



Growing Inclusive Markets
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CASE STUDY: SOUTH AFRICA

Amanz' abantu: Water for the People

In 1997, in response to the South African government's appeal to the private sector for help in providing water services for historically disadvantaged rural communities of the Eastern Cape, Amanz' abantu, which means '*water for the people*' in Xhosa, was created. Under the leadership of Oliver Ive, the company is guided by a strong social and environmentally sustainable mission to provide municipal services through government partnerships and community empowerment. Amanz' abantu is, 'not just about profit at any cost; it's got to be a shared objective, and from there one needs to be able to maintain a sustainable business,' according to Oliver. 'It's about responsibility and working within the frameworks that you have.'

In the mid 1990s, South Africa was finishing the dismantlement of apartheid and replacing it with policies and programmes focused on repair and equity. The new government recognized the importance of water and sanitation as keys to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. In a bold move, the new constitution identified water as a human right, guaranteeing free access for all South Africans. Unfortunately, the government lacked the capacity to deliver basic water and sanitation services.

Amanz' abantu was formed as a consortium of private sector businesses and NGOs. The company brings in local rural communities of the Eastern Cape, which are often steeped in poverty and lacking basic services, not just as clients or consumers, but as partners with the company and the government.

Community residents are recruited to oversee and steer project implementation, including the actual building and construction, leading to ownership over the infrastructure and training for future employment. Truly engaging communities has been essential to Amanz' abantu's successes, as Oliver explains: 'You just simply cannot implement a project of any nature without working with the people. That's the 'abantu' side of Amanz' abantu!'

Although partnerships are at the core of the company's success, these were not easy to create or to maintain initially. There was suspicion on the part of the government and difficulty in understanding the role of the private sector. Non-payment of water tariffs was used as a political tool of the community against the apartheid government, and community members were expectantly waiting for the new government to follow through on their promises of service delivery. Overcoming these barriers required Amanz' abantu to create innovative technology, engage the community and build trust among all its partners.

The success of these partnerships with the government and local communities is evident. Areas that did not have access to clean water now have improved sanitation and hygiene. Women, who are typically responsible for water collection, now do not have to spend many hours fetching water. Rural residents, including women, have gained skills necessary for employment. And perhaps most importantly, Amanz' abantu has shown how the private sector can work with governments, organizations, and communities to achieve Millennium Development Goals. Through bringing water to the people, Amanz' abantu proved that business can be a powerful tool in fostering environmental and social sustainability, because, in Oliver's words, "*these things are just good sense.*"