

# Inclusive Public Space Planning & Design: Lessons from Asiye eTafuleni, Durban, South Africa

Joanne Lees with  
Richard Dobson



## **WIEGO Technical Briefs**

WIEGO Technical Briefs provide guides for both specialized and non-specialized audiences. These are designed to strengthen understanding and analysis of the situation of those working in the informal economy as well as of the policy environment and policy options.

### **About the Authors**

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Richard Dobson, an architect by training, worked for over ten years for the eThekweni Municipality as a project leader; first of the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project and then for the inner city renewal programme. He left the city in 2006 to co-found Asiye eTafuleni and focus on offering design and facilitation services to those working in the informal economy. His professional technical, design and project work has been recognized through various local, national and international awards and citations, and he is a recipient of the 2014 Diakonia Human Rights Award for advancing the rights of informal workers.

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to acknowledge the Asiye eTafuleni team – past and present – with particular acknowledgement of Patric Ndlovu, Tasmi Quazi and Phumelelo Mkhize, for their crucial contributions to the highlighted projects; and Caroline Skinner of WIEGO, for encouraging us to write up our experiences and for her substantial edits.

**Publication date:** December 2021

**ISBN number:** 978-92-95106-08-6

**Please cite this publication as:** Lees, Joanne and Richard Dobson. 2021. Inclusive Public Space Planning & Design: Lessons from Asiye eTafuleni, Durban, South Africa. WIEGO Technical Brief No. 13. Manchester, UK: WIEGO

Published by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)  
A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee – Company No. 6273538,  
Registered Charity No. 1143510

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## Key Points

- Inclusive participatory processes are the best way to support informal traders and maximize their contribution to city economies.
- Co-design with, and appropriate provision of, infrastructure for informal traders enhances the functionality and aesthetics of public spaces, secures better urban management and improves city-making for all.
- Asiye eTafuleni, and its staff, have two decades of experience of co-designing public space with informal traders. Their work, described in this brief through case studies and a review of their experience and learning, suggests methods and tools for informal traders and their leaders, local government officials and other urban practitioners.
- Before intervening, urban practitioners need to conduct a thorough status quo analysis. Asiye eTafuleni has used critical observation, individual and focus group interviews and encouraged traders to do their own research.
- Asiye eTafuleni has identified different trading patterns and typologies with associated planning and design implications. This is offered as a tool for urban practitioners to apply.
- Informal trade is dynamic, making contextual responses key. Rather than providing a blueprint, the brief provides ideas and principles that could be applied elsewhere.



## 1. Introduction

*“95 per cent of the world's designers focus all of their efforts on developing products and services exclusively for the richest 10 per cent of the world's customers. Nothing less than a revolution in design is needed to reach the other 90 per cent.” – Paul Polak*

With one in every five urban dwellers living in an informal settlement, and 61 per cent of all workers employed in the informal economy, informality is *the* challenge for this generation of planners, urban designers and architects.

This document reflects on the work of Asiye eTafuleni, a non-profit organization operating out of inner-city Durban, South Africa. Asiye eTafuleni's team has worked alongside informal workers for decades, amplifying their voice and ensuring inclusivity in planning and design. Our award-winning<sup>1</sup> work is founded on the belief that inclusive processes are the best way to support informal workers in their livelihood endeavours, and that appropriate design and provision of infrastructure for public space trading enhances the aesthetic qualities of those spaces, secures better urban management and improves city-making for all. Inclusive processes also reveal

the substantial contribution of the urban informal economy to city economies, and an understanding of the often-fragile ecology that supports it.

This Technical Brief is aimed at urban practitioners and leaders of informal worker organizations. It starts with three case studies describing what Asiye eTafuleni did, how we did it and why. These are then used as reference points to highlight four thematic areas.

The first theme deals with consulting and co-designing with informal traders. Asiye eTafuleni in isiZulu means “bring it to the table”, in other words, let us negotiate. Participatory processes and stakeholder consultation underpin all of our work, and we offer principles and guidance for leading or participating in meaningful engagement and co-design processes.

Consultation with informal workers should ideally be matched with a parallel process of engagement with local government, which is addressed as the second theme in this brief. The lessons that we have learned inform the principles that guide us when persuading local government to engage or to adopt more inclusive processes.

<sup>1</sup> 2011 The Mail and Guardian and South African Trust Drivers of Change Award was awarded to AeT in recognition of their ongoing positive impact on the lives of people living in poverty, through the development and implementation of effective public policies and strategies. <https://mg.co.za/article/2011-11-04-giving-the-sidelined-a-voice/>

2012 AfriSam-SAIA Commended Award for Sustainable Architecture Work of Social Significance, for the Inner-city Cardboard Recycling Project. <https://plusnetwork.wordpress.com/2012/10/16/inner-city-cardboard-recycling-project-wins-sustainable-architecture-awards/>

2012 Mayor's Award for Excellence <https://aet.org.za/markets-of-warwick-wins-a-mayors-award-for-excellence/>

2017 Curry Stone Prize - AeT was recognized among 100 of the “most influential socially engaged design practices” referred to as the Social Design Circle. <https://currystonefoundation.org/practice/asiye-etafuleni/>

2018 WRI Ross Prize for Cities announced AeT as one of the top five finalists for their role in the urban transformation of Warwick Junction. <https://prizeforcities.org/2019-winners>

2019 SAIA-KZN Awards for Architecture - Richard Dobson Architect, in partnership with AeT, received a Special Mention for Work of Social Importance for the bio-efficient cookstove prototypes designed for the Mielie Cooks in Warwick Junction, which would alleviate health and safety risks, reduce carbon emissions and waste, and contribute towards a more efficient cooking method and dignified workplace. <https://www.kznia-journal.org.za/journal/2019-saia-kzn-awards-architecture>

The focus of the third theme is the physical and spatial situation analysis - this helps unpack the social dynamics in the area, get a sense of the stakeholders' experience in using the space and their perceptions, and may run in parallel or prior to stakeholder engagement. Appropriate design interventions that achieve user uptake can only be arrived at through a detailed understanding that includes the physical context.

Finally, the fourth thematic area describes one of Asiye eTafuleni's key methodologies for the design of spaces and infrastructure for informal traders - using patterns and typologies as a design tool.

The informal economy is particularly complex and fluid, making contextual responses key. Rather than suggesting a blueprint, the brief aims to suggest

principles that could be applied elsewhere. Asiye eTafuleni sees this as an opportunity for shared learning, and we invite feedback and ongoing dialogue.

Warwick Junction is the largest public transport and trading hub in inner city Durban, South Africa: approximately 8,000 informal workers operate there and about 460,000 commuters travel through daily. This central transport interchange was the focus of Durban's inner city regeneration programme between 1995 and 2008 and remains a key component of their inner city planning agenda.

Prior to founding Asiye eTafuleni, Richard Dobson and Patric Ndlovu worked on the Warwick Junction Urban Renewal Project for the City of Durban. During

Durban Inner City and Warwick Junction locality map

Credit: Durban Inner City Local Area Plan, 2017



this period, the benefits of deliberate place-making for informal workers in cities had become clear. Building on the trust established with stakeholders while working for the Municipality, they continue to practice and advocate for inclusivity – now in a more complex relationship with local government due to their more activist stance.

Much of their work prior to 2008 – when they founded Asiye eTafuleni – has been well-documented in the book [‘Working in Warwick’](#) (Dobson and Skinner, 2009), as well as the informal economy documentation of the inner [eThekweni Regeneration and Urban Management Programme](#) (Dobson).

Durban has an Informal Economy Policy and national legislation mandates five-yearly Integrated Development Plans. In these documents and processes the informal economy is consistently acknowledged as an important contributor to the overall city economy. The way that policy translates into practice on the ground, however, often excludes informal workers. Urban management imperatives prioritize enforcement of local by-laws that govern the activities of informal traders, who are

perceived as uncontrolled and a source of chaos, conflict, congestion, capital flight and urban decay. Infrastructure investment often occurs through patronizing, top-down processes motivated by a desire to create “urban order” and to make public spaces that will attract private investment and grow the property rates base – an essential local government income stream. In addition, the design and management of public space and the activities in it falls under several different departments which operate in silos – each with their own, often unaligned, agenda and mandates.

It is in this context that Asiye eTafuleni works alongside and in support of informal workers, using our understanding of how local government works. The methodologies that we employ are shaped by the relationships that define each project. The principle is always to be as inclusive as possible: the broader the buy-in, the better the prognosis for effective government spending and constructive engagement around ongoing operational and management strategies.

Warwick Junction, Durban

Credit: Google Earth





Asiye eTafuleni's role has been to amplify informal workers' voices, not to represent them. The team is on the street daily to engage, observe and analyze what we see. Our experience and built environment expertise allow us to sometimes foresee issues with and the implications of policy changes, published plans and budgets. Bringing this to the attention of traders allows for the possibility of early engagement, which can prevent conflict later on.

We sometimes find ourselves in an adversarial relationship<sup>2</sup> with one city department, while simultaneously advising, mediating, or participating as a key informant in city processes for another department. Asiye eTafuleni is recognized by the planning and architectural professions, and we are often consulted or subcontracted by built environment professionals appointed to plan or design interventions that affect, or are affected by, the informal economy. As shown in the Isipingo Urban Design Framework Project case study below, the recommendations Asiye eTafuleni makes are not always what local government wants to hear. This potential conflict of interest needs to be carefully managed, but the opportunity to be actively involved in ensuring that the needs of informal traders are fully integrated is important – and worth the risk.

