Effectiveness of In Situ Upgrading in Improving the Quality of Life of Beneficiaries Living in Informal Settlements in South Africa

Kedibone Maganadisa, Vuyiswa Letsoko, Ockert Pretorius

(Kedibone Maganadisa, Department of Civil Engineering Technology, University of Johannesburg, kedibonem@uj.ac.za)
(Vuyiswa Letsoko, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Johannesburg, vuyisway@uj.ac.za)
(Ockert Pretorius, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Johannesburg, opretorius@uj.ac.za)

1 ABSTRACT

Informal settlements have been a recurring problem in South Africa and it is undeniable that eradication of informal settlements is a goal difficult to achieve. However, the fundamental problem is not the mere existence of informal settlements but, the poor quality of life the residents are subjected to. Since 2004, South Africa has embarked on a journey to improve the quality of life of informal settlement dwellers through the implementation of Upgrading of Informal Settlement Programme (UISP). Not only did the state recognise that upgrading informal settlements can be a viable solution to the housing backlog but also acknowledged that housing strategies that relocate the poor have a significant impact on the livelihoods of the urban poor. Thus, UISP is set to achieve effective informal settlement upgrading through ensuring minimal disruption to livelihoods, encourage community empowerment and community participation. The paper presents results of a study conducted on the implemented UISP in Slovo Park informal settlement. The study is conducted using a qualitative approach which entails in-depth interviews with ten residents of Slovo Park and two City of Johannesburg officials on the possible impact UISP has on improving quality of life. This paper reveals how effective is UISP in ensuring land tenure security for the urban poor. Furthermore, the paper highlight factors that hinders the effectiveness of UISP. Results from this paper can be used to monitor and review the outcomes of in situ upgrading by highlighting the shortcomings in the planning and implementation process. In addition, findings from this study could assist the National Department of Human Settlements in achieving successful in situ upgrading by improving the UISP process using recommendations provided.

Keywords: Community empowerment, informal settlement, in situ upgrading, livelihoods, quality of life

2 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION

South Africa has experienced influx of migrates to major cities over the past two decades (Ziblim et al., 2013). Socio-economic inequalities have left many poor households unable to provide for their needs including accessing shelter and or adequate housing. Despite the over 1 million new houses built since 1994, the South African new democracy has since been battling with meeting the growing housing and infrastructure demand. Particularly in metropolitan cities such as Cape Town, Johannesburg and Ekurhuleni, leaving many families resorting to seeking affordable accommodation in informal settlements or backyards of formal residence units in the townships (Møller, 2007). Nonetheless, formation and expansion of informal settlements has been a challenge faced by most developing countries. Many among them initially pursed forced eviction and demolition of existing informal settlements as an 'easy' way to eradicate informal settlements. This practice has made the residents of informal settlements poorer as the vacant land created through eradication of informal settlements is later, amongst other things, commonly used for development of luxury housing units, and shopping centres, benefiting the upper class (Arimah & Branch, 2011). The third UN Conference in Istanbul in June 1996, launched the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, which brought change in the global policy dialogue on the need to ensure adequate shelter for all. This policy agenda was later renewed within the framework of the UN Millennium Development Goals MDGs, which indicate under Goal 7 Target 10, to expressively enhance the lives of more than 100 million informal settlement dwellers by the year 2020. Developing countries had to oblige by this target, thus instituted various programmes aiming at improving informal settlements (Ziblim et al., 2013). Although the upgrading programmes do not provide a lasting solution to the development and expansion of informal settlements, some governments have been implementing this approach since the 1980's using funds from the World Bank. The UN-HABITAT and the World Bank established the Slum Upgrading Facilities (SUF) in 2004 with the core objective of summoning domestic capital for informal settlement upgrading undertakings through facilitating links among numerous local actors that possess resources such as financial, technical and political elements of development projects. The UN-HABITAT and the World Bank have also been driving

foreign investment from global capital markets to enable funding of upgrading programmes initiated by municipal authorities, nongovernmental organisations, private property developers and utility companies (Arimah & Branch, 2011).

