focal point for community mobilization around environmental quality and justice issues. The aim of the SEA was to develop sustainable development guidelines to address existing problems and to guide future development in the area. The study examined potential short-term and long-term development scenarios for the South Basin and evaluated them against sustainable development criteria. The findings of the evaluation process suggested that the area was likely to retain an industrial character well into the foreseeable future and that the resources (financial and technological) required to address environmental quality issues were linked to the need to attract new industrial investment into the South Basin. The extensive public participation process undertaken during this project included an environmental education and capacity-building component. Although much time and effort was spent on this element of the project, it had limited impact due to the heightened tensions that existed between local government and local communities as a result of the study's finding that certain future development options could result in the loss of existing residential areas.

c. Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D'MOSS) framework plan

This project focused on the design of an open space plan to protect and guide the management of the city's natural resource base. A review of the role of open spaces in meeting the needs of a growing African city showed open spaces to have a key role in providing goods and services (such as water supply and pollution control) that are vital in meeting the basic needs of urban residents, in particular poor, conventionally unserved communities. In Durban, the total replacement value of these open space services was estimated – using international research in the field of resource economics – at R 2.24 billion per annum. This figure excluded the value of Durban's tourism sector, worth approximately R 3.5 million per annum. This project provided the opportunity to test the usefulness of tools such as resource economics in raising the profile of "green" issues on the political agenda.

d. Community open space development

In order to demonstrate the advantages of improved environmental management to local communities, a project was undertaken to create usable open spaces in high-density residential areas that would contribute to the ecological functioning of the open space system. This project was also intended to address community priorities such as poverty alleviation, improved quality of life, equal access to resources and job creation. The key problems encountered included: the lack of maintenance funds; vandalism; wasted resources; poor project management; and local communities' discontent at not being involved in the maintenance of the project areas. Successful projects were characterized by active councillor and community involvement. However, even in these areas, problems such as vandalism and a lack of adequate funds for maintenance limited the success of the intervention.

e. Education and outreach initiative

The lack of understanding amongst all stakeholder groups regarding the importance of environmental management, sustainable development and Local Agenda 21 prompted the initiation of an education and outreach programme. The initiative included the production of media materials, capacity-building and training opportunities, and the use of innovative tools such as street theatre.

Box 2: Local Agenda 21 on the street

“Green Bafana” was a street theatre performance developed to bring sustainability issues to life, and employed a trio of Zulu freelance actors. In the Zulu language and culture, *Bafana* means “the boys” but also denotes a connotation of popularity. The key theme of the play was that individual actions have an environmental impact, either positive or negative. The play also celebrated the positive actions being taken by local government and communities to improve quality of life and sustainability in Durban. The script emphasized the contribution that individuals can make towards improving the sustainability of local government services and the environment in general. The performance was targeted at school groups, local government officials and councillors.

V. PHASE 3: TRANSITION AND REVIEW (1999-2000)

FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION of Phase 2 it became apparent that there would be a significant transition period as preparations began for the establishment of the Durban Unicity. It was decided that the most strategic use of this time would be to consolidate work already done and to lay the foundations for future programme development.

a. Cities Environmental Reports on the Internet (CEROI) project

South Africa’s four largest cities participated in this international project.⁽⁴⁾ The aim of the CEROI project was to facilitate comparative global reporting through the development of a simple and easily understood State of the Environment Report template for the Internet. This represented an opportunity for Durban to increase the accessibility of the information collected within its Local Agenda 21 programme to a broader range of local, national and international stakeholders.

b. Documentation of Durban’s Local Agenda 21 programme as an international case study

European Commission funding from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) facilitated the documentation and publication of Durban’s Local Agenda 21 programme and created the opportunity to formally record and evaluate the work undertaken during the first seven years of the programme. This documentation process has been critical in developing an institutional memory in a situation where staff turnover levels are high and where institutional restructuring is a highly disruptive force.