At Asiye eTafuleni, we organize our work under four interconnected workstreams: urban advocacy, urban design, urban intelligence, and urban learning and education. For more detail on this and our current work see our [website](#) and [Asiye eTafuleni at 10: Fostering an economy that prioritizes spatial justice and social capital](#).

## 2. Three Case Studies

The Bovine Head Cooks Market was 16 years old and overdue for upgrading. When the cooks heard about the plan to upgrade the market, they demanded to be included in the planning process. The municipality did not consult them, however, and the appointed architect came to present the proposal as a fait accompli. The cooks were not happy with the proposals and refused to endorse them. They approached Asiye eTafuleni to assist in improving the design, due to our long-standing relationship with them – Richard Dobson had led the programme responsible for implementing the original market, Jonne Lees was the architect and Patric Ndlovu facilitated the inclusive design process.

In this instance, Asiye eTafuleni's primary role was to support the cooks to get a sorely needed appropriate upgraded facility, through advocating for an inclusive design process. What emerged was the urgent need to provide a suitable temporary trading arrangement during construction. The eThekweni Municipality Architecture Department was uncooperative in the beginning, citing their need to spend the allocated capital budget within the approved time-frame. Eventually, Asiye eTafuleni and the cooks were given only two weeks to come up with a new design.

<sup>2</sup> Asiye eTafuleni has supported informal workers in litigation to defend their rights or to create a strategic precedent. However, this briefing note focuses on the planning and design aspects, assuming that constructive engagement is possible.



The bovine head cooks have been operating in Warwick Junction for many years and they have formed an organized group with an elected committee. Initially, Asiye eTafuleni engaged with the

committee only on the design process but, because the group of cooks is fairly small, eventually it was possible for all the cooks to engage directly.

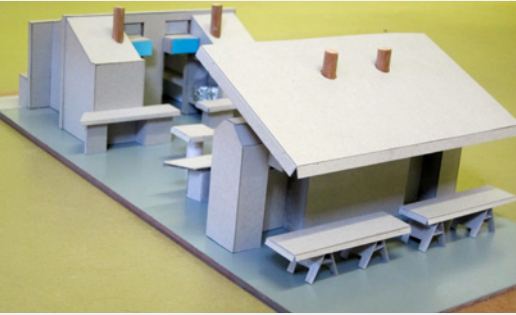




The original Bovine Head Cooks' facility before demolition

Photo Credit: Denis Gilbert



## The process

Phase	What we did and how we did it	all photos courtesy Asiye eTafuleni
<p><b>Review of the City's proposal</b></p>	<p>The proposal was presented by the appointed project architect to the cooks and our team.</p>	
<p><b>Research and development</b></p>	<p>Our team visited the site on several occasions to record the existing situation.</p> <p>Three consultation and feedback meetings were arranged with the cooks and the other traders in the market – to discuss the pros and cons of the existing situation, the architect's proposals, and their needs for the future – as part of the process of establishing a comprehensive brief.</p> <p>Three major challenges emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of the other traders at the market: the existing market included other cooks and fresh produce sellers, who were working in a symbiotic relationship. These other traders were excluded from the proposed design.</li> <li>• The proposed design did not suit the cooks' preferred workflow.</li> <li>• The proposed design assumed that the cooks would use electricity for cooking, while they prefer to use charcoal to provide the heat for their very large pots. Neither LPG gas nor electricity was acceptable to them as an alternative. This led to a separate research and development project for Asiye eTafuleni to improve stoves for the cooks.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Preliminary design</b></p>	<p>We developed a design concept based on the cooks' input, who then provided feedback.</p> <p>The revised concept included all traders and was respectful to their preferred workflow and cooking method. After the concept was accepted we developed the idea in more detail.</p>	
<p><b>Design development</b></p>	<p>Over the next few days, we developed the design and invited the cooks to our project office to workshop the detailed proposals. Using scale models of the facility and a full-size mock-up of a typical cooking space, the cooks were able to roleplay and test the design experientially.</p>	
<p><b>Stakeholder presentations</b></p>	<p>We developed design proposals presented to all stakeholders, including the cooks and other traders. We used scale models, 3D sketches and architectural drawings and this was the opportunity for any final feedback or design tweaks.</p>	
<p><b>Final concept drawings</b></p>	<p>Our team prepared final drawings for hand-over to the Municipality's Architecture Department and their appointed professional team, with full support and sign-off from the cooks.</p>	
<p><b>Temporary facility</b></p>	<p>The next challenge was to figure out a temporary trading arrangement for the period during construction. Due to the process that we facilitated, the Architecture Department and the project architect were engaged with the cooks and – with very little input from us – agreement was reached about an alternative temporary site and design. The building contractor for the upgraded facility did not deliver and the temporary market is still in use today. Work is underway to restart the project with a different contractor. In recent months, we have assisted the cooks with voicing their demands for essential maintenance at the temporary facility, as completion of the upgraded facility will take at least another 18 months.</p>	

## Lessons learned

When designing a specialist facility, such as the Bovine Head Cooks Market, the users of the facility are the best judges of what is needed. An intensively consultative and co-design process was possible within a very short time-frame due to the existing relationship between Asiye eTafuleni and the traders, and the co-design methodology allowed an experiential sense of the design that enabled swift feedback and design improvements.

A potentially explosive situation was turned around very quickly by pausing and engaging the traders directly in the design process. No time in the overall programme was lost, whereas an impasse would have caused a long delay because the traders were occupying 'the site'. Once the traders and the project architect had been in a design process that we facilitated, they were then able to engage successfully around the temporary facility without Asiye eTafuleni's support.

Isipingo is one of the secondary central business districts (CBD) of Durban and the second-largest multi-modal public transport and informal trading concentration, after Warwick Junction. When a tender was out for the development of an urban design framework for the area, Asiye eTafuleni was invited to join a multi-disciplinary team for our specific informal economy and facilitation skills. The team was awarded the project by the eThekweni Municipality and ten months after the work began, in 2018, it was completed.

The eThekweni Municipality's Strategic Spatial Planning Department was the client for the project and they set up a project steering committee that included representatives of all relevant local government departments.

An Isipingo Regeneration Programme task team had already been active in Isipingo for 12 months in response to escalating complaints about the chaos and "crime and grime", as well as the negative impacts on surrounding areas, arising from a situation that had largely been neglected for decades. The CBD sits at the confluence of a large storm-water catchment area and – due to poorly designed public space and inadequate infrastructure – is often subject to severe flooding. Traders working in the informal economy, particularly un-permitted or so-called illegal traders who service the large number of regional commuters and taxi ranks, were regarded by most stakeholders as a major part of the problem. The issue of legal and "illegal" traders has been an ongoing issue for the local government, although it was acknowledged that the urban design framework must include these traders "in structured trading spaces".

The project team consisted of planners, an architect, an urban designer and a traffic engineer. Environmental and service infrastructure input came via local government officials and/or previous work done in the area. This case became the driver of some of our ideas around the integration of informal workers into design concepts from the very beginning.

Key stakeholder groups included property owners, formal businesses, residents, civil society groups, the minibus taxi industry, the National Passenger Rail Association (PRASA) and informal workers.






Congestion on the sidewalk of Phila Ndwandwe Road, a transport arterial and the main commercial street of the Isipingo CBD.

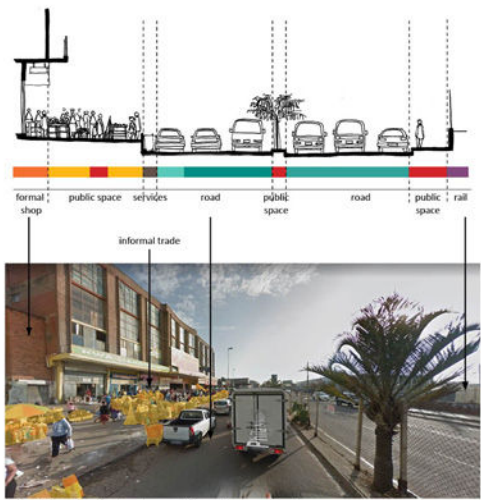

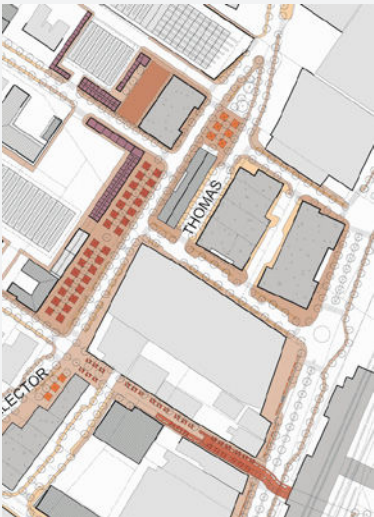
Photo Credit: Asiye eTafuleni


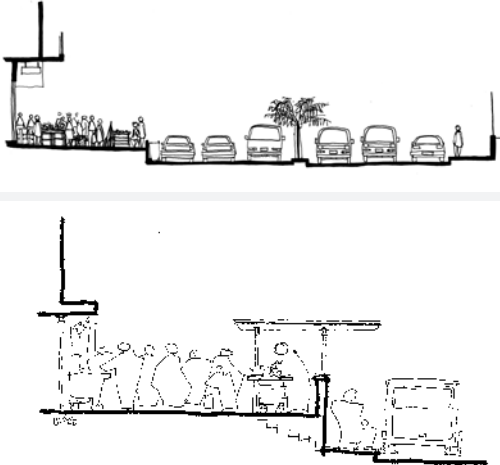


## The process

Phase	What we did and how we did it	all photos courtesy Asiye eTafuleni
<p><b>Status quo analysis enquiry</b></p>	<p>Our first task was to contribute an understanding of where, why and how informal traders were operating in Isipingo for the “status quo” report: a systematic sector-based investigation. We spent a lot of time on the street, carefully observing and recording what was happening. It became evident early on that there were observable patterns in the way in which traders occupied different spaces, used different types of equipment/furniture and operated their businesses. The team started to document these “typologies” as a way of understanding the complexity in this apparently chaotic environment.</p> <p>We conducted the fieldwork independently from local government officials, because we have observed that behaviours change if enforcement authorities are present, which skews the findings.</p> <p>Critical observation, augmented by one-on-one conversations, was the main methodology. Our team – Patric Ndlovu in particular – is known to many traders and there is an established trust-based relationship. Conversations were conducted in isiZulu and the team recorded summaries of the main findings once back in the office. Every street and taxi rank was examined and photographed, and the observations were analyzed and recorded. Drone aerial photography augmented the on-street survey. Frequent site visits allowed for follow-up questions and observations to verify the emerging picture as the work progressed. Parallel land-use mapping, vehicular (mainly public transport) traffic, and physical public space documentation and analysis undertaken by others on the team helped deepen the overall understanding.</p>	 <p>Photo Credit: Viloshin Govender</p>  



