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Beyond self-help: learning from communities in informal settlements in Durban, South Africa

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Introduction

In South Africa, over 50 per cent of the population lives in urban centres, where more than 2,700 informal settlements exist, accounting for around 20 per cent of total households (SERI, 2018). Due to rapid urbanisation and population growth, informal settlements have become a major challenge in the urban landscape, exacerbating issues related to poverty, inadequate infrastructure, housing and poor living conditions. Reflections on past upgrading efforts in South Africa suggest that top-down policies have not been successful to date. By contrast, participatory techniques in the design and construction of housing have been used to enhance community empowerment and a sense of local ownership. However, participation and collaboration can mean various things for informal housing upgrading, and often the involvement of local communities is limited to providing feedback in already agreed development decisions from local authorities and construction companies.

This research lies under the umbrella of sustainable bottom-up urban regeneration. As part of a large collaborative project between UK and South African research institutions (the ISULabaNtu project), this chapter presents findings from Phases 1 ('Context analysis') and 4 ('Project management and skills enhancement in construction') and explores various interpretations of 'self-help' housing. The overall research adopted a postcolonial perspective to urban transformations and explored community-led approaches for

informal settlement upgrading in the Durban metropolitan area (eThekwini) (McEwan, 2009; Pieterse, 2010; Watson, 2014). ISULabaNtu was framed around the holistic view that informal settlement upgrading is not about physical housing per se but rather a socio-technical approach that delivers social capital, livelihood development, empowerment and skills to local residents.

The overarching aim of this chapter is to uncover the benefits and challenges of moving towards a more participatory, incremental approach focusing on construction management and integrated environmental management systems, which can enhance quality of life, livelihoods and ultimately community self-reliance. The study explores the concept of 'self-building' in the context of community-led upgrading in South Africa. Participatory action research methods have been applied to 'co-produce' knowledge with residents and community researchers in three case studies in the Durban metropolitan area: Namibia Stop 8 (Phase 1), Piesang River and Havelock. The research seeks to identify critical success factors in managing self-build upgrading projects, discussing the crucial roles of stakeholder management, procurement and project governance. It also explores community-led approaches in informal settlement upgrading in Durban, highlighting the drivers and constraints of inclusive participatory approaches to design, construction and overall project management.

In particular, the study seeks to uncover the challenges in 1) formal v. informal forms of procurement; 2) the need to acquire 'the right resources at the right time' from local industry and/or construction practice; and 3) compliance with rigid municipality processes. The findings of this study seek to build capacity both for local communities seeking to improve their quality of life and for local authorities seeking to enhance their upgrading planning programmes, plans and policies.

Background context

Housing has been a key challenge throughout the post-apartheid era in South Africa, with the commitment to provide access to adequate housing for all (Department of Human Settlements, 2009). Migration and poverty are major causes of informal settlements, as dwellers cannot afford to build or buy their own houses or to access formal housing schemes (Mutisya and Yarime, 2011; Wekesa et al., 2011). Misselhorn (2008: 5) emphasises that 'it is important that any analysis of the current situation is premised on an appreciation for why informal settlements exist and what functionality

they afford to those who reside in them'. Informal settlements are considered a major concern for many urban areas as they pose health and environmental risks, both to informal dwellers and also formal residents living in the same neighbourhoods. Informal settlements are characterised by self-help efforts, often illegal, and considered 'informal' as they do not align with prevailing regulations. In their self-help efforts, residents make use of the limited resources available to them for the purposes of erecting shelter on interstitial or marginal land (Dovey and King, 2011), often close to places that offer economic, social or survival benefits.