4. The CEROI project was conceived and coordinated internationally by UNEP/GRID-Arendal (United Nations Environment Programme/Global Resources Information Database) in partnership with the ICLEI Cities 21 campaign.

c. Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level (APELL) project

The SEA project recommended the initiation of UNEP's APELL programme in order to better prepare Durban for technological and industrial accidents in the South Basin. Although a launch workshop was held, this project could not be formally initiated as a leading community-based organization in the South Basin withdrew from the process because of APELL's association with the SEA project. A subsequent mission by an overseas conflict resolution expert established the conditions to be met if APELL was to be undertaken successfully in Durban. Although all three stakeholder groups (local government, business/ industry, local communities) expressed their qualified commitment to these preconditions, the international funding organization that sponsored the mission declined to fund the Durban APELL project. The reasons given were that the expected project budget exceeded its financial means, the project would deviate from its core business and its national government policy for South Africa had shifted to priorities other than environmental protection and resource management. Although the funding organization has offered to assist Durban in obtaining alternative sponsorship, it is possible that this setback will result in the demise of the APELL initiative in Durban.

d. Education and outreach initiative – promotional event

Following a spate of staff resignations,⁽⁵⁾ the Environmental Management Branch suspended the education and outreach initiative. In order to ensure that the impact of the initiative was not entirely lost, a promotional event was held to focus the attention of key local government officials and politicians on the achievements of the programme. A series of posters and a video profiled the work undertaken during the first six years (1994-2000).

e. Creation of an Interim Environmental Management Structure

Following approval for the interim restructuring⁽⁶⁾ and expansion of the Environmental Management Branch flowing from the DMEPI process, approval was received in 2001 for the filling of seven of the 19 new posts created. A review of critical posts throughout the council, however, led to this decision being revisited and only two of the new posts being approved for advertisement. This effectively leaves the Environmental Management Branch in its current under-resourced form for the foreseeable future.

VI. PHASE 4: PREPARING FOR THE UNICITY (2000-2002)

THE TRANSITION FROM apartheid to democracy in South Africa has brought with it changes to the size and nature of many of the country's larger metropolitan areas. In Durban, there has been a metamorphosis from a municipal area of 300 square kilometres (pre-1996) to a transitional metropolitan area of 1,366 square kilometres (1996-2000) finally culminating in a Unicity⁽⁷⁾ (post-2000) of 2,297 square kilometres. This has resulted in large areas of peri-urban, rural and tribal land being included within the city's boundaries. Sixty per cent of Durban is currently consid-

5. This was largely due to the high workloads, poor salaries and limited opportunities for advancement in the under-resourced Environmental Management Branch.

6. Recommendations for final restructuring in the new Unicity council were also made but it was acknowledged that these would be addressed only in the medium to long term. The interim restructuring was a short-term measure to address immediate capacity shortages in the environmental function.

7. Now known as the eThekweni Municipality.

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ered to be peri-urban and rural in nature. The projects initiated during Phase 4 were a response to the required transition from a metropolitan to a Unicity administration.

a. Review of environmental performance in local government

A review of local government's performance against the requirements of the Durban metropolitan environmental management policy was identified as the next step in the development of the city's environmental management system (EMS). This process has identified six key projects that will assist in meeting the sustainability objectives of the city's recently released long-term development framework. It is likely, however, that the resource limitations of the Environmental Management Branch will restrict the extent to which it can further advance EMS development once this review process is complete.

b. Preparation of a Unicity Environmental Services Management Plan (UESMP)

This project focused on the extension of the metropolitan open space plan to the new Unicity boundaries. The Unicity plan differs from the previous metropolitan plan in that it includes only those areas considered to be critical to the sustainable provision of open space services. The metropolitan plan, however, included all areas considered to contribute to the ecological viability of the open space system. This change in design approach has resulted in a substantial reduction in the spatial footprint of the Unicity plan. Available financial and legal tools were also investigated with a view to ensuring that important open spaces in private ownership are not lost because of the owner's financial inability to maintain them, or through the implementation of existing, inappropriate development rights. Although the project was completed in June 2001, the Environmental Management Branch is continuing to refine the UESMP during the remainder of Phase 4. The Environmental Management Branch is also hoping to lay the foundations for the handover of the open space planning function to the future Unicity Parks Department so that the planning and management of the natural resource base can be undertaken by a single line function.

c. Cities for Climate Protection Project

Concerns linked to open space planning and air quality management in Durban suggested that there was a need to consider both the local and global implications of these problems. "Climate change" provided a useful umbrella under which the global impacts of these local problems could be debated. A subsequent bilateral grant agreement between the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) and USAID (US Agency for International Development) to implement a South African programme to address global climate change (with a specific focus on eight South African cities) will provide funding and technical assistance for the initiation of a climate protection project in Durban.