<p><b>Status quo record</b></p>	<p>The purpose of the investigation was to inform urban design proposals, which is why the findings were “packaged” as a visual document. Data sheets for each street type were developed, with analytical street sections. This was integrated into the overall status quo report, but the Asiye eTafuleni document was kept intact as an appendix.</p> <p>The streets were categorized based on the predominant land-uses that bound them: for example, residential, business, half residential–half business, one side bounded by a taxi rank, railway line. A street section drawing with a short description was supported by a detailed photographic record and observations regarding the type and form of trading occurring, the urban aesthetic and urban management implications.</p>	<p>PHILA NDWANDWE ROAD, SHEET 1</p>  <p>Phila Ndwandwe Road: railway and formal business flank.</p>
<p><b>Conceptual framework</b></p>	<p>Our team developed design concepts for each of the spatial trading typologies observed in the study area during the status quo phase. The project design team prepared three urban design concepts for presentation to the project steering committee, on which we advised – using the typology approach to inform the concepts for the design of the public spaces as well as the inclusion of trading infrastructure.</p> <p>Using a typology approach enabled us to contribute ideas early in the urban design concept stage. A change of the function and configuration of many streets was required to improve the functioning of the Isipingo CBD as a whole, which presented the opportunity to deliberately design for the inclusion of trading spaces. Defining specific spatial and locational criteria for each trading typology solution, as part of the urban system, allowed this thinking to be easily integrated at this stage in the process.</p>	
<p><b>Detailed urban design layout</b></p>	<p>Based on stakeholder feedback, the concepts were refined and developed in more detail. We worked with the design team to further develop the trading typology proposals and to design public spaces with integrated trading infrastructure, including associated amenities such as washing and storage facilities.</p> <p>Because the urban design proposals included substantial changes to the CBD, public transport and pedestrian movement, Asiye eTafuleni was called upon to advise on the potential consequences of these changes on traders.</p>	

<p><b>Stakeholder engagement</b></p>	<p>The stakeholder engagement process was driven by the client who invited groups of stakeholders to sector-based meetings: these included formal businesses, property owners, informal trader representatives, taxi organizations and civil society. We were asked to assist with facilitation of some of these engagements, where proposals were presented for comment and feedback.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement works best if local government does not gate-keep invitations to presentations and workshop sessions, as they potentially exclude dissenting voices which ultimately weakens the potential for inclusive planning. Asiye eTafuleni was able to mitigate this by doing</p>	<p>independent fieldwork on behalf of the team, but a more inclusive process would have been better.</p> <p>The trader session was poorly attended and only certain traders had been invited. The Asiye eTafuleni team went back onto the street to engage with a broader spectrum of trader stakeholders. The team insisted that the client hold an “open day” session that would allow different stakeholder groups to be in the room at the same time in order to address potential tensions between the groups. Unfortunately, that session was co-opted by a few powerful participants with vested interests. The street engagements conducted by Asiye eTafuleni helped to fill the gaps.</p>
<p><b>3D modelling</b></p>	<p>The brief for the plan included detailed 3D imagery and a model to illustrate the proposals. Asiye eTafuleni contributed important understanding of how the spaces would most likely be used.</p>	
<p><b>Implementation plan</b></p>	<p>The implementation plan stage of the project included a list of short-, medium- and long-term projects, and an implementation phasing proposal. The phasing was particularly complex because of the interdependent relationships between public transport, commuter movement and trading. We were able to bring 20 years of phased implementation experience in Warwick into the collaborative team response. At this stage in the project, despite an exhaustive consultation process with client and external stakeholders, the client (municipality) decided to exclude trading from the main arterial that runs along the edge of the CBD. It is currently the most overcrowded and unmanageable space but the urban design proposals that we helped design included solutions to these current problems. The team pushed back with strong motivations yet, despite our best efforts, this part of the plan was not accepted by the authority. As a result, Asiye eTafuleni recused itself from the final presentations and engagements, unable to endorse this course of action.</p>	

**Lessons learned**

When working as a consultant, there is a risk that the client will try to instruct the consultant or ignore their advice. At the end of this project, the tensions between the client and Asiye eTafuleni regarding the final exclusion of traders from the main road affected the whole team. In the “close out” report for the project it was noted that the final recommendations and the limitations in

the client-driven stakeholder engagement process were contrary to the consultants’ position. However, the close out report does not form part of the final public document. We had been aware of the potential for conflicting positions and the need to manage the political dynamics throughout the project and, in this important proposal, we were unable to influence the final outcome.

Kanyenathi, meaning “with us” in isiZulu, was a Comic Relief-funded project implemented by Asiye eTafuleni. The project was a comprehensive audit of infrastructure and urban management challenges, and needs of informal workers across three districts in Durban. Through a participatory action research approach, traders were trained to identify and prioritize their infrastructure needs.

The project was carried out over three years and ended in 2017. The intention was to then enable a process for these workers to engage with the City on an ongoing basis. The completed research was presented by the traders to city officials. Asiye eTafuleni has continued to provide the secretariat for the meetings between the traders and the City, which are ongoing. This has enabled the traders to use and hone their skills to interact constructively with the municipality.

Kanyenathi research team





Photo Credit:  
Asiye eTafuleni



## The process

Phase	What we did and how we did it	all photos courtesy Asiye eTafuleni
<b>Research process design</b>	<p>The intention was to involve informal workers as trained fieldworkers in an action research process.</p> <p>The research design was a combination of interviews, physical surveys, photography, team meetings and focus group sessions. The focus group sessions were based on a set of research questions collectively determined by informal workers, researchers and the Asiye eTafuleni team.</p> <p>Our role was mainly to provide social facilitation, project coordination and technical support. Teams of traders were to carry out the actual research, assisted by post-graduate university students whose main role was to oversee accuracy of the surveys.</p>	
<b>Recruit participants</b>	<p>The recruitment and nomination process included the trader leaders and was conducted democratically. The project originally targeted the participation of 15 informal worker leaders, across 3 districts. Certain project activities, such as the audit, required the broader recruitment and training of additional workers with additional skills.</p> <p>Methods to map and zone the survey areas and to match those zones to relevant leadership structures were co-conceived and implemented.</p>	



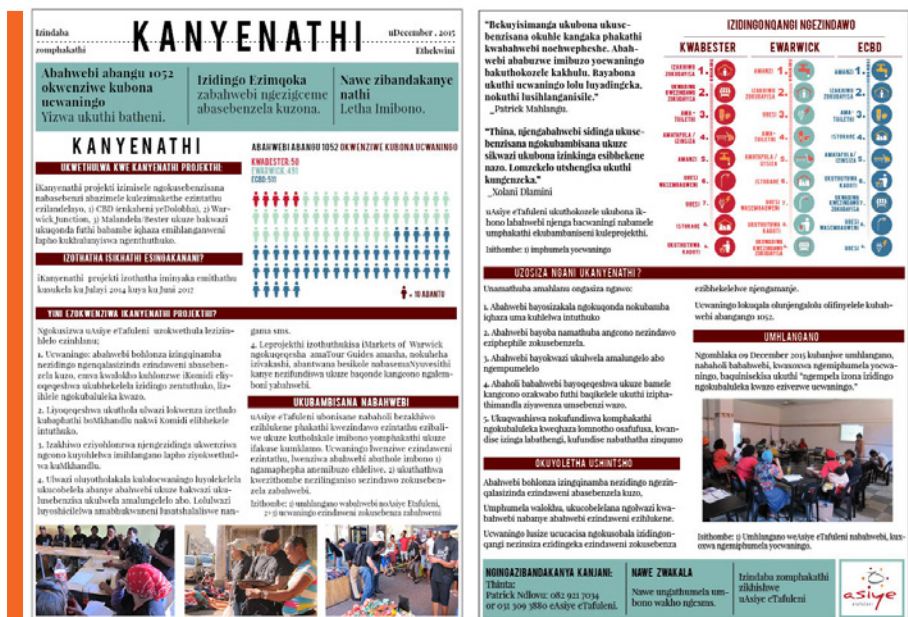
<p><b>Train participants</b></p>	<p>In total, 97 traders received training, of which 40 conducted the audit of 1052 (i.e a 10 per cent sample) informal workers across the 3 districts, supported by 13 student assistants. The training was conducted by the Asiye eTafuleni team.</p> <p>Three sets of training sessions were conducted to draw on different skills from the community of informal workers: 1) questionnaire training; 2) spatial survey training; and 3) community representation training.</p> <p>User-friendly and innovative survey instruments were designed to make the fieldwork administration more accessible to the research participants: e.g. the comprehension of tape measures, forms translated to isiZulu, visual aids for the conceptual understanding of spatial mapping, and training in the use of digital cameras for photo-documentation.</p>	
<p><b>Conduct survey</b></p>	<p>The participant researchers had the following roles within the data collection team:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) administering the questionnaire;</li> <li>2) photographing workplaces and conducting area measurements of the surveyed workers; and</li> <li>3) responsibility for community liaison.</li> </ol> <p>In addition, university post-graduate students provided mentorship and oversight.</p> <p>To curb research bias we emphasized ethical interviewing techniques during the training and through simulations; assigned trader fieldworkers to informal economy districts other than their own; and asked the student assistants to conduct independent surveys in every district.</p>	
<p><b>Present data</b></p>	<p>We piloted an innovative method of presenting the information from the audit after it had been processed by external data analysts, to ensure the information would be presented in an accessible manner.</p> <p>At a meeting – facilitated by Tasmu Quazi and Patric Ndlovu – the findings of the audit were unanimously accepted by the trader representatives as an accurate reflection of their working dynamics.</p> <p>After presentation by the trader representatives to their constituencies, the findings were adopted as a final version to be utilized as a community resource at meetings with city officials regarding new proposed redevelopment plans.</p> <p>The use of infographics, accessible technical language, copies of the presentation slides for note-taking and interactive presentations assisted in achieving high levels of understanding.</p> <p>The trader representatives were given laminated colour copies of the presentation so that they could present the findings to their constituencies.</p> <p>The ease with which the trader representatives engaged with and verified the content of the infrastructure audit findings, as well as the requests for more copies and for its final adoption, affirmed the benefits of a participatory process and the value of investing in deliberative processes facilitated by accessible language and tools. Through meaningful participation, we found that there was both appetite and ability for informal workers to engage with the co-creation of their urban workplaces.</p>	 