Cities Without Slums (CWS) recognises that informal settlements are characterised by urban poverty, it therefore intends to reduce urban poverty which exists within informal settlements through the SUF programmes that will empower citizens, improve economic opportunities, create jobs and improve governance capacity to manage future urban growth (Arimah & Branch, 2011). Informal settlement upgrading programmes are focussed on improving the environment within which informal settlements exists, also known as in situ upgrading. It is notable that this was a radical change in attitude towards the existance of informal settlements especially in urban areas. Upgrading programmes provided a locality-based enhancement strategies intended to replace the various degrees of undesirability and deterioration in informal settlement through the initial provision of basic social services and physical infrastructure such as water reticulation, sanitation, waste collection, storm drainage system, street lighting, paved footpaths and streets (Abbott, 2002). Huchzermeyer (2011) indicated that compared to previous informal settlement intervention strategies, implementation of informal settlement upgrading programmes is relatively cheap and ensures that livelihoods and social support system are uninterrupted. Given the creative manner in which housing is commonly constructed in informal settlements, the upgrading programme acknowledges that if government provide the bulk infrastructure, formalise the settlements, provide tenure security and improve access to social services, the community is capable of gradually improving their housing structures.

National Department of Human Settlements introduced UISP designed under National Upgrading Settlement Programme as a progressive intervention to eradicate informality in human settlements. One of the main UISP objectives is to upgrade the existing informal settlements incorporating community participation to achieve effective upgrading (Huchzermeyer, 2009). There is much literature focusing on UISP as a strategy to eliminate informality in human settlements (Abbott, 2002; Charlton & Kihato, 2006; Gardener, 2003 and Huchzermeyer & Karam, 2006), however, current studies do not indicate the effectiveness of UISP in improving the quality of life of beneficiaries. The primary outcome of the paper is to inform future human settlement policy by indicating the successes and failures of UISP in improving the quality of life of informal settlement residents. Findings from this paper can also be used to monitor and review the outcomes of in situ upgrading in providing quality of life and improving the socio-economic circumstances of residents of informal settlements by highlighting the shortcomings in the planning and implementation process.

2.1 Conceptual framework: Informal settlements and in situ upgrading

Defining informal settlements requires specific context as its definition varies from culture to culture, social class and often changes with time. Subsequently, the term informal settlements does not apply to all countries. Some countries call them slums, while some call them squatter settlements. Corburn & Karanja (2014) describes informal settlement as a representation of human deprivation to adequate access to safe water, adequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure, poor structural quality of housing, overcrowding, and insecure residential status. According to Amao (2012), an informal settlement can be defined as a residential area which was established without legal claims to the land or permission from the relevant authorities to occupy. These are unplanned settlements and are built in areas that are sometimes unsuitable and environmentally hazardous and using noncompliant building plans. Despite the varied names, informal settlements have similar characteristics. People living in informal settlements have similar circumstances that suggest their informality. These include unauthorised use of vacant public or private land, illegal subdivision and/or rental of land, unauthorised construction of structures and buildings, reliance on low cost and locally available scrap construction materials, absence of restrictive standards and regulations, reliance on family labour and artisanal techniques for construction, non-availability of mortgage or any other subsidised finance. Talukdar (2018) observed that it is becoming commonly acknowledged that in most developing countries, informal settlement is a representation of the poverty trap. People living in informal settlements often exist in conditions that expose them to risk for their health, prosperity, safety and undignified way of life. It is argued that due to their illegal occupation status, informal settlement dwellers have generally limited access to basic social services if at all. Lack of regulation within the settlement have resulted to the overcrowding which contributes to stress where sharing of communal resources such as water stand taps, drainage and toilet facilities is concerned as well as prevelance of crime and violence (Amao,

2012). The South African Department of Human Settlement identifies a settlement as an informal settlement with the following characteristics, which forms the basis of the definition; a settlement in an inappropriate location, a settlement that was formed illegally, an area with restricted public and private sector investment, a settlement overwhelmed with poverty, vulnerability and social stress (Ziblim et al., 2013).