According to the 2011 census, 12 per cent of all households in the Durban metropolitan area live in informal settlements, with 29 per cent renting their dwellings (Housing Development Agency, 2013). eThekwini's urbanisation has, over time, incorporated low-density urban settlements and adjoining farmlands. This structure has been influenced by an extreme topography; the city centre is fragmented, and economic opportunities are spatially segregated from formal housing and residential spaces (eThekwini Municipality, 2016). Post-apartheid consequences have therefore led to spatial inequalities, social segregation and various housing typologies (Western, 2002; Williams, 2000). These include high-density residential developments, such as inner-city flats in abandoned buildings, private rental housing schemes in informal settlements and social housing schemes. There are also subsidised houses in urban townships, informal backyard shacks adjacent to formal housing on both public and privately owned land, and rural housing dwellings. Some of the negative consequences of spatial fragmentation and low-density include an inefficient public transport system with high transport costs per low-income household, inefficient infrastructure and overall environmental pollution (eThekwini Municipality, 2016).

Definitions of informal settlements

Informal settlements are defined by physical, social and legal characteristics; hence, it becomes difficult to define the term 'adequate' housing in the South African context (Housing Development Agency, 2013). Many scholars emphasise the dwelling type (shacks with poor-performing building materials), while others refer to the issue of land tenure (Housing Development Agency, 2015a). A clear departure from the apartheid terminology included the term 'slum' being replaced by 'informal settlements' (Huchzermeyer, 2011). Informal settlements are related mostly to the legal standing of the scheme: namely, settlements that mushroom on vacant land, within

and around places of opportunities, without proper planning, building regulations or standard construction methods (Khalifa, 2015). Informal settlements have been traditionally considered as 'urban substandard' schemes, providing low-cost housing to the urban poor under poor living conditions, health risks and environmental hazards (Sutherland et al., 2016). However, Roy (2011) suggests a progressive interpretation of informal settlements as spaces of habitation, livelihood, self-organisation and politics. As stressed by Huchzermeyer (2011), informal settlements are complex, popular and spontaneous neighbourhoods offering an immediate response to housing needs and with their location critical for the socio-economic activities of the involved community. This concept moves away from the pathology of informal settlements, envisaging instead their potential as dynamic places of living.

History of upgrading models

Physical upgrading of informal settlements takes two general approaches: demolition and relocation, or *in situ* development (Del Mistro and Hensher, 2009). Demolition and relocation is the process of moving inhabitants from their settlements to another 'greenfield' site. However, a growing body of literature favours *in situ* upgrading, as this involves the formalisation of informal settlements in their original location (Del Mistro and Hensher, 2009; Huchzermeyer, 2006; Massey, 2014). One of the main critiques of demolition and relocation is the macro-economic target of the government to meet the physical aspects of housing shortage and infrastructure provision rather than the improvement of poor living conditions. This has led to conflicts and significant socio-economic disruption, with little regard given to displacement, poverty, vulnerability and the impact of these actions on social inclusion. *In situ* upgrading is the process undertaken to improve the conditions of an informal settlement in its current location through the provision of basic services and secure tenure to people. *In situ* models can be wide-ranging, from simply dealing with land tenure to incremental housing improvement and/or the provision of site-and-services associated with formal settlements.

In South Africa, the post-apartheid period offered various top-down approaches to low-cost housing provision. Government authorities have been responsible for decision-making on behalf of the local inhabitants. Top-down models have been criticised as unsustainable in the sense that they continue the legacy of segregation in housing delivery, as they have not engaged directly with low-income communities, nor properly

understood the social capital required or the nature of the vulnerabilities of the affected populations (Huchzermeyer, 2011).

Informal settlement upgrading in Durban

Informal settlement upgrading in South Africa is dominated by the work of the South African Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SASDI) alliance. The approach of the SASDI and its community partners are explored by Bolnick and Bradlow (2010), Bradlow (2015), and Mitlin and Mogaladi (2013). Focusing on the Durban metropolitan area, analysis of informal settlement upgrading has been presented by van Horen (2000) and Charlton (2006), who focus on Besters Camp, a settlement where community participation in planning was attempted but with poor tenure arrangements. Charlton (2006) and Patel (2013) discuss Ntuthukoville in Pietermaritzburg-Msunduzi, Briardene, Cato Crest and Zewlisha case studies. These highlight the value of 'informal continuity' – i.e. sustained activity after formal upgrading – and criticise the lack of capacity at a municipality level which reinforces power relations that may not serve or be relevant to all community groups and individuals. Cross (2006) and Huchzermeyer (2006) emphasise the resistance, reluctance and/or inaction of local government, despite national policy and legislation promoting community-led upgrading (e.g. the government housing strategy 'Breaking New Ground').