<p><b>Engagement with the Municipality</b></p>	<p>We trained trader researcher representatives to present the Infrastructure Audit findings and we assisted in drafting an invitation to municipal officials to a presentation meeting, which was accepted. It was very significant that the traders convened the meeting, which Asiye eTafuleni helped to host. The usual power relations were reversed: the traders were the experts presenting new and useful information to the officials.</p> <p>The research was well-received, and it was agreed to hold follow-up meetings.</p>	
<p><b>Dissemination and follow up</b></p>	<p>The first Kanyenathi isiZulu newsletter was distributed to informal workers after the infrastructure audit was completed, reflecting on the process and findings.</p> <p>As part of an ongoing process and to communicate the outcomes to the wider community, Asiye eTafuleni produces a newsletter based on what is discussed in the meetings, as well as current events in Warwick. The newsletters, available in English and isiZulu, are printed and distributed to traders and the municipality. These newsletters are available to view at <a href="https://aet.org.za/kanyenathi-newsletters/">https://aet.org.za/kanyenathi-newsletters/</a>.</p>	

The first Kanyenathi newsletter

Photo Credit: Asiye eTafuleni



**KANYENATHI** - December 2015

**Abahwebi abangama-1052 okwenziwe kubona uchwangingo Yizwa ukuthi batheni.**

**Izidingo Ezimqoka zabahwebi ngezigceme abasebenzela kuzona.**

**Nawe zibandakanyeni Letha Imibono.**

**KANYENATHI** - Ikhawulezi abangama-1052 okwenziwe kubona uchwangingo

**IZIDINGOQANGANI NGEZINDAWO**

	KWABESTER	EWARWICK	ECBD
1. IZIDINGOQANGANI	1. IZIDINGOQANGANI	1. IZIDINGOQANGANI	1. IZIDINGOQANGANI
2. IZIDINGOQANGANI	2. IZIDINGOQANGANI	2. IZIDINGOQANGANI	2. IZIDINGOQANGANI
3. IZIDINGOQANGANI	3. IZIDINGOQANGANI	3. IZIDINGOQANGANI	3. IZIDINGOQANGANI
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9. IZIDINGOQANGANI	9. IZIDINGOQANGANI	9. IZIDINGOQANGANI	9. IZIDINGOQANGANI
10. IZIDINGOQANGANI	10. IZIDINGOQANGANI	10. IZIDINGOQANGANI	10. IZIDINGOQANGANI

**UMHLANGANO**

Ngomhla 09 December 2015 kubanjwe umhlango, nabaholi babahwebi, kwawonwa ngomhlanga yochwangingo. Inqanaba lakho "ngomhla lozo izidingo ngokubaleka kwazo ezivutwe uchwangingo."

**OKUYILETHA USHINTSHO**

Abahwebi babona izinqanaba ezidingo ezinqanaba ezindaweni abasebenzela kuzo. Uchwangingo wabaleka, ukubalekana ngobanzi kwabahwebi nabanye abahwebi ezindaweni ezibhekene. Uchwangingo lize ucacisa ngokubaleka izidingoqangi nezizwa ezidingo ezindaweni zokubaleka.

**NOINGAZIBANDAKANYA KANJANI:**  
Thizwa: Patrick Nelso: 082 921 7034  
07 021 309 3880 eAsiye eTafuleni.

**NAWE ZWAKALA**  
Nawe ungathumela umhlanga wakho ngomhla.

Inzindaba zomphakathi zikhulwe uAsiye eTafuleni

**asiye**

**Lessons learned**

The decision to involve the traders directly in the research was crucial and a participant emphasized the importance of who is doing the asking in a research enquiry: "The training we got helped us with the fieldwork, but it was only during

the fieldwork that I realized just how necessary the research and the project is, because informal workers struggle with a lot of challenges which they need to vent about. I believe it was easier to vent and tell other traders like us about these challenges than anyone else."

This project was very empowering for informal workers. The ongoing Kanyenathi meetings have proven to be a powerful tool for the workers to engage with their colleagues and with the municipality on the universal challenge of infrastructure, basic services and urban management needs.

Reflecting on this, one participant said:

*“The project showed the traders that we can approach authorities with our issues with confidence, through working together, and have all the information we refer to documented. We have gained a sense of confidence in how to present issues in the future... We have seen the difference it makes now that we collaborate as the street committees and informal traders around Durban.”*

*“It was interesting to see the people that normally lead a meeting actually listen. We had the power to design the programme so that the municipality listened to us. Usually the city sets the meeting, presents, and often they run out of time so our voices are not heard.”*

Meetings continue to take place on a more or less quarterly basis and have provided an essential platform for engagement on a range of issues beyond the initial project – especially during the

COVID-19 pandemic, which has been a particularly challenging time for people who work in public space.

### 3. Consulting and Co-design with Informal Traders

A well-meaning initiative or project can result in a disappointing outcome, wasted resources, and/or ongoing conflict as a consequence of ineffective or a lack of stakeholder consultation. When infrastructure is being provided for public space trading, informal traders are seldom engaged as a key stakeholder group around the planning and design. Completed designs may be presented “for approval” only and, at that stage, changes are resisted due to delivery deadline pressures. One of the key roles that Asiye eTafuleni plays is to facilitate mutual understanding of the different stakeholder needs and desires, which then allows for collaborative design and improved outcomes.

Professional expertise is best employed when combined with a deep and nuanced understanding of how traders operate in the spaces they use, and why; what their

Patric Ndlovu and Richard Dobson engaging with traders in Kwa Mashu in 2013

Photo Credit: Joanne Lees



challenges are; and what they think the solutions might be. We call this “street knowledge”, or urban intelligence. In many instances, traders know exactly what they need and have potential solutions worked out, but they don’t have the means or power to put them

into practice. Sometimes issues that seem insurmountably difficult may be solved with very simple interventions, and, conversely, well-meaning but overly complex interventions can make a situation worse, or even create problems that did not exist before.

<b>All parties must be clear about their mandates and the purpose of the engagement</b>	
	At Asiye eTafuleni, we work to amplify the voice of informal workers and are clear that we do not represent them.
	Who is commissioning the work and what is their agenda? For urban practitioners, taking an activist position is difficult if local government is the client (see the challenges during AeT’s experiences in Isipingo - Case Study 2, above).
	The design of the consultation process will depend on the relationship with local government and whether participation goals are mandatory. Sometimes appointed consultants may feel that they are in a “forced relationship” with the client. Proper reflection of the terms of reference or engagement is necessary.
	Consultants and officials must introduce themselves properly and be sensitive to potential tensions. It is best to be clear and transparent about any “positions” that are inherent to the situation.
	Where local government is at odds with the needs of traders within the informal economy, the urban practitioner may need to adopt an advocacy role.
	Where the practitioner convenes an engagement process on behalf of all stakeholders and with local government as willing participants, the practitioner’s role is facilitation and advisory (probably technical expertise) .
<b>Be as inclusive as possible</b>	
	It is important to include ALL interested and affected stakeholders in the overall consultation process and then decide together who needs to participate in the different aspects of the process.
	In Durban, there are traders with official permits and just as many traders without permits – so-called “illegal traders”, whose legitimacy is not recognized by the local government and who are excluded from all official processes. There are tensions between those two groups. Meaningful engagement must include everyone, in order to arrive at a successful outcome.
	In Case study 1, the Bovine Head Cooks Market facility upgrade, the cooks insisted that the traders working alongside them in the existing facility should be included in the upgrading planning and design.
<b>Keep a database</b>	
	Create a database of all parties involved in the consultation process – for accountability, network building and keeping participants informed.
	Keep updating the stakeholder database as things change on the ground.
	Share the database with all participants.
<b>Hold the vision</b>	
	Check in with participants to ensure that you are working towards common objectives. Be conscious about how any intervention or project supports or undermines the bigger vision for the place, for local government and for workers.
	Asiye eTafuleni’s vision includes dignifying work in the informal economy, creating great urban spaces and ensuring sustainability. This vision has been ratified by our constituency and is reviewed periodically. It drives our commitment to consultative and participatory processes.
<b>The importance of context</b>	
	Be considerate of cultural norms/practices and beliefs. If you do not know, ASK.
	Be aware of community dynamics, including community structures, politics and gender. Make an effort to understand.
	Traders are busy. Plan engagements carefully and consider ways to create space for participation. Where research requires time-consuming interviews, consult about the most appropriate timing and consider offering a stipend or some form of compensation for potential income loss.
	Do not make assumptions. Why are people using a particular space? It may simply be what is available rather than a particular preference.
	Understand the externalities, including laws and regulations, and urban management pressures.



