

# Close partnership develops two cities –

## Gothenburg and Nelson Mandela Bay



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Many links between Sweden and South Africa date back to the struggle against apartheid. In the late 1990s, two cities deepened their relations and commenced long-term cooperation with support from Sida. Today, Gothenburg and Nelson Mandela Bay enjoy a lively cooperation that benefits development on many different fronts in both cities.

“This is the longest and most successful cooperation Nelson Mandela Bay has ever had,” says Hester Botha, Deputy Director of the department of international relations in Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality. “When it began, South Africa was still isolated from the international community – culturally, economically, academically and socially. The cooperation programme has opened many doors for the people of Nelson Mandela Bay, providing unique and valuable insight into the workings of a modern city in a successful country.”

### Trustful relations

Gothenburg and Nelson Mandela Bay (formerly Port Elizabeth) have a great deal in common. They are important port cities with sizeable automotive and steel industries, and large suburbs. From the outset, the objective has been to establish conditions for mutual and sustainable development in both cities. The focus is on developing the local economy, enterprise, gender equality and democracy, as well as on reducing poverty and injustice. The cooperation is being conducted on a broad front between universities, business and the public sector through the exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas among people.

Hester Botha explains: “Our partnership has developed in three stages. During the first year, our focus was on building up trustful relations – professional, social and political. The objective was to understand one another’s

culture and conditions, as well as how these affect our cooperation.”

“In the second year, we identified the activities of importance to development in both cities. We gathered facts, planned activities and prepared a budget. In 2001, implementation began on a broad front and we are still in the middle of this.”

### Building capacity and knowledge

Many of the key projects focus on capacity development and the exchange of knowledge. One example is the municipal cooperation between Frölunda and Gelvandale, and in particular between the Frölunda Cultural

Centre and the Gelvandale Public Library, which is situated in a shanty town outside Nelson Mandela Bay.

“Gelvandale has developed into a fully fledged cultural centre with workshops, exhibitions and performances. It has transformed the cultural and social landscape in the area, contributing to numerous changes, such as increased influence in society, reduced poverty, increased awareness on HIV/AIDS and the environment,” says Hester Botha.

Another important project is the development of capacity in the municipal libraries in Nelson Mandela Bay and, above all, the professional role of the librarians. This includes the “Books Building Bridges” project that is intended to stimulate reading among pupils in both Gothenburg and Nelson Mandela Bay.



Workshop on mural painting at the Frölunda cultural centre in connection with a thematic month on South Africa in 2008.



"Books Building Bridges" is a project to stimulate reading and an understanding of other cultures among pupils in Gothenburg and Nelson Mandela Bay.

### Long-term efforts

The cooperation also offers benefits for Gothenburg on many fronts. Among other things, it has resulted in the University of Gothenburg introducing the "Peer Helping" student support programme, developed in cooperation with Nelson Mandela Bay University, which has worked with peer help for some time.

Anki Gustavsson, assistant coordinator of the South Africa project for Business Region Göteborg explains: "The programme is now one of the leaders in its area and we have received several enquiries from foreign universities on developing the concept."

"In the area of the environment, we have seen results including improved database systems for the collection of data on air quality, competency certification regarding environmental management systems and improvements in customer databases for waste management. When it comes to urban planning, we have implemented improvements through mutual discussions on urban development, particularly regarding the city centre and the port."

The business community is indirectly involved in many projects, primarily because it possesses specialist expertise in certain areas that affect various projects.

"Trust is built through effective and long-term efforts and this allows us to support business relations between our regions," explains Anki Gustavsson of Business Region Göteborg.

### Continuation self-evident

The long-term cooperation project has also led to activities and exchanges that are conducted without the help of Sida funds. An example is the visit paid by the East Indiaman Göteborg to Nelson Mandela Bay in 2006. Another example is the "Eastern Cape from Above" exhibition that travelled to Gothenburg's cultural festival, presenting Eastern Cape Province as an attractive tourist destination. And next year Nelson Mandela Bay will host the "FIFA 2010 Soccer World Cup" with support from Gothenburg.

"We are completely certain that this cooperation will develop and grow further, particularly in terms of

sustainable urban development, environmental and climate changes, local economic development and culture," says Hester Botha. Today Sida is giving a small financial support through ICLD (International Central for Local Democracy).

South Africa is one of the countries where Swedish aid is changing. Cooperation between various Swedish players – authorities, organisations and businesses – and partners in the country is increasingly taking place on equal terms and through mutual interest. The objective is long-term self-sustaining relations, for the partners in the countries and for the people living in poverty.

Sida is stimulating Partner Driven Cooperation by facilitating contacts, arranging meeting, disseminating knowledge regarding possible partners and markets, as well as providing initial financial support.