Community participation

Community participation can be viewed as 'an instrument of empowerment' (Samuel, 1987: 3). A growing body of literature promotes participatory techniques as a key method to enhance a sense of local ownership within an upgrading project (Aron et al., 2009; Botes and van Rensburg, 2000; El-Masri and Kellett, 2001; Frischmann, 2012). Self-reliance is also a relevant term associated with community participation and self-help activities. It refers to communities defining and making their own choices through shared knowledge, skills enhancement and planning activism. However, even though 'bottom-up', participatory methods for community upgrading are often discussed theoretically in international development discourses, in practice the tools, methodologies and processes needed to ensure a successful upgrade on the ground have not seen widespread dissemination or uptake, particularly in the Durban metropolitan area.

Self-help housing involves practices in which low-income groups resolve their housing needs mainly through their own resources in terms of labour

and finance topping up government subsidies (Marais et al., 2008). Self-help activities are interrelated to community self-reliance and are not new to South Africa, as since the 1950s an incremental, step-by-step, self-building approach on serviced sites was considered the cheapest and most efficient solution to slum upgrading (Landman and Napier, 2010). Community participation derives from self-help activities and refers to grassroots planning processes where the local populations themselves decide the future of their own settlement (Lizarralde and Massyn, 2008). In reality, however, community participation often remains 'formal, legalised and politicised' (Jordhus-Lier and de Wet, 2013: 2). In informal settlements, key conceptual and practical challenges hinder active community participation. Residents value nine factors in informal settlements: comfort, cost, environment, facilities, local economy, safety, security, social value and space (Jay and Bowen, 2011). In practice, there is often a lack of social and physical resources, as well as conflicting interests in individual and community expectations from involvement in development projects (Emmett, 2000). In addition, these nine factors need to be viewed in relation to livelihood creation and employment opportunities, particularly in the case of relocation (Hunter and Posel, 2012). Muchadenyika (2015) discusses the problematic relationship between local communities and local authorities and governments, whereby issues of legislation, politics, power and identity play a major role in resource management, distribution and implementation of the upgrading project. Patel (2015) describes the effect of devolved housing allocation leading to exclusion of non-favoured groups in Durban, thus negatively affecting community engagement. Devolved housing increases competition between residents around ethnicity, nationality and/or political party views.

Community-led upgrading in the Durban metropolitan area

Methodology

This study adopted a participatory action research method, utilising 'co-production of knowledge' as the process through which residents in selected case study areas have an active role in research (Mitlin, 2008; Ostrom, 1996). Fieldwork in three case studies, Namibia Stop 8 (Phase 1), Piesang River and Havelock was conducted between May 2016 and February 2018 to assess the level of 'good available practice' in community-led upgrading of informal settlements in the Durban metropolitan area. The case study selection criteria involved community leadership, presence

of an active support organisation, community self-organisation practices (e.g. saving groups), good documentation of historical development and upgrading models used in the past. Empirical data was gathered by means of twenty-five household interviews in each case study, ten focus group discussions with community members and twelve focus groups with external stakeholders from eThekwini municipality and the construction industry in Durban.

Self-build houses in Namibia Stop 8

Located on Haffajee's Land in Inanda, a northern outskirt of Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal province, the first case study refers to Phase 1 of Namibia Stop 8, built between 2010 and 2014. Namibia Stop 8 has been a greenfield project, to which residents were largely moved from two neighbouring areas (Namibia and Stop 8) as part of a re-blocking exercise for services and housing. The housing that was built was a mixture of government-provided Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing and a small number of houses built through the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP). uTshani Fund, a support organisation partner of the SASDI alliance, provided the finance facilities to FEDUP, who acted as community contractors and led the provision of self-build housing. The site has piped water, electricity lines, access roads (although these do not reach all properties) and a sewage system. The area suffers from water shortages and intermittent electricity supply.