Language	
	Take care to listen, and respond in a way that elicits further responses.
	Recognize that the traders are best-placed to know what their space and infrastructure should be/do. Do not present yourself as the expert.
	Find ways for everyone to participate – not only the most vocal.
	Set up different ways for people to contribute.
	Do not use jargon – note the colloquial, or the actual words used, instead.
	Consider visual language – drawings are difficult for most people to understand.
	Use mock-ups, models and/or 3D sketches.
	It is critical that the consultation encourages people to participate meaningfully and that it emphasizes the importance of their voice.
Who does the asking	
	Practitioners should introduce themselves properly and declare any potential conflicts of interest. Be aware that the perspective of the practitioner influences the outcomes of a process.
	Ask stakeholders to identify people they trust.
	It may be best to train traders to do the research. On how to do this, see case Study 3 (Kanyenathi.)

Informal workers need to be vigilant about their participation in design processes. The Bovine Head Cooks – as discussed in Case Study 1 – recognized their need to influence the design of their facility and asked Asiye eTafuleni to assist. The Warwick mielie (corn-on-the-cob) cooks did not; and ended up with a dysfunctional facility.

The architect for the mielie cooks facility was consultative, but made a crucial mistake because he lacked the necessary contextual understanding: the consultation took place during the off-season when the intensity of the cooking heat and smoke was absent, which limited his understanding of this issue. As a result, the semi-closed building that was provided is almost unbearable and the light fittings suspended from the roof melted within the first weeks.

*The mielie cooks' facility*

*Photo Credit:  
Asiye eTafuleni*





<b>All parties must be clear about their mandates and the purpose of the engagement</b>	
	Insist that the terms of reference and relationships are clearly defined.
	MBOs should check the practitioners' experience and interrogate their position.
	Take care to remain focused and don't use engagements as an opportunity to raise general issues and conflicts. Equally, demand that consultation processes are authentic and not merely "rubber-stamping" of predetermined outcomes.
	It is helpful to articulate potential tensions up-front so that everyone is aware, but it is important to be open to a process that intends to increase understanding.
<b>Be as inclusive as possible</b>	
	Ensure all relevant stakeholders and/or their organizations and representatives are included, so that all perspectives can be brought to bear.
<b>Keep a database</b>	
	Insist that the stakeholder database includes consultants, facilitators and officials, and that it is shared with all parties.
<b>Hold the vision</b>	
	Be clear about your objectives for an intervention or project and try to articulate this as clearly as possible, so that any misalignment of objectives can be addressed immediately.
<b>The importance of context</b>	
	If any cultural protocols are important, make sure that this is properly explained and ask that these are respected.
	If the amount of time or the scheduling of consultation sessions is a constraint, propose possible solutions that will ensure maximum inclusion and participation for an effective process. If an activity is seasonal or periodic, make sure that this is explained.
	Clarify where incorrect contextual assumptions become apparent.
<b>Language</b>	
	Insist on language usage that maximizes inclusion and participation.
	Ask for or offer translation if necessary.
	If the process is very technical, ask for resources to engage a technical representative to assist from the traders' side. Asiye eTafuleni often plays a role in technical support and translation.
	Insist that maps and/or drawings are presented in a way that can be understood by all. Request three-dimensional representations – including scale models and/or even full-scale mock-ups – or pilot projects to test ideas.
	Encourage broad participation from members and ask for a range of engagement options, especially if some participants are not confident to speak up in big meetings.
<b>Who does the asking</b>	
	It is important to trust the parties you are engaging with to listen and to ask the right questions. Insist on co-developing questions and raise interest or trust issues, if these arise. If possible, traders should participate as researchers, as in Case Study 3. (Kanyenathi)

Co-design is a philosophy rather than a methodology and must be embedded from the beginning. It requires an iterative process and continuous two-way communication that is designed into the process. Asiye eTafuleni has found that, aside from ensuring inclusion, co-design poses the lowest risk to ongoing buy-in or uptake of an intervention – especially when the proposed intervention has no precedent and must be conceived from first principles.

Data is important but beginning from a position of openness to discovery and learning, rather than expertise, allows for emergent solutions. The Traditional Herb and Medicine Market – described in detail in 'Working in Warwick' (Dobson and Skinner, 2009) – was the first facility of its kind, with very particular technical and cultural challenges, and could never have succeeded without a co-design approach. The more recent example of the Bovine Head Cooks Market Upgrade describes a co-design process in detail (See Case Study 1).

Patric Ndlovu consulting with traders in their Warwick workplace

Photo Credit: Asiye eTafuleni



<b>How to begin</b>	
	Present an understanding of the current situation and the brief back to participants to confirm.
	Adjust if necessary
	Keep checking that everyone is on the same page.
	Discuss design implications – <i>"if this, then that..."</i>
<b>Refine the brief and document</b>	
	The brief must include what is desired as well as what is NOT wanted.
	Use performance criteria to describe the brief initially: what the project or intervention should DO, rather than a more technical description of what it might BE in terms of size, function and form.
	Spatial criteria will emerge from the performance criteria as you proceed.
	Remember to use accessible language: no technical jargon. Co-develop project terms if necessary.
	Do not assume common understanding of even commonly used words.
	Preferably ask a community member to do language translation, if required.
<b>Present initial ideas</b>	
	Always present in a way that is OPEN and invites feedback: especially welcome criticism and encourage stakeholders to propose ideas.
	Treat your first proposal as a prompt for discussion and be prepared to discard it completely if necessary.
	Keep checking against the interpretation of the brief, as new criteria may emerge in response to new ideas.
<b>Integrating feedback</b>	
	The charette method (a facilitated process of designing together in a workshop format, with sketches or a drawing as the product) is a good way to integrate feedback in the moment, as it shows a commitment to respond openly and seriously.
	If integration is not possible in the moment, commit to holding a follow-up session where revised ideas will be presented.
	Continue with as many iterations are necessary, going a little deeper each time, until there is an agreed solution.
<b>Prepare graphic representations of design proposals</b>	
	Use 3D sketches and physical models to present to participants, as they are more widely understood than conventional 2-dimensional architectural drawings.
	It helps to build capacity and confidence for future engagements if you use the process to teach people how to understand plans.
	Mark out full-scale mock-ups, on the actual site if possible, and role play to give participants a sense of what the space could be like. We have found that this method is very effective and saves a lot of time.
<b>Finalizing the design</b>	
	Update proposals to include all feedback and present the "final" design.
	Use the opportunity, if appropriate, to coach participants to present the design to others, including local government officials. This builds agency and establishes real ownership of the proposals.
	Ask for stakeholder leaders to formally sign-off on the design for the record. Ensure that there is a clear understanding of the cost implications – and therefore impossibility – of making any changes to the design during implementation.
	If possible, ask local government officials or anyone else driving the implementation to also be accountable to the agreed way forward through some form of formal sign-off.

## 4. Engaging with Local Government

Asiye eTafuleni has assisted many groups of informal workers to engage with local government bodies because better stakeholder relationships lead to better urban management outcomes, or even co-management strategies. Constructive engagement enables understanding and integration of needs, constraints and opportunities, potentially leading to innovative solutions that would not otherwise have been thought of.

Top-down processes without engagement and sufficient understanding of the context may result in abortive expenditure, missed opportunities, or facilities that are not fit for purpose. This is wasteful and inefficient.

Typically, there are four main situations (with associated roles) where Asiye eTafuleni provides support in an engagement with local government:

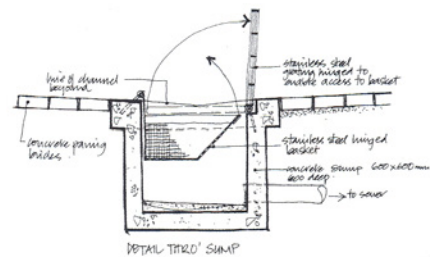
1. Technical support when traders have been asked by a local government body to respond to a planning or design proposal. Often, simple amendments to design proposals – with “street” wisdom applied – can achieve improved outcomes for all, but traders may need technical assistance to understand the proposals. This kind of engagement may or may not lead to situation 2.
2. Mediate in a conflict between traders and the municipality, where solution-seeking is the main purpose and compromise may be an option. This situation has arisen when traders were presented with plans that they believed would negatively affect them, and officials and/or their representatives were unresponsive to their feedback.
3. Help to convene an engagement around an issue, when the government resists engagement. (For example, the Bovine Head Cooks

A drain clogged with street cooks' waste.

Photo Credit: Asiye eTafuleni

Innovative drain design to allow easy maintenance by the cooks themselves.