VII. DURBAN'S SUSTAINABILITY ROAD MAP

8. See: www.unesco.org/csi/pub/info/wise10.htm

IN REVIEWING DURBAN'S experiences, UNESCO's "wise practice" framework⁽⁸⁾ provides a useful tool for highlighting the lessons learned that may be of general applicability to other local authorities which are considering the initiation of a Local Agenda 21 programme.

- **Ensure long-term benefit.** *Benefits of the activity will be evident years from now and will improve environmental quality.*

Need for change. Durban has shown that Local Agenda 21 is not a pseudonym for "business as usual". It is a call for long-term change in all sectors. For government, this could mean changing its structures to ensure a critical mass of people and resources working towards sustainability or facilitating the involvement of local stakeholders in decision-making processes. For business and industry, it could mean changing modes of production to become responsible contributors to local and global sustainability rather than just a vehicle for economic gain. For communities, it could mean replacing activism with a willingness to sit at the bargaining table to discuss new and difficult issues. Because Local Agenda 21 programmes will have to mediate these processes, they must be flexible enough to meet the expectations of the different stakeholder groups and responsive enough to react to the new priorities and needs that will emerge through time.

Ripple effects. Local Agenda 21 processes are slow to unfold and require time to become well rooted in local administrations and political structures. Changes in attitudes do not occur instantaneously. Because of the evolving nature of these processes, it is possible that decisions made at one point will have consequences later on in the process. This "ripple effect" needs to be managed and the possible long-term consequences of all decision making critically evaluated.

- **Capacity-building and institutional strengthening.** *The activity should provide improved management capabilities and education for the stakeholder groups as well as knowledge and efforts to protect the local environment.*

Need for capacity-building. Because the concept of sustainable development is so complex and the term "Local Agenda 21" foreign to so many, capacity-building and education are critical elements of any Local Agenda 21 programme. This capacity-building must be an ongoing process rather than a one-off exercise. Capacity-building must also be a priority task rather than the first programme element to be sacrificed when resources and skills are scarce. In order to be successful, Local Agenda 21 programmes must also acknowledge the capacity mismatch that exists between stakeholder groups. This is an important consideration as these programmes seek to create partnerships for local action under conditions where each partner will usually have different skills and capacity-building needs. One size does not fit all! Capacity-building is also important in ensuring that processes are not dominated by the agendas of gatekeeper groups.

Need for a critical institutional mass. There is a need to establish a critical institutional mass to sustain momentum and ensure delivery. This is necessary as Local Agenda 21 programmes require widespread networking and partnership development, a process that cannot be undertaken successfully by one or even a few people. Where this critical institutional mass is not achieved, there is a danger that there will be too strong a reliance on programme champion(s). Under these

circumstances, programme sustainability becomes strongly aligned with the commitment and energy of individuals, a situation that is highly unsustainable.

- **Sustainability.** *The activity adheres to the principles of sustainability (the extent to which the results will last and development will continue once the project/programme has ended).*

The need for mainstreaming. Working towards greater sustainability in the urban environment is a complex task involving the coordination of stakeholders, resources and priorities. Because it will never occur spontaneously, it must be planned for. For this reason, it is imperative that Local Agenda 21 programmes are mainstreamed (i.e. prioritized within the strategic planning processes of local government) in order to ensure broadscale commitment and involvement. Local Agenda 21 programmes in the developing world particularly, need to have a strong developmental focus and must demonstrate how sustainability can help meet people's basic needs and improve quality of life. Location within an environmental department therefore brings with it the danger that these processes will be seen as "green" or anti-development.