At the project preparation stage, the community undertook detailed profiling. Three women-led savings groups established an 'Urban Poor Fund' to finance the delivery of housing. A culture of continuous saving was developed so FEDUP households could provide funds for larger structures, tiles, ceiling board and/or furniture compared to the RDP houses. One FEDUP member mentioned that:

> with group savings we want to make sure that everything is going according to the plan … You are building your own thing and you make sure it is done properly … We are also able to hire more people to help with construction and ensure hardware stores deliver the building materials that we need. (Namibia Stop 8 focus group)

The project involved ninety-six houses using the participatory People's Housing Process model that is predicated on a community-driven participatory approach. FEDUP construction was slower but this collaborative approach delivered substantially larger (56 square metres), better-designed

and better-sized houses than those constructed under the government-driven RDP model (40 square metres). FEDUP households developed a sense of ownership and control and invested in self-building through helping community contractors and builders. Some of the respondents said that they learned how to collaborate and tolerate each another, and this process created new social ties within the community, thus enhancing social cohesion. Moreover, many have become financially literate and have developed habits of saving for household needs and personal goals. On the practical side, respondents said that some of the beneficiaries have acquired new skills and experience in construction. This made the process quicker and reduced labour costs. Initially, FEDUP leaders built a demonstration house and asked community members to give feedback on the foundation, structure and material selection. People that were offered RDP houses, on the other hand, had little input on those discussions and the overall self-building process.

In terms of materials and construction techniques, the FEDUP houses were built with concrete blocks, wooden roof trusses, tiles, plastering inside and out and floor screeding. By contrast, RDP houses were unplastered,

Figure 4.1 Self-help housing in Namibia Stop 8

with smaller windows, and residents argued that the foundations were poor. RDP households also required additional waterproof paint on walls and doors for rain protection, which was done privately if the residents could afford this extra cost. As a community leader stated, 'the majority of people continued to live in the houses after the upgrading, while the comparative figures for the municipality houses are about 50 per cent. This is because paying someone to do it is more expensive than doing it yourself.' In effect, the high costs incurred mean that residents may end up renting out the property and then move elsewhere: sometimes back to the informal settlements, where living is cheaper. The construction method of FEDUP entails delivery by community contractors and the establishment of community construction management teams (CCMTs), supervised by uTshani Fund and approved professional contractors, who ensured technical support. In terms of procurement, CCMTs and uTshani Fund compared three local hardware stores in Kwabester, Mtshebheni and KwaMashu and chose the supplier (who was the sole provider of all building materials) based on a cost–benefit assessment of quality and cost. According to the CCMT members, the community faced some problems during the construction (for example, negotiations with the municipality on the dimensions of the slab and the theft of construction materials), but the project was successful since all ninety-six houses were completed on time and all the listed beneficiaries received their houses according to plan.

FEDUP households pointed out a number of challenges and lessons learned. Residents are still awaiting their title deeds from the municipality. Consequently, they are reluctant to rent their homes as they do not trust potential tenants without formal tenure recognition. From a technical perspective, FEDUP foundations replicated the RDP module, which proved rather small and needed to be extended during construction. There was also no guttering for rainwater collection or a ventilation strategy: for example, trees could provide thermal comfort and prevent overheating in the house. Other non-technical challenges involved the lack of wider community trust. Building materials were stolen during the construction process, particularly single units, such as doors and windows. Residents had to move back to their old homes until this was fixed, thus increasing frustration. Moreover, not all FEDUP members contributed to the self-building approach and some were controlling with others, leading to conflict and/or trust issues. There was also the question of access and connectivity to the main road and the lack of spatial integration. Households developed a culture of fencing their yards due to the lack of pathways,

thus hindering community development. In terms of construction, technical support would enable a better redesign of the roof and therefore save resources (such as timber) that could be used elsewhere. The community emphasised the need for training or hiring skilled workers for future upgrading projects. Lastly, it was noted that the youth were not engaged in group savings after the project ended. This inevitably meant that the knowledge and skills that CCMTs developed were lost.

