



Community engagement

Building capacity in communities

Community engagement

- How do you set about community engagement and building?
- How to choose a community (or does a community choose you)?
- What is the process of community engagement and building?
- Where do you start?
- What do you need to watch out for?

In search of a community

- Search for community project that would align with the company's objectives
- Required an international organisation with a credible reputation
- Close the gap in the youth programme to reach the lives of primary school learners
- Needed to find a community with the passion to improve and grow

First impressions

- WWF-SA after one year came back and said a project in Port Elizabeth was available for sponsorship
- The site visit was at well-resource schools
- On an off-chance we requested WESSA (Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa) representatives to take us to Motherwell
- Motherwell had no Eco-Schools programme. This was where development was needed. And the educators and learners were hungry for learning and passionate

Site visit – what was missing

- Dumani Primary School in Motherwell, Eastern Cape.



- Refuse dumped outside the school, piled high like small hills
- Water cut off for 21 days because of a burglary, wiring hanging out of the ceilings, cisterns stolen for scrap metal
- Food gardens on barren soil
- Rudimentary environmental education among educators and learners
- No electricity in classrooms

Site visit – what was good

- Children who were eager to learn
- Educators keen for supplementary learning materials to support the curricula
- Opportunity to use small monetary interventions to make a big difference
- Potential to inform a new generation who will be in the mainstream of society
- Hope, faith, fighting spirit

Setting up the programme

- The first priority was for the node coordinator to establish regular visits to the schools
- Next was the delivery of learning materials that WESSA did well
- It was too early for growing the programme so we waited while the WESSA team implemented the basics – get an understanding of environmental issues
- One year later the learners were presenting environmental and energy efficiency topics with confidence

Project takes time to gain traction

- Learners enthusiastic about the programme.



- For about two years the program progressed slowly
- A period requiring patience while things needed to settle
- Avoid hindering NGO, don't tell them what to do (no, no)
- People changed and the programme took fire – new ideas, enthusiasm, relevancy
- New manager and schools coordinator provide momentum
- Educators rise to the challenge

Through action, learning and commitment grows

- Learners take pride in their accomplishments.



- Learners are better equipped and are taken on field trips
- Educators are more alive to the project – enthusiasm spreads
- Food gardens begin to be established and win awards
- A wetland in the community is cleaned up, residents want to relax there on the weekends and trees
- Spekboom is planted for carbon sequestration and wind breaks for gardens
-

Investment attracts other sponsorships, networks and support for schools

- Networks grow.



- Requests come in for water tanks for gardens
- Other sponsors, British High Commission and other corporates start to add resources – more tanks required as garden expands. Others fix windows, toilets and so on

Learners and educators are exposed to the critical environmental issues of their area

- Making learning fun.



Schools get involved in the Water Saving Project facilitated by WESSA within the NMBM programme to deal with the water crisis in the metro.

But significant environmental challenges are ever present

- Vandalism, theft, robberies result in classrooms without electricity, water cut off, leaking cisterns etc
- The poor infrastructure and environment surrounding schools impacts on learning
- Systemic change is required to empower teachers, learners, parents and community members to have pride in their schools and the environment around them
- ABB calls for a public meeting in Port Elizabeth which WESSA facilitates
- Public Works, the Station Commander, officials from DOE, school principals attend – creates a better understanding and network between parties.

Conversations that count

•A session on community building run by Peter Block in Johannesburg.



To create a community of accountability and belonging, we seek conversations where the following is true:

- an intimate and authentic *relatedness* is experienced
- the world is shifted through *invitation* rather than mandate
- the focus is on the communal *possibility*
- there is a shift in *ownership* of this place, even though others are in charge
- diversity of thinking and *dissent* are given space
- *commitments* are made without barter
- the *gifts* of each person and our community are acknowledged and valued

- "Community: The Structure of Belonging", Peter Block

The key is building capacity and resources



- Equipping educators to teach the environmental curricula – workshops held to empower teachers
- Installing 10,000 L water tanks for food gardens and for emergencies is critical – area is in critical water crisis
- Planting climate change crops, sweet potatoes that thrive in dry, warm conditions to support school nutrition programme
- Educators become experts in sustainable gardening and teach others – a nursery earns income for the school.
- Recycling projects start to generate income for school.

Actions lead to learning and benefits for all



- Clearing wetlands to act as a sponge in severe floods and acting as a community resource and preventing pollution of rivers
- Showing the community how to heat water using black plastic bags and buckets provides simple low cost solutions
- Recycling waste for income generation energises the reduce-reuse-recycle campaigns which is taken back into their homes.

ABB/WWF Climate Change Game

Climate change game.