Need for adequate resourcing. Human and financial resource limitations will have severe impacts on Local Agenda 21 programmes. These range from the inability to undertake work, to the need to curtail or stop successful initiatives. Preventing the wastage of human and financial resources will require that Local Agenda 21 programmes are adequately resourced from the beginning. This is important as stakeholder expectations are raised through involvement, and the inability to complete the project or implement the resulting recommendations creates mistrust and reduces commitment to future projects.

Grab opportunities. Local Agenda 21 programmes should make use of "windows of opportunity". This does not mean that programmes should be deliberately opportunistic in nature but rather, that they should be able to use changing circumstances (e.g. political transformation) to their advantage. The drawback is that the change and uncertainty that often characterize these "windows of opportunity" can have equally negative consequences for the Local Agenda 21 process, making it difficult to plan proactively and impacting on the motivation and commitment of staff.

Catalysts and implementers. There is a division between role players who act as "catalysts" and those who act as "implementers" in any Local Agenda 21 programme. Typically, "catalysts" initiate new projects, promote new ideas and seek out new problem-solving techniques. Every "catalyst" must, however, be partnered by an accompanying implementing agent to give effect to these new ideas. Unless both capacities are present in local government, many sustainable development initiatives are unlikely to go beyond the drawing board.

- **Transferability.** *Aspects of the activity can be applied to other sites, in or outside the country.*

No carbon copies. Local Agenda 21 processes are not standardized and the individual needs and priorities of each city should be used to craft a city-specific programme. Although key principles and methodologies may be transferable between cities, in each case these have to be applied or used by people and institutions with a deep knowledge of the local context.

- **Consensus-building.** *The activity should benefit a majority of the stakeholder groups while bearing in mind that, in some cases, certain*

under-privileged groups may need to be treated as special cases.

Need for compromise. All too often, the notion of sustainable development is taken to imply a "win-win" scenario. This is misleading, as there are likely to be instances where the move to greater sustainability produces situations that are regarded by some stakeholders as "win-lose" scenarios. This implies that Local Agenda 21 programmes will be arenas for difficult decision-making and that they will have to rely on strong and visionary leadership to ensure that the best long-term decisions prevail. Particular care must be taken where potential losers belong to vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, in order to ensure that improved sustainability for the many does not further peripheralize the few. These groups must be fully engaged in determining and overseeing the process of change.

Conflict management. Where competition exists between well-established and entrenched power bases, new integrative initiatives such as Local Agenda 21 may be seen as threatening, signalling the emergence of a new competing power base or as an attempt to control existing ones. Local Agenda 21 practitioners should not think that because they advocate a better, more sustainable future, this idea will be readily accepted or embraced by other stakeholder groups. Some stakeholders could have vested interests in perpetuating unsustainability for short-term gain. Local Agenda 21 programmes can therefore be highly conflictual in nature and this must be planned for through the establishment of conflict-management processes and structures that regularly bring together different stakeholder groups and power bases for debate, dialogue and capacity-building in order to build trust and new partnerships.

- **Participatory process.** *Participation of all stakeholder groups – where the intentions of all groups are known – and the involvement of individuals is intrinsic to the process.*

Champions. The scale and complexity of the global environmental crisis often serves to trivialize the role of the individual. In Local Agenda 21 processes, a single person or small groups of people can and do make a difference. Local Agenda 21 programmes must therefore make space for more than just stakeholder groups, they must facilitate action by highly motivated individuals, particularly those who will act as champions. Champions are important as they provide continuity when interest wanes amongst other stakeholders, help brand processes, provide a rallying point for people with similar interests and are often instrumental in unblocking stalled or difficult processes. Without hardworking and committed champions, no Local Agenda 21 programme can hope to succeed or survive in the long term. At the same time, there are potential pitfalls associated with too strong a reliance on champions. There is the danger when a champion moves on (either geographically or in terms of interest) that the programme will lose momentum or collapse entirely. This does not mean that champions are irreplaceable but, rather, that Local Agenda 21 programmes should work towards the identification of a range of champions amongst all stakeholder groups (e.g. amongst city administrators in different line functions, politicians, community groups and NGOs) and help build their capacity to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the programme.