Project management in Piesang River

Piesang River is a historical informal settlement, similar to Namibia Stop 8, which pioneered strong elements of community leadership and negotiations with the South African government around housing delivery. Piesang River is located near the townships of Inanda and KwaMashu, twenty-five kilometres north-west of Durban. The settlement was established through the purchase of land and its subdivision, followed by the gradual settling of adjacent land in the 1970s and 1980s. Civic structures were formed in the late 1980s by the United Democratic Front, eventually leading to land regularisation and the extension of infrastructure into the settlement (Huchzermeyer, 2004).

Since the early 1990s, Piesang River has undergone a gradual process of formal development involving multiple actors. In the early 1990s until 1995 the civic organisation in Piesang River was supported by the Built Environment Support Group (a local NGO) acting as project manager for the development of infrastructure and site allocation. The Homeless People's Federation (and its supporting NGO, People's Dialogue) later rose to prominence in Piesang River, prioritising the construction of individual houses for its members. At around the same time the NGO Habitat for Humanity established itself in the settlement, offering loan funding for housing construction. The local authority eventually organised the election of a representative committee to resolve some of the tensions and differences between the priorities of these organisations and to resolve the question of which households would have to be relocated.

The aim of community-led building was to improve the living conditions in mud houses and issues with water shortage. Women in Piesang River are empowered in this process: they initiated group savings and are responsible for book keeping and fund management. Group saving was initiated by women asking residents to contribute from 50 cents per person per day, and demonstrated to the government that Piesang River was an organised community worth supporting. Subsidies were then received from the government through uTshani. In particular, uTshani Fund enabled

FEDUP to support housing construction through a process of pre-financing (bridging finance) by making a loan to assist 'sweat equity' (time and labour), allowing beneficiaries to repay the loan at a later stage. Thereafter, the community undertook the actual construction of the houses. As a community leader argued: 'FEDUP did not wait for the government to deliver housing, we put effort and we succeeded. Also, we decided not to pay the construction professionals and therefore we were able to save and build larger houses.'

FEDUP leaders built a cardboard module of the 'ideal house' with four rooms. This caused conflict with RDP residents, who only had two rooms (40 square metres). A Steering Committee was established which divided semi-skilled inhabitants into seven groups of four to ten members (which was easier to manage), and each according to their specific skills, namely:

- *technical (design and construction)*: bricklaying, foundation, plumbing;
- *management*: supporting labour, finance (book keeping), quantity surveying and costing;
- *social facilitation*: mobilisation, negotiation and communication around a 'shared' vision.

Figure 4.2 Self-building in Piesang River

The Steering Committee managed the whole building project, but the skills learned from individual FEDUP members involved mostly bricklaying and group savings. As a FEDUP member stated: 'We were taught to do things that are difficult to achieve when working alone … We were taught to negotiate about land, electricity, water and construction. FEDUP houses do not have cracks and are of better quality compared to the RDP ones.'

Piesang River also showcases the role played by women in project management and construction: for instance, women were trained how to lay out the foundation of the houses. FEDUP brought professional builders on site to provide assistance and training to the individual groups. The community felt that training members would save money compared to hiring professional builders throughout the construction. The community was open to learning new skills (such as bricklaying), and this process facilitated formal skills transfer. In contrast to Namibia Stop 8, FEDUP members engaged in training youth groups and managed to pass on the culture of saving to the next generation. In terms of the construction method and selection of building materials, the houses are quite similar to Namibia Stop 8. FEDUP community leaders commented that criteria for the procurement strategy included price, quality, durability, cost (affordability) and safety when visiting different hardware stores for a quote. Respondents mentioned that they gained communication skills and links to the municipal officials. Overall, the process created better social interactions and interrelations within the community, reducing many social tensions amongst them. Also, the upgrading created job opportunities for the youth and resulted in a reduction of crime.