In situ upgrading is a relatively new idea of tackling urban informality challenges instead of eradicating informal settlements. In situ upgrading is an approach focusing on promoting land tenure security by firstly regulating informal settlements. It is also an approach that recognises and promotes maintenance of existing social relationships and community cohesion in informal settlements. Through land tenure legalisation and infrastructure improvements, in situ upgrading aims to gradually improve living conditions of residents living in informal settlements (Khalifa, 2015). Braathen et al. (2014) indicated that in situ upgrading of informal settlements is the state's acknowledgement that informal settlements can form part of a housing solution. It is also the state's recognition that the traditional housing strategies that allocate housing in the periphery of the city have a negative impact on the livelihoods of the urban poor.

3 IN SITU UPGRADING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The Housing White Paper 1994 obligates municipalities to ensure that all residents live in socially and economically integrated communities that sustain livelihoods and provide reasonable access to healthcare, education and social amenities. The policy further states that housing delivery should occur by means of various possible mechanisms because it is government's first and foremost priority to deal with the problem of housing for the poor. The Comprehensive Plan for Sustainable Human Settlements of 2004 brought about various housing strategies to address issues of adequate housing in South Africa. This includes initiations of sites and services, Breaking New Ground (BNG) launched in 2004 (Wekesa et al., 2011). According to Marais & Ntema (2013), the first large scale sites and services project was implemented at the Freedom Square informal settlement and benefited over 100,000 households. BNG projects under the National Housing Subsidy Scheme would provide land, housing and basic services using the project-linked capital subsidy programme also known as the 'Reconstruction and Development Programme' (RDP) housing subsidy. According to Huchzermeyer (2014), BNG also came along as informal settlement eradication strategy in which households qualifying for the one-off capital subsidy were offered the subsidy to later be relocated to an identified area where completed units were allocated. Although this programme provided many poor communities with low-cost housing, residents were disadvantaged because they were commonly relocated to the periphery of the city where economic opportunities are scarce. Providing housing for the poor in the periphery of the city does not address challenges of urbanisation and urban poverty, instead it undermines the social networks created by residents of informal settlements as their survival strategies, causes higher transportation costs and perpetuates social exclusion (Tshikotshi, 2009).

It was recognised that this housing subsidy strategy was only dedicated for developments on vacant land, which presented a policy gap in terms of the availability of subsidy system designed to facilitate in situ upgrading of informal settlements. To fill this policy gap, during the same year as BNG was launched; the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) was introduced as Chapter 13 of the National Housing Code. Five years later, UISP was incorporated into Part 3 of the new Housing Code (Huchzermeyer et al, 2014). Not only was this move viewed as closing the policy gap, it was an act of acknowledgement that informal settlements are a part of cities and have the potential to solve the housing backlog for the urban poor, while preserving livelihoods (Wekesa et al., 2011). However, implementation of UISP was delayed at the provincial and local government level until 2008 when the NDH established a National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) which was incorporated in the UISP. NUSP's main task is to promote and support the implementation of the UISP in terms of co-ordination with sectors and partners involved as means to ensure that government's capacity and professional practitioners are strengthened to implement community-based incremental upgrading, mainly in the metropolitan cities (NUSP, 2015). NUSP was established to largely assist UISP in achieving Outcome 8 'Human Settlements' - upgrading of 400,000 households in informal settlements by 2014 (Huchzermeyer, 2014). UISP had a pilot project in all nine provinces, many of which intend to implement in situ upgrading throughout the province (Ziblim, 2013). Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme consists of four fundamental phases, namely; (1) application, (2) project initiation, (3) project implementation and (4) housing consolidation (Huchzermeyer, 2006). UISP recognises that the poor are attracted to particular locations due to the economic opportunities such locations