- **Effective and efficient communication process.** *A multi-directional communication process involving dialogue, consultation and*

discussion is needed to attain awareness.

Consultation. The success of the consultation and participation processes within any Local Agenda 21 programme is often the best barometer of overall sustainability. Effective participation and consultation requires the creation of small, committed and accountable stakeholder groups that can play an integral role in the planning and implementation of projects. A structured approach to participation (i.e. clear objectives and rules for interactions, defined roles and responsibilities) also provides a mechanism for addressing the distrust that can exist between stakeholders. By working together within an agreed format, new understandings and friendships are developed.

- **Culturally respectful.** *The process values local traditional and cultural frameworks while also challenging their environmental validity.*

The challenge of cultural diversity. In a culturally and politically diverse society, Local Agenda 21 programmes must employ different tools and approaches to communicate ideas to stakeholders in terms that are meaningful to them.

- **Gender and/or other sensitivity issues.** *The process accounts for the many aspects of gender and/or other sensitivity issues.*

The silent constituency. To date, Durban's Local Agenda 21 programme has not focused specifically on gender-linked or other sensitivity issues or problems. This is not a result of a lack of awareness but, rather, the result of focusing limited resources on issues that are perceived to have greater developmental and political significance. This demonstrates how easily this aspect of sustainable development can be overlooked. Mechanisms will have to be found to mainstream gender and other sensitivity concerns, particularly in the cities of the developing world. This will require a diversity of interventions, for example training local government officials and the establishment of specific institutional structures to deal with gender and related issues, and for these issues to be incorporated into performance management systems.

- **Strengthening local identities.** *The activity provides a sense of belonging and self-reliance at various levels.*

A cocktail of action. Local Agenda 21 projects that focus on policy development or planning are unlikely to change the attitudes of local communities. For any Local Agenda 21 programme to survive it must appeal to grassroots stakeholders as well as policy makers. It is difficult for most stakeholders to sustain interest and involvement in high-level processes that appear to have no direct benefits. This suggests that Local Agenda 21 programmes must link planning and policy generation with local development projects in order to ensure sustained buy-in from the broader community.

- **National legal policy.** *The activity adheres to current government environmental, economic, legal and social policies.*

- **Regional dimension.** *The activity should embody the regional, economic, social and environmental perspective.*

From the bottom up. Compliance with national and regional policy and law is a critical element in ensuring long-term sustainability. There will, however, be instances where local processes highlight the unsustainability or unsuitability of these higher-order requirements. Under these circumstances, local needs should be used to inform and motivate for changes in these broader frameworks.

- **Human rights.** *The activity should provide freedom to exercise fundamental rights.*

Providing a platform. Local Agenda 21 programmes must provide a platform for all stakeholder groups to exercise their fundamental rights and to lobby for change where these rights are compromised through unsustainable development.

- **Documentation.** *The activity and the lessons learnt have been well documented.*

Creating institutional memory. The complexity and dynamism of many Local Agenda 21 programmes mean that many important processes, experiences and decisions are not adequately documented due to a lack of time and resources. The net result is that no permanent institutional memory is created and valuable lessons are lost. Time and resources must be found in all Local Agenda 21 programmes to document sustainability experiences.

- **Evaluation.** *The activity has been tested to determine the extent to which wise-practice characteristics have been utilized.*

Measuring progress. It has been internationally recognized that a system for measuring achievements and monitoring the implementation of Local Agenda 21 programmes is important. This need is, however, often overlooked due to the lack of appropriate human and financial resources and the fact that no measurable objectives were specified at the beginning of the process. This means that those involved directly in the programme are not able to assess realistically the level of success and that the progress made will often be obscured by the difficulties associated with the process. The need for monitoring also underlines the urgent need for accurate and comprehensive databases to be developed in all key sustainable development sectors to establish the baseline state and evaluate future progress.