Nevertheless, households pointed out a number of challenges and lessons learned. FEDUP households still have not received their title deeds, which has caused some issues when installing water meters: the community had to hire a private company to connect them to the mains water pipe. Piesang River features double-storey buildings; however, their construction was not successful. A community member mentioned that accepting customs and culture in the upgrading process is key, as 'people prefer to live in their own houses and the double-storey construction caused issues with older and disabled people'. Another challenge was the need for further reinforcing metal to support the structure, which increased total costs in addition to a suspended concrete floor. In term of community engagement and participation, residents pointed out that it was challenging to carry on investing in group savings and labour when an individual house was completed. Quite often people were not willing to participate after their

house was built. Finally, some respondents pointed out that one of the major issues was that the project had started during the apartheid era and so the change of administration hindered the full completion of the project. As a result, services like water and electricity were not properly connected and still, some twenty years on, they lacked meters.

Socio-economic challenges in Havelock

Havelock is an informal settlement located eight kilometres from Durban city centre, with an estimated 200 dwellings and approximately 400 people living in the settlement (SASDI, 2012). The informal settlement dates back to 1986 when a jobseeker in the area decided to build a house on the site in the absence of other places to stay. The land, a steep incline with a river at the bottom, had been overgrown by trees and bushes prior to the construction of the settlement. Havelock sits on both private and municipal land, with various hazards including illegal electrical connections, dangerous electrical cables sprawled across paths, fire hazards and flooding. The municipality have installed ablution blocks and a detailed assessment has been conducted for the proposed re-blocking of the settlement. However, the abundance of water from the river, which overflows during heavy rains, has discouraged private owners from reclaiming the land and carrying out the demolition.

Unlike Piesang River and Namibia Stop 8, Havelock has not undergone an upgrading process (at the time of the writing of this chapter) despite ongoing negotiations. The previously established saving schemes have not been successful due to a lack of long-term commitment among residents and the additional pressures of high unemployment and temporary work. According to community leaders, prioritisation of immediate needs ahead of savings for future upgrading has added to the set of obstacles. Furthermore, many inhabitants still have homes in rural areas elsewhere and view Havelock as temporary accommodation to access employment, meaning they have little interest in the long-term upgrading of the settlement. Besides weak social cohesion and the public–private ownership of the land, the settlement also faces other challenges, including a lack of skills and training in construction, particularly in the passing on of this knowledge to the younger generation. The situation is complicated further by the settlement's conflictual relationship with nearby formal neighbourhoods who do not support improvement and upgrading efforts, arguing that this would turn Havelock into a permanent settlement and decrease the value of their properties.

Figure 4.3 Informal dwellings in Havelock settlement

Notwithstanding these issues, there is a clearly articulated need to improve living conditions in the settlement, which is prone to flooding, fire hazards and other accidents caused by uneven pathways, lack of places for children to play (with the road being the only alternative) and the overall density of housing. With the presence of professional

bricklayers and people with construction skills, residents believe there is some existing capacity in the settlement to enable them to carry out upgrading *in situ* themselves. However, without any formal opportunities to get involved, people become discouraged and such potential remains unused.

Even if help was to become immediately available to the households, lack of space to build houses is also perceived as a barrier. Services like roads with speed bumps, public spaces (such as a playground for children), paved pathways and a way of separating the settlement from the overflowing river were seen as highly important. Potential building materials for the houses, as expressed by focus group participants, would have to be fireproof to protect from the fire hazards stemming mostly from the wires of illegal electrical connections in the settlement and the use of paraffin stoves. Strong foundations able to withstand flooding were also a critical necessity highlighted in the discussions. A preference for more expensive materials was expressed in order to ensure the long-term quality and durability of the improved houses, rather than cheap materials which would need to be replaced frequently or added to. This long-term thinking about building materials and ways of improving the physical conditions of the houses was in contrast to the feeling that the settlement was only a temporary place to live, one where 'we know that we will not be here for the rest of our lives' – a sentiment expressed by one of the respondents and shared by many others in the settlement. To date, however, only cheap, reclaimed materials from dumps and from networks of contacts have been used for building the houses and making any improvements.