have to offer. Therefore, living in informal settlements is a survival strategy. Within these informal settlements, residents develop strong social networks which are considered their coping strategies. These include access to credit from community groups and the ability to create self-employment opportunities that have a strong customer-seller network and community-based mutual help and support (Braathen et al., 2014). UISP is set out to achieve effective informal settlement upgrading through ensuring minimal disruption to livelihoods, encourage community empowerment and community participation in decision-making (Huchzermeyer, 2006 and 2009). Informal settlement interventions that are not accessible to beneficiaries will result in their displacement to housing options that offer affordability and, in many cases, these are new or existing informal settlements, irrespective of the inclusiveness of the initial allocation procedure. Therefore, if skills development was not possible during the UISP implementation phases, then community-based or area-based subsidy mechanisms must be considered.

Like any other state housing programme, UISP is funded by government subsidy which caters for land rehabilitation, incremental provision of basic services, infrastructure provision and the last phase of the UISP process which is the housing project and sometimes health and educational facilities, recreational centres and shopping centres. While national government is liable for establishment of a funding framework for housing development, negotiating and securing funding allocation from the state budget for housing. Provincial government is there to support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities to facilitate housing provision including assessing funding applications received from municipalities, administer national housing programmes and monitor the performance of accredited municipalities. This leaves the local municipality with the responsibility to facilitate the development and management of housing stock as per their Integrated Development Plan (IDP) as well as identifying suitable vacant land for relocation (NUSP, 2015). The first step towards upgrading an informal settlement through UISP process requires feasibility investigation by the local municipality. When the location is proclaimed suitable for re-development and assumed that relocation is inevitable for community members in some cases, application for funding must consider both in situ upgrading and the relocation site (Huchzermeyer, 2009).

UISP principles and approaches apply also to relocation site and this is done to minimise the additional stress that comes with relocation. Nikuze et al. (2019) observed that there are worse socio-economic impacts associated with awaiting relocation, which is beyond the physical relocation, yet these are not given enough attention. Securing of livelihoods before relocation takes place helps concerned individuals to become more resilient and enable them to cope with post- relocation. Huchzermeyer (2009) highlighted that UISP in situ upgrading is a positive response to many court cases of housing rights violation and forceful evictions that have been reported since 2000.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is set out to explore the effectiveness of in situ upgrading in improving the quality of life of beneficiaries, studying Slovo Park informal settlement. The study area was chosen because it is one of the oldest informal settlements in Johannesburg and recently received a favourable court ruling to have the settlement upgraded through the UISP. Although there are no recent statistics on the total population of Slovo Park and the number of migrants in and out of the settlement, in 2011 the area was indicated to constitute of a total of more than 5 000 individuals, about 1 600 shacks amongst the 1 050 stands. The informal settlement was formed in 1994 and has since been expanding. The study applied a qualitative method, in which in-depth interviews and field observation were conducted. The combination of the two different data collection styles was proven to increase the standards of validity or to strengthen the credibility of research findings as compared to the use of a single data collection style (Salkind ed., 2010). The target population is the residents of Slovo Park informal settlement, particularly individuals older than 20 years preferably the elders within the families. The sample consist of participants who have lived experience of the subject matter, as such, are more likely to provide reliable and valid information. The sample was representative of the entire inhabitants of Slovo Park as it also included participants who are renting a shack and those who were allocated a stand in all genders. In order to understand the phenomena under investigation in the perspective of the participants, the researcher employed a semi-structured interview approach.