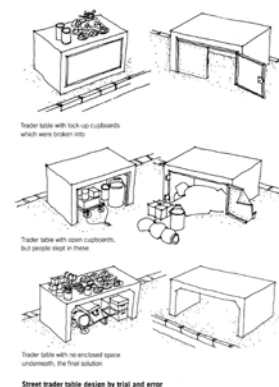
Credit: Barbara van Zyl



Unsuitable steel trading tables provided by the municipality were overturned by traders in a protest against their design and the lack of engagement.

Municipal concrete street trading table design development through trial and error.

Credit: Asiye eTafuleni





Market Upgrade, described in Case Study 1.) The Asiye eTafuleni team has cultivated relationships with key officials over time, which helps us to support traders to get access to government officials. The organization also has a lawyer on staff, who can advise on the traders' right to engage. This kind of engagement may or may not lead to situation 4.

4. Provide technical support for traders to embark on a litigation process if, and only if, it is clear that lines have been drawn and common ground or compromise cannot be found. In this instance, and as a measure of last resort, Asiye eTafuleni provides technical support for traders to embark on a litigation process. Litigation is time-consuming and there are opportunity costs, even if legal assistance is free. Strategic litigation,

however, is very important: key victories in Durban have helped to elevate the constitutional rights of traders<sup>3</sup> and increased the likelihood that they may be consulted for major plans.

Most cities have clearly articulated strategic social and economic objectives and goals. Given the prevalence of informal workers in most urban areas – particularly but not limited to the Global South – the contribution of the informal economy to these goals is usually significant.

Finding areas where local government and informal workers' needs and objectives are in alignment is useful for constructive engagement.

*John Macwicana after his successful, precedent-setting court challenge against unlawful municipal confiscation of traders' goods.*

*Photo Credit:  
Asiye eTafuleni*



<sup>3</sup> <https://aet.org.za/landmark-legal-case-defending-informal-workers-rights/>  
<https://aet.org.za/a-tribute-to-john-makwicana/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krPEMV89Ct0>  
<https://www.wiego.org/blog/durban-street-vendor-wins-precedent-setting-victory-court>  
<http://saflii.org/za/cases/ZAKZDHC/2015/7.html>  
<http://www.gbv.de/dms/zbw/868797936.pdf>  
<https://www.iol.co.za/news/court-victory-for-informal-trader-1820045>  
<https://mg.co.za/article/2015-02-17-municipality-impounding-informal-traders-goods-unlawful>  
<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Cop-could-be-forced-to-pay-for-confiscated-sandals-20141126>

## How Asiye eTafuleni Approaches Engagement with Local Government

### Identify supportive officials to work with

Even having just one person in local government who is open to engaging is a good start.

Ask them to help convene an engagement with relevant colleagues.

### Meet in a neutral venue if possible

### Position the engagement as a space to solve a mutual problem through improved understanding and collaborative thinking

Diffuse adversarial positions as soon as possible and encourage all parties to consciously hold multiple perspectives – for example, ask each party to imagine or even role-play themselves in the others' shoes.

Describe informal workers' concerns in a non-combative way.

LISTEN to local government concerns.

Use mirroring as a technique to ensure that everyone understands the "other" – the facilitator can do this for all parties if necessary (for example, repeat back to the parties how what they describe has been understood). Storytelling and personal accounts are helpful to make situations and issues less abstract.

Demystify the situation – walk around the "site" or "study area" together as an immersive exposure.

Look for common ground and identify mutual goals. Back up from the detail that may be conflictual to a place where there is a shared aspiration and then the goal is for everyone to contribute to achieving it. For example, everyone would prefer an attractive, well-managed public space. Even if what this means can vary, there are usually elements that are common such as less crime, sufficient space with clearly defined functions, or attractive space with appropriate amenities and infrastructure.

**Ensure that officials know that litigation is only a last resort, where common ground cannot be found and rights are being infringed, and is NOT a preferred route to resolution of differences.**

### Clarify roles

We work in advisory, advocacy, educator, and facilitator roles. Design is almost always part of the process. We try to define which role we are assuming in any engagement.

When we are occasionally formally engaged by local government departments, putting us in the role of consultant with local government as the client, this is declared up-front.

We work alongside informal workers and do not represent them. They represent themselves with our (invited) support.

NGOs can play an important bridging role between traders and officials – facilitation improves communication and understanding.

### Pre-Conditions for Successful Engagement

Remain independent, even when contracted in (see Isipingo case study).

Remain non-partisan with respect to different groups and explicitly not aligned to any political party.

Engage across line-function departments: for example, economic development, environmental health, or urban management departments.

Accountability or some form of "buy-in" to an aspirational vision – for example, an inclusive city, great public spaces or urban transformation – is very helpful to frame the engagement.

Commitment of all parties to follow through on any resolutions is essential and builds trust.

For more on Asiye eTafuleni's facilitation principles and practices see [Asiye eTafuleni at 10: Fostering an economy that prioritizes spatial justice and social capital](#) (Pauline Conley, 2018, especially p25).

## 5. Conducting a Situation or Status Quo Analysis (for urban practitioners)

Asiye eTafuleni’s small team works from an office in the centre of Warwick Junction. This means that we are immersed in the area and regularly spend time on the street and in the markets. For a long-term project, there is no substitute for the project office being based at the project site. If this is not possible, it is imperative to start with the best possible immersive and detailed research enquiry because thoroughness and depth are crucial for successful project design and outcomes.

Often, a situational analysis reveals that the initial project brief needs review. This may be particularly relevant where the proposed design intervention arises out of pressure from a particular stakeholder group.

In this section, we attempt to unpack the critical observation techniques Asiye eTafuleni uses for a situational analysis,

the kinds of questions that inform the analysis, what to look for in the apparent chaos, and a methodology that helps to make sense of the findings.

In essence, the analysis is intended;

- to provide a detailed contextual understanding and develop base information for design;
- to inform how (and if it’s even advisable) to intervene in an area;
- to inform the inclusive design process.

While this briefing note is focused on the physical and spatial aspects, it is worth noting that sometimes an initial scoping may be needed to substantiate or ascertain the need for inclusive planning and design in the first place. Ideally the whole process, including the situation analysis, should be inclusive and consultative: there is always information that only the people on the ground would know.

*A range of trading set-ups along the edge of a taxi rank in Warwick.*

*Infrastructure maintenance deficits, goods trolleys, and a range of trading tables in Warwick.*

*Display strategies using municipal tables in Warwick. Some traders use pallets to extend the table area and insulate the produce against the steel which heats up in the sun.*

*Numbered trading ‘squares’ painted by the municipality, a range of self-provided trading tables, and storage boxes made by street carpenters in Warwick.*

*Photo Credits:  
Andrew Griffin*





When planning the research and analysis process, Asiye eTafuleni starts by developing key questions that will underpin our enquiry. Regardless of the mode of enquiry (discussed below), it is necessary to differentiate between questions we need to ask ourselves (such as what information exists and where can we get it; what are the big things that we need to know and to what specific end; what mapping might we need; what level of detail is feasible; who do we need to talk to and what do we need from them) and what questions we need to ask public space traders and other stakeholders, directly.

Broadly, we as designers want to understand:

- What works currently – and why? and for whom?  
What should be protected and/or enhanced?
- What doesn't work currently – and why? and for whom?  
How do people adapt?
- What conflicts/potential conflicts exist?  
For example, land use conflicts or stakeholder tensions.

- What are the drivers of the situation? For example public transport, social infrastructure or movement patterns.
- What are the urban management challenges?
- How is the area generally perceived by different groups?

At a more detailed level:

- Who is trading?
- What are they trading?
- Why are they trading in this particular space?
- How are they displaying their goods – and why – what are the spatial parameters and cues?
- Who are their customers?
- Is the customer footfall periodic?
- What are the movement patterns?
- Do traders stay at their spots all day and trade different goods?
- Do traders move between different locations?
- What infrastructure is being used?
- How is this infrastructure arranged and does it seem optimal?
- Are there specific inadequacies?
- What assistance is employed?' – for example, in Durban, the barrow operators are a crucial part of the

*An example of a formal/informal trading relationship.*

*Traders working under bridges, using different display modes and storage boxes.*

*A range of trading modes and goods at a taxi rank.*

*Chickens in cages inside the Early Morning Market.*

*Photo Credits:  
Andrew Griffin*



process of setting up, closing, and moving stock, and many traders employ assistants.

- What street furniture/infrastructure is being used – tables, kiosks, water, electricity, storage, security – and what are the pros and cons?
- What are the environmental conditions – waste management, lighting, services, washing facilities, weather protection, other?
- Are there particular social “codes” of behaviour?
- Is there evidence of sector or spatial typologies?
- Is the activity seasonal, or are there periodic or seasonal peaks? Ensure the enquiry includes the peak situation.
- If there are patterns, what informs or drives them – user preference or regulations?
- What are the obvious urban management challenges and/or conflicts?

The methodology used for enquiry is determined by the relationship between the stakeholders and Asiye eTafuleni, and between the stakeholder groups themselves. Also, different methods are used depending on the level of

commitment for the project: observation and informal engagement on the street may be appropriate for a feasibility assessment, but formal interviews and focus group sessions may need to wait until there is more certainty. Regardless of the project status, common courtesy and proper introductions ensure mutual respect going forward.