Besides affordability, what is also preventing residents from seeking more expensive and solid materials is the fear of fire and the potential loss of those materials. Hence, only temporary and low-cost fixes are applied to the houses. After a fire incident, the municipality claimed to have provided some relief to two houses. However, one of these households reported that they did not receive the materials in time and sourced their own materials to rebuild, while the other house did not manage to secure any materials from the municipality as the supply ran out and it had to obtain materials later independently. Although eThekwini officials stated that in the event of an emergency 'the disaster teams are the first to respond [followed by] a quick enumeration [that] will be done to see who has been affected', in the case of Havelock the system did not deliver and the assessment was either inaccurate or the distribution of materials was not efficient.

A new approach to informal settlement upgrading

The importance of leadership in local government was outlined during a focus group with the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) and uTshani Fund, who stated that 'you have a local government and a state, they are mandated to provide services and to respond'. However, their approaches are in contrast to that pursued by NGOs.

> The municipality are again feeling challenged by others. They offer support but our processes [CORC/FEDUP], bottom-up community led is immediately an issue. The municipality want to come and deliver the emergency materials. As where we would have processes, re-blocking in the case of a disaster, if it was a fire which destroyed dwellings to rethink their space and how they can lay it out more effectively, and that would undermine our processes if the municipality just come and deliver materials and people haphazardly do their own thing again, and you lose that opportunity to do that re-blocking. (Focus group with CORCP and FEDUP representatives)

Furthermore, it was made evident in most household interviews and focus groups with CORC and FEDUP that there is a need for enhanced interaction by the municipality with the community and vice versa. This is fundamental for the improved delivery of housing, services and further clarity of all parties' plans, management of expectations and alignment of agendas.

The importance of local government leadership leads to the need for effective communication in upgrading negotiations. Regarding the shortcomings of the delivery of housing, in an interview the municipality argued, 'we have the silo mentality of working, where we are not connected, and it is killing the end product and there is no kind of bond'. The focus group discussion also revealed that there is no alignment between individual departments and complex political agendas that need to be navigated, along with long bureaucratic processes. Departmental communication issues are then magnified by the time they reach the communities due to the extended timescales and increased tension.

In addition, the municipal tendering process for public works ensures that there are various further requirements measured against the tendered price submitted. These are: Black Economic Empowerment, the percentage of women in the workforce, the number of young adults and evidence of how the company will transfer benefits to the local community. An example of this would be skills development and mentorship. The municipality will then use criteria to assess the contractor's performance post-completion

for future contracts. This is a very beneficial practice that could help develop necessary skills for community members and allow for the retention of labour in the communities, creating a more reliable network of local construction workers.

Current estimates in eThekwini municipality indicate that there are about 327,615 households in 476 informal settlements, without any clear plans for upgrading or signs of a participatory process (eThekwini Municipality, 2015). An innovative participatory action planning approach has been proposed by the Housing Development Agency and was endorsed during the focus group discussions with external stakeholders. This is because full upgrading with services and subsidised housing is not a viable option for South Africa in general, and the Durban metropolitan area in particular. This approach also underlines the fact that the challenge to upgrading is not just housing, but a manifestation of structural social change and political endurance. In this context, a new approach to informal settlement upgrading should adopt the following key principles, to be:

- *city-wide*: inclusive of all the informal settlements;
- *incremental:* with a range of different improvement as opposed to traditional housing delivery;
- *in situ:* considering relocation as a last resort;
- *partnership-based*: instead of purely state service oriented;
- *participatory and more community-driven*: collaborative informal settlement action and co-management to develop acceptable solutions;
- *programmatic and area-based*: instead of project delivery-focused;
- *context related:* differentiated, situationally responsive (as opposed to 'one-size-fits-all');
- *statutorily and regulatorily flexible*: working with and not against informality (Housing Development Agency, 2015b).

