

# Perspectives on KwaZulu-Natal

## HIV/Aids: Impact on women in South Africa

Using Durban's Warwick Junction as an example, **Glenda Caine**, the director of the Independent Projects Trust, suggests that multi-agency approaches to issues of crime and violence achieve better results and are more sustainable than interventions working in isolation.

Warwick Junction is one of the oldest and most vibrant areas of Durban and is strategically placed at the entrance to the city, with an estimated 300 000 commuters passing through it each day. This makes it one of the country's busiest transport centres. Its unique character is the result of the merging of cultures and history and reflects Durban's rich heritage.

The area has three distinct precincts. First, a trade and transport area that consists of a primary metropolitan transport hub with associated markets and street trading. Second, the Grey Street precinct, which is a historical Indian business district with shopping, street trading and residents. Finally, the Warwick Triangle which is an in-fill housing project catering for households of lower to lower-middle income groups.

During the apartheid era the area was politically marginalised in terms of physical, social and economic development and within its precincts are the historic Grey Street Mosque, the Emmanuel Cathedral, the famous early morning market, informal trading stations and the 'umuthi' (traditional medicine) market, where traditional healers consult and market their cures.

By 1996 the area had fallen prey to serious urban decay. The advent of the taxi industry had created numerous transport problems in the area; informal traders had invaded any empty space including the sidewalks and many were living on site in unsanitary conditions. This was accompanied by a breakdown in law and order.

At this point local residents and other stakeholders began to actively lobby local government to begin to address these problems. The initial response was from individual government departments that attended to complaints addressed to them.

However, by 1997 the Durban city council realised that these isolated responses were having a limited impact and a coordinating team was formed to address the problem. Especially important was the allocation of funds by the council for this project. What became known as the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project had as its focus the improvement of the quality of life of traders, businesses, transport operators, commuters and residents.

Central to the success of the project was the decision to base it within the Warwick Junction area, rather than at the city hall, or in the offices of consultants. The city provided venues for meetings between multi-disciplinary teams, members of the various community interest groups and representatives from the various council departments.

The aims of the project were: To improve safety and security in the area; to enhance transport facilities; to increase trading and employment opportunities; to upgrade cleanliness and the

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quality of the physical environment; to expand services; to integrate the area with other parts of the city by providing walkways and effective transport and to create investment opportunities which bring resources to the junction.

Early in the project much time was spent building relationships and initiating dialogue with local stakeholders and roleplayers. Residents and traders were extensively consulted to ensure that their needs were identified and taken into account. Over time the results of this integrated approach have been remarkable. There has been a marked improvement in the trading, commuter safety and living conditions for a large portion of Durban's population. High levels of criminal activity which were experienced on an under-utilised bridge, for example, have dropped dramatically. This followed the setting up of market stalls along the length of the bridge, increasing passive surveillance and legitimate users.

Project leader Robin Dobson estimates that the area has a gross annual turnover in excess of R1 billion, with the annual turnover of one of Durban's largest shopping centres being in the region of about R1.2 billion.

As a result of discussions a herb traders' market was created for traders who previously traded from sidewalks in the area. In 1998 this market had an annual turnover of R20 million in the retail of products and R150 million through visits to inyangas (traditional healers). While providing a venue for between 300 and 450 traders, the market has also created an estimated 14 000 jobs in Durban. This from an initial council outlay of R3.5 million to develop the market.

Other job creation opportunities were provided when the project set up a facility for the cooking of mealies (corn cobs). The capital outlay was about R50 000 and in December 2000 the weekly gross turnover was estimated at R1 million, with 28 tonnes of mealies prepared daily and sold throughout the inner city.

An area of complete urban decay has, over a period of just five years, been transformed into a vibrant business centre and a colourful, exciting tourist attraction through a project which enabled and support multi-agency and multi-disciplinary co-operation.

Clearly, multi-agency work requires more than lip service. We must acknowledge that there are difficulties associated with co-operation. Working together often involves more effort in the early stages as diverse groups have to build dialogue and common understanding. This takes time and is often fraught with conflict. For many agencies and individuals the fact that credit accrues to the collective rather than individuals or departments is problematic especially since funding often depends on what one is seen to have accomplished.

It is also vital that local and central government departments actively include and involve the 'little people' who have a current or future stake in the area. The planning of interventions must happen in consultation with the residents and users of the area if they are to have any chance of success. It is also important to anticipate the arrival of new residents and entrepreneurs who are attracted to areas undergoing improvement.

For a multi-agency approach to work there is a need for people who are prepared to take some level of personal risk, to share workload and responsibility and to reach across divides to drive the process forward in unison.

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