# Unpacking Redefine's ABCD approach to driving sustainable transformation

By Sindy Peters

24 Jul 2019

With the goal of achieving sustainable transformation in the community surrounding Maponya Mall in Soweto, a building it owns and manages, Redefine Properties has employed an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach, which recognises communities as intergral partners and role players in developing and driving lasting solutions to local issues.

Redefine's Challenge Convention during which key stakeholders were invited to highlight the real challenges they faced and identify existing community assets that could be leveraged to address these.

Within a few months of engaging with community members, Redefine managed to create 15 permanent jobs and gave entrepreneurs in the community access to space worth over R1m to showcase their services and products - all at no cost.

The company is planning on undertaking similar initiatives in other communities in which it operates in the coming years, using the Maponya Mall pilot as a case study of how the ABCD approach can deliver significant results by investing with communities rather than for them, says Marijke Coetzee, head of marketing and communications at Redefine Properties.

This #CSIMonth on Bizcommunity, Coetzee unpacked for us Redefine's ABCD approach at Maponya Mall, explaining exactly what it entails, and sharing some of its short-term successes and how it is helping drive sustainable transformation.

***Unpack for us the asset-based community development (ABCD) approach and what exactly it entails?***

The asset-based community development approach recognises community assets as a point of entry for meaningful conversations and the communities as partners who possess the agency and skills to develop and support solutions for sustainable transformation. By seemingly looking through a lens of partnership, the Maponya Mall pilot sought to develop a platform which could be conducive to true collaborative practices, develop lasting partnerships and ultimately establish an agenda for impactful social investment.

In its initial phase, the process involved extensive engagements with over 1,000 community members, community-based organisations, local NGOs, political representatives and local businesses and entrepreneurs. This was followed by the Challenge Convention late last year during which the key stakeholders were invited to highlight the real challenges they faced and identify existing community assets that could be leveraged to address these. Using #ifihaditmyway to lead discussions; innovative solutions emerged which are now being developed further for implementation.

### ***How has this approach been implemented in Soweto in the surrounding area around Maponya Mall?***

What became apparently clear from these engagements is that to enable the community to sustain themselves, we needed to establish infrastructure that could reliably connect the needs of the identified community stakeholders and provide access to resources that will promote participation in the local economy.

We are considering amongst many options a community hub in Soweto. The focus will be on addressing the needs of the three stakeholder groups in the community, with emphasis on access to services, resources and participating in programmes and opportunities that promote empowerment. The hub could be an enabler to scale community development and attract partnerships with other private social investors with similar vision and objectives.

### ***Could you highlight some of the approach's noted successes thus far?***

Marijke Coetzee, head of marketing and communications, Redefine Properties

Immediate success has come from proactive intervention by Maponya Mall. Within a few weeks of the Challenge Convention, the mall made access to Wi-Fi a reality for shoppers and businesses, employed eight permanent security guards, installed additional lighting in parking lots and other areas around the building, acquired generators to ensure continued lighting during power outages, as well as put into a service a golf cart to transport pensioners and disabled people on mall property. In addition, exhibition space valued at R1m was offered to and used by entrepreneurs in the surrounding community to display and sell their products in the mall.

### ***How does Redefine ensure the approach delivers sustainable transformation?***

Sustainable transformation or development can only be achieved through a demand-driven approach. To prepare for this, we held a series of strategic engagements and workshops with the core group of representatives. The outcome of these engagements was the development of three distinct solution-based programmes.

For the youth – it is an integrated youth development and empowerment programme targeted at those that are in school and those out of school. For small businesses, entrepreneurs and informal traders, the programme will focus on skills development responsive to the needs identified by the sector. This will include upskilling the cohort on financial management, marketing, digital literacy, investment strategies, leadership development, etc.

With the NPOs active in the area, we will provide support by helping them understand and acquire governance skills, further develop their fundraising, marketing and general financial management knowledge, as well as capacitate them on partnership development and management.

The approach in itself is sustainable, as alluded to, as it is not about donation but more about doing. We are asking the community, how do they see it being delivered, and in this way we are able to draw from their recommendations and inputs to understand and develop interventions that solve ‘their’ identified needs.

### ***How does Redefine ensure meaningful community engagement and participation as part of the process?***

Central to the ABCD is assessment and evaluation. Taking into account all aspects of the engagements in Soweto throughout the two phases as well as theoretical underpinning of the ABCD, a community development interventions matrix was developed. The framework will track outputs and outcomes over time, based on inputs, and further promote opportunities for learning from short- and long-term results. The framework will also contribute to informing better interventions and programmes in the future.

Redefine Properties has identified Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 8, 9, 11 and 13 against which the interventions will be benchmarked and specifically the National Development Plan for 2030 (NDP), which is closely aligned with the SDGs. The NDP is of high interest and importance to communities like Soweto as well as the private sector as it shapes and guides programmes for each year until 2030.

#CSIMonth: Education initiatives can transform CSI into social justice
Dion Reddy 17 Jul 2019

***What are some of the notable challenges experienced by surrounding communities, and how is Redefine helping them address these?***

The key is to collaborate. Conversation and facilitation of information underpin our ABCD efforts and enable us to unlock potential assets, skills and tools the communities already own.

To improve our communities and to make them vibrant, we need to partner effectively with other individuals and organisations - both inside and outside the community. However, these partnerships also need nurturing and roles need to be well defined to ensure we come together in a manner that meets everyone's needs and interests.

During September 2018, Redefine Properties commissioned FNB Philanthropy to develop and host a series of community-centered conversations in Soweto, specifically in the immediate communities surrounding Maponya Mall. These conversations were intended to gather information from the community regarding their assets, social needs and determine the best possible avenues for future social investment in the area.

When we started having conversations with the communities, we quickly realised that the entrepreneurs there battled to promote their goods and services to potential consumers. Our own ads rang a bell - need space, more space? Many of the entrepreneurs we spoke to simply wanted space in the mall to exhibit their goods. In other words, the asset-based approach has helped us to begin to open up possibilities for how we can make a tangible difference that benefits both the people and enables entrepreneurs.

***Does Redefine have plans to expand this approach to other communities in which it has a presence?***

The Maponya Mall pilot is just the first of a number of planned initiatives that we intend to undertake over the next couple of years. Already similar consultation with the communities around Centurion Mall will see us, together with the City of Tshwane (CoT), deliver a state of the art taxi rank to the community. Maponya Mall will serve as a good example of how ABCD can deliver significant results by simply focusing on equipping and mobilising community members to use their available assets, skills and strengths, to co-create opportunities and build their own communities instead of us as a corporate trying to fix the perceived problem.

We are passionate about transformation and are committed to leveraging the spaces we manage to change the lives and the future of the people and communities around them.

## ABOUT SINDY PETERS

Sindy Peters (@sindy_hullaba_lou) is a group editor at Bizcommunity.com on the Construction & Engineering, Energy & Mining, and Property portals. She can be reached at sindy@bizcommunity.com.

- 2022 Lesedi Award winner Faeeza Marshman on what drives her giving spirit - 9 Dec 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: Why integrating the environmental and social components of ESG is key - 3 Nov 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: ESG an opportunity for purposeful shareholder engagement - 1 Nov 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: Success in ESG starts with leadership, partnerships and good governance - 31 Oct 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: What should ESG reporting look like in Africa? - 26 Oct 2022

View my profile and articles...