Interviews were conducted with ten (10) residents of Slovo Park. Although the sample size it relatively small, the selection was purposive and saturation was reached. Interview questions were written in English

but the interviewees were interviewed in the participants' preferred language, which was mostly Southern Sesotho and IsiZulu. This is because the researcher avoided compromising the quality of the response. Thus, in order to preserve high quality in the answers provided by participants, the researcher allowed the participants to answer in their home language. Within 24 hours of the interview sessions, the recorded interviews were translated into English by the researcher and a written text of each interview was created. Through the transcribed interviews, the researcher established several themes that emerged consistently. Interviews were also conducted with two (2) of the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) municipal officials as facilitators (the Project Officer and Deputy Director for Housing Department) of UISP in the study area. For anonymity, participants' names are disguised in the write up. The following themes guide data collection and analysis:

(a) Regulation of informal settlement

(b) Community Empowerment

(c) Safety within the community

(d) Improved livelihoods

(e) Improved food security

(f) Ineffective community participation in planning UISP

(g) Overcrowding

(h) UISP, a prolonged programme

5 A PERSPECTIVE ON THE UPGRADING INFORMAL SETTLEMENT PROGRAMME

This paper is providing details of views emerging from interviews and the literature, with an emphasis on the impact of UISP in improving the quality of life of informal settlements. This section is organised into two sub-sections, namely; success factors and limitations of UISP.

5.1 Success factors of UISP

5.1.1 Regulating of informal settlement

For the purpose of this paper, a stand can be described as a plot of land occupied by a household for residential purposes. During the interviews with residents of Slovo Park, the stand owners indicated that the high court's verdict to have Slovo Park upgraded meant that the informal settlement is finally being regularised. Therefore, they will no longer live in constant fear of being evicted. Although stand numbers are changed every ten years, these numbers are reallocated to the existing owners and this has been providing the confidence in property ownership. This was indicated by the respondents in the interviews who said that "government will never evict us after investing so much money into electricity installations. Although stand numbers change every 10 years, I am not threatened because all these numbers are allocated to the same ID number…" Respondent 1. "I have a stand number that reassures me that I will not be relocated. Even if they change these numbers every 10 years, no one can claim my stand. In the yard, I have an electricity cable connected only to my house, as such, rentals are not a threat because it is clear to them too that the stand belongs to me. If I had financial resources, I would build a formal housing structure just like some of the community members who have already started". Respondent 2.

From these views, it appears that residents of Slovo Park informal settlement are certain that regularisation of the settlement was achieved through the UISP process and that has reassured the residents that they will not be forcefully evicted from the area. As such, the in situ upgrading process was effective in instilling the confidence that residents have a secure place to live and this was achieved by installing electricity cables into each shack with a stand number. According to Amos (2011), the definition of informal settlements has been realised mainly based on their illegal or unpermitted occupation of land. The fear of illegal eviction and demolition has contributed to the likeliness of residents of informal settlements to build their shelters using building materials that are easy to remove, such as corrugated iron. Thus, regulating the settlement has impacted the residents positively because it implies that the settlement forms part of a planned area and it unblocks assets accumulation for the residents as they will be able to invest in their properties in compliance with the city's acceptable building standard and norms. Tenure regularisation also promotes provision of urban services which were previously absent (Arimah & Branch, 2011). This also forms part of what Wekesa

et al. (2011) indicated as the state's acknowledgement that informal settlements are not only a part of the cities but a potential solution to the existing state housing backlog.

5.1.2 Community Empowerment

Interviews revealed that some of community members were empowered during the electrification project, through the offering of temporary employment. It was highlighted that there were no initial intentions to employ community members on the project, which also delayed implementation processes. The decision to employ unemployed members of the community, accompanied by a fair selection process coordinated by the councillor ensured a successful implementation. These were views expressed by Respondent 3, who explained that "the Councilor facilitated the employment of unemployed community members. He applied a process called "fuduwa" meaning that individuals would put their names into a container which is shaken, and names are randomly picked. Even people living with disabilities were employed in the project".