Puzzling Climate Change

A start-up pack of pictures



TO:

- Originated out of a need to provide education about climate change in a fun and stimulating way
- ABB invested R120,000 in the game developed by WESSA
- Available on SHARENET as an educational resource
- 1500 game sets distributed
- An example of how a relationship can deepen and bring greater value



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Refocusing the programme

- After a time the programme drifted away from energy efficiency into other environmental areas
- Dialogue took place to refocus the programme with exciting energy efficiency projects
- It's human nature for things to drift into areas with greater interest
- Trying to make the contractual obligations stick is necessary from time to time

Success factors

- Community building requires deep commitment from the sponsoring company
- Short terminism doesn't work (the quick fix) – you need to stay with the project for the medium-term
- Strong sustainability partners who have a close understanding of the community's needs is essential
- High levels of motivation are required among all parties
- Leveraging the involvement of a multi-national company provide a basis for attracting other investors
- The project must be relevant to your customers and stakeholders
- The focus of social development work should tie in with your core business

Impacts

- Promote awareness of energy efficiency to educators and learners at a young age
- Equip youth with learning materials
- Spread the message throughout the community
- Established sources (tanks for rainwater harvesting, food gardens, worm farms)
- Strengthen the social capital in the community
- Broaden the horizon for children (engineering, conservation, environmental science) – support science with maths module

What the people say

- (WESSA requested to supply)

What the people say

NMBM Councillor Desi:

ABB intervention is helping to spread the message about need to save electricity and the opportunity of alternative energy e.g. solar geysers that the municipality is installing around PE area.

Zolelwa Ngoma: Canzibe Primary educator

Eco-Schools Programme and ABB projects and excursions are linked with our curriculum which is great and helps us a lot. But we still do not have electricity in our classrooms to help us with teaching and practical experiments.

Martheanne Finnemore: Regional Manager

Empowering educators and learners to realise their potential in struggling townships schools is the key challenge. Support from corporates is essential to make it happen, given the minimal resources available from the Dept. of Education. With visible eco-activities that schools can relate to, learners, educators and supportive community members start to see they can make a difference.

Inspiring the right educators to lead the project is important. Pride in the school starts to rise.

There is a sense of achievement.

Schools receive their Eco-School awards



What the people say (cont.)

Mr Lukwe: Principal Khulile Primary

ABB's intervention helps. For example on water conservation because it is line with the municipality drive to save water during our water crisis. Environmental programmes are very beneficial as these are an essential part of Life Orientation curriculum.

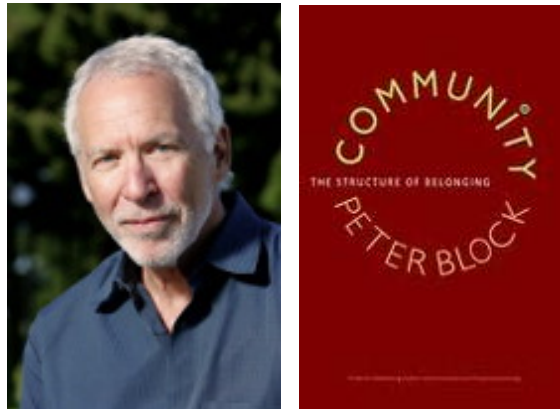
Pearl Jonas: WESSA Senior Education Officer

ABB's intervention in the five schools is enormous – it gives the schools **Oomph!** When you go into the schools, you can see learners and educators who are keen and eager. When they see the WESSA car, they see us as bringing change into their lives.

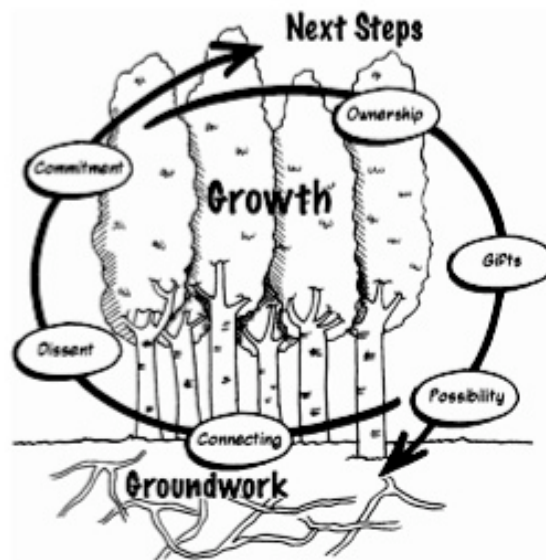
ABB makes things possible for us to deliver not just make empty promises

Questions to ignite conversations

• Peter Block, author of "Community".



- How much risk do you plan to take and how participative do you plan to be in this gathering or project ? (ownership)
- What are the crossroads you/we are at appropriate to the purpose of the gathering ? (possibilities)
- To what extent do you see yourself as cause of the problem you are trying to fix? (ownership)a
- What is the story you hold about this community all this issue, and what are the payoffs and cost of this story? (ownership)
- What are your doubts and reservations? (dissent)
- -- Peter Block, "Community"



Underlying aim: Build social capital

- “A community's well-being is dependent on the quality of relationships among the citizens of that community. Social capital creates a sense of belonging thus enhancing the overall health of a community.” -- Robert D. Putnam
- "The context that restores community is one of possibility, generosity, and gifts, rather than one of problem solving, fear, and retribution." This context allows a new conversation to take place. It requires its citizens to act authentic by choosing to own and exercise their power rather than delegating to others what is in the best interest of that community. Focus must be inclusive for all, not just the leaders but each and every citizen of that community.” – Peter Block

The subtle art of facilitating the process

- "The leader doesn't talk, he acts. When his work is done, the people say, "Amazing: we did it, all by ourselves!" – Lao-Tzu
- "Remember that you are facilitating another person's process. It is not your process. Do not intrude. Do not control. Do not force your own needs and insight into the foreground. If you do not trust a person's process, that person will not trust you." – John Heider

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