### Critical observation

There is no substitute for spending time on site or on the street. Many key questions can be answered simply by carefully observing what people are doing, where, and how. Be sure to observe the activities across a full month/week/or even year (some activities are periodic) and at all times of the day (from set-up to closing). Are these the same every day and are there obvious reasons why (not)? Are there busy and less busy trading times, and is there a difference in how traders operate at those times? Note what assistance may be employed; what difficulties might be self-evident (e.g. access to water for someone who may be cooking); are there issues with lighting in the early morning or at the end of the day; are there conflicts between various activities. Note observations using photographs, sketches and notes. Constantly interrogate your understanding and assumptions, making

*For a project in Kwa Mashu, Durban, we began with research and we were asked specifically not to raise expectations. After many site visits, it became clear that there were trading patterns and typologies, and that the key issues concerned the spatial configuration of the area and the lack of or inadequate infrastructure.*

*Photo Credit:  
Asiye eTafuleni*



notes of what needs to be double-checked through asking the traders themselves. We try to assign Asiye eTafuleni team members with different skill sets to work together (e.g. a social facilitator paired with an architect/planner) because they have a different focus, yielding a fuller picture.

After spending some initial time observing, it should be possible to identify key issues and to start framing specific lines of enquiry around those issues.

### Interviews

At Asiye eTafuleni we use various interview techniques. Most commonly, team members engage informally through conversations on the street and summarize key findings in discussion and/or as field notes. This street engagement is crucial for building relationships. Where a more systematic approach is required (for example, where we want to address specific questions to selected participants) the team will develop a questionnaire which is then used to guide an interview, always leaving space for more general and unanticipated observations.

What we have found most useful, where possible, is to have at least two team members conducting the more formal interview: one to ask the questions while the other takes photographs, perhaps records the conversation (with permission), observes body language and

explains the process to curious people on the street.

### Focus groups

Asiye eTafuleni seldom uses a focus group methodology for the initial enquiry, but it is very useful to verify or correct our interpretation of the fieldwork findings. This involves inviting interview participants to a session where the initial findings and some preliminary conclusions are presented back, followed by a facilitated discussion. This yields a more detailed and nuanced understanding of what has been observed and is an opportunity for any assumptions to be corrected. As part of an inclusive planning process, it allows for design course correction at an early stage – however, such feedback should also emerge at later engagements as part of an iterative, inclusive consultation and/or co-design process. See the section above on co-design.

### Traders do their own research

A key factor in any research enquiry is “who is doing the asking”. In the Kanyenathi project, we successfully trained informal workers to do their own research (Case Study 3). Where there is time and a large research sample, we strongly recommend this as a methodology: the participants experience real ownership of the process and the data, and the success of ongoing initiatives that result from the research are – at least in part – due to their own capacity and personal agency.

*A traders researcher conducting an interview*

*Patric Ndlovu and Richard Dobson conducting a focus group session.*

*Photo Credits:  
Asiye eTafuleni*





An example of this is the use of the “photovoice”<sup>4</sup> methodology – in which people use video and/or photo images to capture aspects of their environment and experiences and share them with others.

Participatory action research is time-consuming for the participants and potentially takes them away from their livelihood activities for an unfeasible amount of time. In this instance, we usually pay participants a stipend. We cannot necessarily compensate fully for the loss of earnings but have found that both the contribution and the gesture are appreciated.

The intention of much of Asiye eTafuleni’s work is about designing better spaces and infrastructure and we try to

organize and present the information visually. We have found that it is useful to create a one-pager and have developed a method of “data-sheets” and related spatial mapping to make the information very accessible and easy to understand. If there are various spatial conditions/situations, and/or obvious patterns or typologies, we make that as explicit as possible, often developing a project-specific numbering system for easy cross-reference.

A typical data sheet for Isipingo Urban Design Framework (Case Study 2) can be seen above.

See two additional examples below. It is best to design project-specific mapping and information management strategies: these examples are offered as a guide only.

A typical fact sheet for Kwa Mashu (2010).

A data sheet for the Warwick childcare project.

Credits: Asiye eTafuleni



site\_29: Cross Street

Questionnaire

1	Name	Thandi Mthethu
2	Site No	29
3	Site Descrip.	Prince Edward
4	Trading location	Corner of Cross Street and Br Esomam
5	Place of residence	Kemville, Sea Cow Lake
6	Cellphone number	0604705139
7	Baby Name	Majazi
8	Baby Gender	Male
9	Birth date	28 Jan-24
10	Frequency	From birth until 4 years old he came everyday, now goes to creche
11	Child care	he sleeps in amongst the sofasores
12	Support	yes, but he is independent- sometimes walks to Berea Station on his own
13	Time	8am to 5pm
14	Nutrition	yes, breastfed until 4 years old
15	Hygiene	yes
16	Security	yes there is security around here
17	Proble	yes is a problem, we are in the open
18	Politics	is
19	Water	we buy bottled water
20	Happy shopping space	at trading area
21	Trading	sofasores
22	Waste disposal	rubbish bin around corner
23	Exposure	outdoors
24	Air quality	is
25	Sound	78-148
26	Health and safety	was an isolated incident of the child being trampled by a security guard
27	Surface condition	armac pavement
28	Economic viability	trader mentioned that the benches sometimes buy in bulk from her
29	Other observation	

Social Questions

Technical & Observations

Location

<sup>4</sup> Community Tool Box, Chapter 3, Section 20. Implementing Photovoice in Your Community <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/photovoice>

## 6. Using Typology to Guide Space and Infrastructure Design

A situation or status quo analysis describes the context and provides a foundation from which to design and, hopefully, innovate. Identifying patterns and typologies is one way of looking at apparently chaotic situations and making sense of them. It helps to codify the “chaos” and to develop responsive designs. In this section, we develop the idea of “typology” as a methodology.

It is very important that this cannot be a simplistic or reductionist process. The underlying reasons that observed patterns may exist must be properly interrogated and brought to bear in developing solutions.

The Isipingo Urban Design Framework (Case Study 2) describes how this approach can be applied in a particular project. The first time we used this approach was for the Kwa Mashu project, referred to previously (section 5). Both areas appeared to be without any order at all when we first looked.

We have found that using typologies makes inclusive analysis and co-design easier. It allows design practitioners to apply their design and technical knowledge in a manner that is directly responsive to the context, while leaving space for traders to bring their lived experience into the process. The typological approach allows for meaningful engagement with local government bodies at the concept stage – to get early feedback before going too far.

Once existing patterns and typologies are understood, we use them to inform and test our design proposals. Continuously checking in with stakeholders mitigates




against simplistic “solutions” that miss the mark. This is where the design process becomes a form of advocacy and avoids the danger of simply repeating patterns that exist, which may be adaptations to restrictive regulations, poor environmental conditions, or a lack of resources, rather than spontaneous and preferred ways of working.

For example, the use of temporary structures is ubiquitous in Durban and comes from prescriptions around building in public space and a management imperative that dictates that in many areas the streets must be clear at night for cleaning. Many traders would probably prefer to leave their goods and stalls in place overnight, as happens in many places in India, yet the situation has been accepted over a long time as a compromise. This does not mean that it should not be interrogated, and in the Isipingo case study alternatives were proposed.

Based on our experience of working in Durban and surrounds, we have identified certain categories of “types”. Other ones will be found in different contexts. The table below describes most of the typologies that Asiye eTafuleni has observed and worked with in Durban, and a summary of some of the design implications following from questions that inform our design process.

It is important to clarify that the spatial typologies are not necessarily progressive (for example, moving toward formalization). Different traders have different priorities – such as shelter rather than location or access to services. Understanding these priorities is critical to design.

## Types of spatial configurations

Category	Description	Design implications	all photos courtesy Asiye eTafuleni
Strips	<p>Rows of traders along a linear sidewalk, bridge link, taxi-rank edge, or other high footfall pedestrian corridors</p> <p>Note that often traders in these spaces are chasing footfall and might tolerate a congested uncovered space as a conscious trade-off.</p>	<p>Is there sufficient space, or if not, is there space to widen the sidewalk? Is there cover? What is the relationship to the adjacent buildings/ frontages and activities? Is there conflict? What makes the space an attractive trading spot? Would some traders move if an alternative location was available? If it is a popular pedestrian route, what would happen if the drive behind the footfall changed?</p>	
Nodes	<p>A cluster or multiple rows of traders where the public space is wider.</p>	<p>Is there sufficient space? Why is the configuration the way it is? Are there obvious ways the configuration might be improved? Is there cover? What is the relationship to the adjacent buildings/ frontages and activities? Is there conflict? Are there amenities such as toilets/storage nearby?</p>	
Markets	<p>A space designated for trading, usually, but not always, with some formal facilities.</p>	<p>Are specific goods being traded that make it a destination and as such is not dependent on passing footfall? Is this trading activity restricted to the market through regulation or is it a natural market? Are the facilities and services adequate? Is the space adequate? What are the conditions of trader access to a market space?</p>	



Strips, nodes and markets.