The above approach has been consolidated and adopted in the form of a strategy (eThekwini Municipality, 2017) by the 100 Resilient Cities Programme (100RC) for the city of Durban. The 100RC team has recognised the need to rethink new perspectives on informality and accepting it as part of the city. Informal settlement is a dynamic space that changes continuously and requires appropriate planning strategies that meaningfully involve residents themselves. Currently, the housing targets (performance goals) are reducing the approach to informal settlements to a mere set of numbers (delivery targets). The key strategy to address this challenge

is represented by collaboration and partnership between local government and the other main stakeholders. There is a lack of understanding about the dynamics of informal settlements and a need to coordinate all the interventions from the different departments of the municipality. Moreover, the involvement of settlement dwellers in planning processes is generally poor and reflects a high level of mistrust between communities and the municipality. The contexts in different settlements vary significantly, too, and so responses need to be diversified and move beyond a narrow focus on targets. Finally, long-term funding is a major challenge.

Concluding remarks

South Africa has a strategy for slum management and response, particularly under the post-2015 UN Sustainable Development Goals (e.g. SDG11) and the Habitat III New Urban Agenda. This chapter sought to provide recommendations on how the above experiences and lessons learned from 'good available practice' in community-led approaches could be effectively incorporated into existing upgrading programmes, such as the new Integrated Urban Development Framework and the city-wide participatory upgrading of informal settlements that are part of the 100 Resilient Cities initiative in Durban.

eThekwini municipality's targets are at present difficult to achieve due to an increasing backlog on housing delivery. Focus group participants claimed that there were currently about 535 informal settlements, comprising around 25 per cent of the population of KwaZulu-Natal province. Most informal settlements are upgradable and are already part of the urban fabric. The government view on informal settlements suggests that conventional upgrading (i.e. state-funded housing and a full package of services) with tenure security and formal town planning is an unviable solution due to the increasing backlog, the costs involved, complex land schemes, higher density and the long timescales. This is why an incremental, city-wide, partnership-based participatory upgrading approach is proposed with lessons learned from communities that have undertaken (even partially) aspects of community-led upgrading.

The research undertaken in this chapter has broadly highlighted some of the major shortcomings which were also brought out within the literature review. Further investigation is necessary to enumerate the possible long-term impacts of these issues, but it is clear that the internal communication methods of eThekwini municipality need immediate improvement and

a new dynamic to align work between departments. It is also important to strengthen external municipal communication with NGOs, the private sector and residents.

All three case studies pioneered strong elements of community leadership due to a set of participatory methods embedded in project preparation and implementation. These include: community profiling and assessments, savings groups, community-driven project management and the 'sweat equity' (time and labour) of beneficiaries. The above processes created a legacy for local residents in terms of income generation, skills upgrading and sense of local ownership from the early planning stages. A key factor in their success has to do with skills enhancement and 'learning by doing'. Continuous improvement enabled community organisations (e.g. FEDUP) to ensure lower costs and better quality in the construction of the houses. However, the case study research revealed that there is a need for further training and skills development on best practice relating to construction and procurement of materials and services. FEDUP and CORC have provided a foundation of knowledge for many residents through savings groups and training sessions. The continuation of such training in line with further support offered by the municipality could facilitate improvements in the processes adopted, enhancing the time, cost and quality of self-building. There are also many inefficiencies within the current municipal tendering and procurement processes, despite good intentions and policies which have been implemented. Shortcomings were found in the tendering process, internal and external communication, stakeholder management and training and development of communities. NGOs such as uTshani, CORC and FEDUP have filled these gaps through bottom-up approaches to the delivery of housing.

Finally, it is important to note that the level of a successful upgrading project is measured differently between local authorities and communities. This is potentially why the government-led upgrading of informal settlements is not providing the results intended. For eThekwini municipality, it refers mainly to successful delivery of infrastructure and services. Empirical data from the three communities, on the other hand, revealed that a successful project is about full ownership of the upgrading, social cohesion, livelihood development and tenure security (ultimately by obtaining the title deeds). This means that upgrading is not just housing delivery but also consideration and development of the social fabric, such as access to job opportunities, health facilities, schools and public transport. eThekwini municipality has practised limited community-led approaches

and currently acts as a mere housing *provider*, rather than being an *enabler*. It is therefore essential to build capacity and invest in further training in both communities and local authorities by understanding the minimum preconditions that unlock community participation in an upgrading project.

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