Credit : Asiye eTafuleni

<b>Strips</b>				<p><b>Detailed Description</b></p> <p>Single sided linear arrangement of trading activity along a pedestrian circulation route. The location of the trading activity (back or front of kerb) will be determined by the boundary edge activity.</p> <p>A permanent or impermanent setup.</p>
<b>Nodes</b>				<p>Single or double sided linear arrangement with the characteristics of a strip typology, but located within a sidewalk with extended width.</p> <p>The more generous sidewalk provides the opportunity in urban space to elaborate the strip typology.</p>
<b>Markets</b>				<p>Expansive urban space occupied by diverse trading activities at scale.</p> <p>Typically the concentration of traders and activities is larger than other typologies. Design intervention inclined towards an urban umbrella as unified covering.</p>




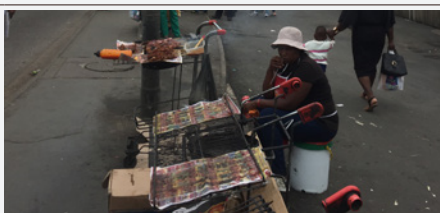


## Types of goods being traded

Category	Description	Design implications	all photos courtesy Asiye eTafuleni
Fresh produce	Fruit and vegetables – mixed or one type. Note that this will be seasonal.	Is there sufficient space for display and what type of display do the traders prefer? Is there protection from the elements – especially sun and rain? What happens to unsold perishable goods at the end of the day? Are cold-storage options available?	
Prepared food	Sandwiches, take-away cooked food, plated meals	Different types of prepared food have different selling modes and requirements. Do the traders need to keep food hot if brought from home? How is this being achieved? Do traders cook on site? What energy source is being used and why? How do traders wash pots, plates, utensils? Do customers purchase and move along or consume at the site? Is food pre-ordered and delivered (common near Durban's taxi ranks)? What happens to unsold perishables at the end of the day?	
Specialized products	Bovine head meat, mielies (corn on the cob), Shisa-nyama (traditional grilled meat), music CD's, beadwork, lime and mphepho, and traditional herbs and medicine. Some of these specialized products are sold in dedicated market spaces in Durban.	Working with these traders requires a detailed understanding of their operations as well as the cultural aspects. Who are their customers and what are their expectations? How do they operate and what specific space and infrastructure do they need? This includes minimum space requirements, cooking fuel type, electricity, waste disposal issues, wash-up facilities, shelter from the weather, security, seating, or clear floor space for selling. Many of these markets have been extensively documented in ' <a href="#">Working in Warwick</a> ' (Dobson and Skinner, 2009).	
Clothing and/or shoes	New pinafores, church uniforms, traditional garments, second-hand clothing, shoes and accessories.	In Durban, traders in these goods generally prefer to display their goods on the floor; however, in some locations this is impractical and they use hanging rails or tables. Some traders need a place to sew, which has specific space and energy requirements.	
Other non-perishables	Chips and sweets, electronic goods such as phone chargers, and toiletries.	In most cases these traders are the most flexible: they simply need a table or may even operate on the ground, or they are mobile, using some form of conveyance or trolley. Footfall is usually the main priority. Those selling electronic goods need power to test appliances.	
Services	Sewing, hair salons, printing and copying, traditional healers, shoe shining.	Most traders offering services require some form of at least semi-enclosed space, either for privacy or because they need to protect their equipment. How many customers do they see at a time, how much space do they need and what infrastructure and services? Would they prioritize amenity over location?	


Recyclers	Cardboard and plastic salvagers. In Durban, salvagers in the informal economy need space to store their materials in order to sort them before selling them to an agent.	Salvagers or recyclers are often criticized because their activities make a mess. What volumes do they deal with? How do they move their materials around the city? (We have developed various trolley designs with some of the cardboard recyclers) Does plastic waste get cleaned, and if so where and how? The issue is often about dignifying the activity as a valid and valuable one.	
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## Types of stalls and scale of operation


Category	Description	Design implications	all photos courtesy Asiye eTafuleni
Floor display	Usually clothing, or entry-level survivalist traders without permits	Many entry-level or survivalist traders start with almost nothing and, unless floor display suits their mode of operation (e.g., clothing), would prefer a table. The issue with floor display, especially in a sidewalk location, is distinguishing between the trading site and the pedestrian circulation space. Sometimes a step in the ground level is all that is required.	
Table	Temporary table, concrete table, steel table, under cover/open	The eThekweni Municipality in Durban has tried many iterations of street furniture, including a range of concrete tables with and without storage below; steel tables with and without an integral canopy; and, in many areas, simple wooden trestle tables that are cleared away at the end of the day to allow for overnight pressure cleaning. Size and material are important. There are many specific constraints, for example, steel tables for fresh produce sellers do not work because the surface heats up in the sun and causes goods to rot. Some municipal-provided tables are too small and are informally extended.	
Kiosk	Make-shift, commercially available gazebo, shipping container, small permanent building	Why is a kiosk required (for privacy, weather protection, security for goods and equipment)? How much space is needed? How is the space used? Why a kiosk in public space rather than a small shop – cost/location/etc.? Is the enclosed space prioritized over location? Is the trader a destination rather than dependent on passing trade? Would they relocate for better amenities?	
Mobile/itinerant	Trolley, tray, mobile braai (grill)	Asiye eTafuleni has observed many creative and innovative mobile trading solutions. Why do some traders prefer to be mobile (to follow footfall, or because they do not have permits)? Would they prefer an allocated space? How have the conveyances been customized? What does this tell you?	







**Types of trolleys/carts/conveyances** (not a focus of this brief, but is a typology Asiye eTfuleni has engaged with extensively)

<p>Transport for stock and equipment</p>	<p>Barrow operator trolley, shopping trolley</p>	<p>What are the ergonomic considerations, how do wheels fare on uneven or potholed streets or sidewalks?</p>	
<p>Mobile stall</p>	<p>Shopping trolleys, metal trolley braai, mielie cooks</p>	<p>Shopping trolleys are the ubiquitous form in Durban but are regarded as stolen goods and are therefore precarious. How is this managed? What innovative adaptations are observable? Are there clues to better solutions?</p>	
<p>Cardboard salvage</p>	<p>Salvage carts</p>	<p>What are the ergonomic considerations, how do wheels fare on uneven or potholed streets or sidewalks?</p>	

**Types of amenities and services**

Type		
<p>Toilet block</p>	<p>How is the condition? What management arrangements are in place? Operating hours? Safety considerations? Gatekeeping (for example restricted access at a market or taxi rank, or is there a cost to use it? What fittings (toilets, basins, tap, etc.) are available?</p>	
<p>'Porta-loo'</p>	<p>Condition? Management? Access to water for handwashing? Safety?</p>	



<p>Electricity</p>	<p>Many traders need electricity and informal/illegal connections are rife. What are the risks? What would it take to provide safer electricity? Are traders prepared/able to pay for electricity? Are there appropriate renewable energy options?</p>	
<p>Water</p>	<p>Access to water for washing hands, cooking, cleaning cookware/ plates. Where do traders access water? What are the issues? Would traders be prepared to pay for water if they could get a dedicated supply?</p>	
<p>Storage – central/ decentralized</p>	<p>Particularly for traders who must clear away their goods over-night, storage for their goods, tables and/or trolleys is essential. How much space do people need? How much can they pay? Do some traders need cold storage? How do they move their goods between their trading sites and storage facilities? What distance is 'too far'? Do the stacking arrangements work? If not, why not? What would sufficient and good storage look like?</p>	
<p>Waste removal</p>	<p>Often informal traders are blamed for areas of the city being a mess. What solid waste arrangements are in place? If they are not working, why? Are there possible solutions or changes in trader and/or customer behavior that could help? Are there systemic issues that require advocacy?</p>	

Using urban space typologies like strips, nodes and markets is particularly useful on a broader urban scale – for example, the whole of Warwick Junction or the Isipingo CBD. It facilitates mapping of existing situations as well as proposals.

This notwithstanding, for a particular street or market the design response needs to be micro-contextual. Even two sides of the same street might require completely different treatment: one side might be very exposed to the sun while the opposite side is covered; one side might have a wide sidewalk or have a

popular destination land-use that attracts many potential customers along it, while the opposite side may be a railway reserve (like in the Isipingo case study). This is a reminder that when working on an urban planning intervention, what seems like a very small, proposed change – such as changing the vehicular traffic flow of a street from two-way to one way, or moving a bus-stop 50 metres along – could have a disproportionate effect on pedestrian movement and thus the footfall that traders depend on. It is necessary to zoom in and out between the big picture and the detail, adjusting both in an iterative manner.

On a smaller scale, for decisions about what kinds of infrastructure to put where, the typologies related to types of goods, trading modes and infrastructure types and preferences are a very useful starting point. For a larger scale plan, the typologies may be sufficient to inform how informal traders are organized within a precinct and may offer a useful starting point for stakeholder engagement and/or co-design processes around the detail. It is imperative that the typology is used as a design tool only, and that proposals are tested in detail to arrive at a more nuanced and responsive final design.

## 7. Conclusion

Urban informality is inherently dynamic. This briefing note reflects on the work of Asiye eTafuleni responding to the needs and concerns of informal workers in Durban, South Africa. Some of the lessons are very place-specific, but there are some universal insights. The preparation of this note has been beneficial to us: it provided the impetus to document processes that are often largely internalized and it has helped us to recognize our own patterns and methods.

Since conceiving this briefing note, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world – making informal workers even more vulnerable and bringing new challenges for public space trading. The measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have generated significant job losses and are leading to more people seeking work in the informal economy in public space. The health imperative for greater distancing between people is exacerbating existing tensions in contested places. Already inadequate public water and sanitation (WASH) facilities are under increased pressure with new imperatives to sanitize and wash hands. Commuter patterns have

changed and over-zealous enforcement of health guidelines and lockdown rules have resulted in punitive action towards traders rather than the flexibility that is needed. Some market spaces are configured in a way that makes physical distancing impossible, so new arrangements must be negotiated.

The principles that always guide our work – respect; listening; deepening understanding to help manage conflicts; party political neutrality; and inclusiveness – continue to be crucial as together with traders and government officials we try to figure out what a better “new normal” might look like. Spatial design and interventions should be a key component, informing policy and regulations. We hope that the increased global awareness of the vulnerability and importance of informal workers will create more opportunities for inclusive planning and design going forward.

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# W I E G O

Women in Informal Employment:  
Globalizing and Organizing

## About WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) is a global network focused on empowering the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy to secure their livelihoods. We believe all workers should have equal economic opportunities, rights, protection and voice. WIEGO promotes change by improving statistics and expanding knowledge on the informal economy, building networks and capacity among informal worker organizations and, jointly with the networks and organizations, influencing local, national and international policies. Visit [www.wiego.org](http://www.wiego.org).