From the above, residents from informal settlement expected upgrading projects not only to facilitate provision of services but also to provide employment, even if it is temporary. El Menshawy et al. (2011) indicated that an informal settlement intervention strategy must empower its beneficiaries through transforming their livelihoods. Therefore, community participation should go beyond decision-making and involve the community during the implementation stage. Simone et al. (2005) observed how this translate to public ownership and accountability necessary for the success of the project implemented for the beneficiaries. Furthermore, community capacity building (both leadership skills and technical knowledge) is realised. By achieving this, the UISP process achieved a successful community participation. According to Wekesa et al. (2011), UISP is one of the few progressive approaches that seeks to contribute towards social inclusion and economic empowerment of the urban poor.

5.1.3 Safety within the community

Residents indicated that, since the decision to upgrade Slovo Park in 2016 by the high court, the community got electrification in 2018. Electricity cables and metres were installed into the stand owner's shack and those who rent share with the stand owners. It was also observed that there are streetlights installed on each street. Residents expressed that this has contributed to the safety of the community. It was revealed during interviews with the residents of Slovo Park that quality of life has improved since the electrification project. Firstly, shack fires have reduced immensely. Secondly, health related issues contributed by paraffin gas have ceased. Thirdly, people no longer wake up too early to prepare for work, therefore, have extended resting period since they walk to work. Fourthly, food security has improved because households are able to buy food in bulk and store in refrigerators, which saves money in a long run. Lastly, the degree of crime has declined because streetlights have brought safety within the community. These were views expressed by the following participants, who indicated that"the quality of life has improved intensively between the time we were relying on illegal connections and now. I have changed from using a paraffin stove and a wooden stove to cook and heat water to bath in the morning, preparing for work" Respondent 3. "Access to electricity has simplified my life and I no longer fear for the safety of my children. When I leave my children for work in the morning or for a night shift, I am comfortable even if I were to forget the lights on" Respondent 2."Having access to electricity has eliminated the health issues I previously had when using a paraffin stove, which released gas that affected my lungs and eyes. With electricity, I can simply use an electric kettle and a 2-plate stove to prepare meals and heating bathing water. This saves me a lot of time. Through the light provided by the streetlights, we can monitor and ensure safety within the community" Respondent 4. "…I can buy food in bulk and store in the fridge. I have a monthly budget. In the morning, I can work up a little later than I used to to prepare for work. I no longer rely on 'mbaula' to warm up water, so, it saves me plenty of time. The streetlights installed have provided safety within the community as we are able to see everything that is happening on our streets at night. So, this has reduced the crime rate. I am also safe walking on the street in the early hours going to work" Respondent 5.

Individuals in the study have a view about their quality of life and their interpretation of the concept is accepted. Based on the above views, it is evident that residents are satisfied with the social infrastructure improvements meant to improve their quality of life. According to Amao (2012), there are three main philosophical approaches to determine the quality of life. The first philosophical approach is the normative ideals and belief systems that individuals live by. This describes the personal experience of people. The second philosophical approach describes the satisfaction citizens attain from obtaining the things they desire.

The third philosophical approach encompasses the first and second approach, therefore description of quality of life, factors such as feelings of joy, pleasure, contentment, and life satisfaction based on personal experience. According to Tonon (2015), when qualitative methodology is applied in a quality of life study, it becomes imperative to consider people´s perceptions, opinions, feelings, ideas and interpretations. This approach is important to help the researcher understand people's experiences of wellbeing and issues related to quality of life. This is because the study of the quality of life has a direct link to the material conditions such as the social welfare and to the psycho-social conditions such as the personal welfare.

5.1.4   Improved food security

It was also indicated during interviews that since the electrification, residents not only are able to save money on monthly groceries but also have improved food security. These were comments made by respondents, who said "…having access to electricity has reduced the amount of money I spent on basic food. I can buy food in bulk and store in the fridge" Respondent 6."Access to electricity improved food security in the household and helps me stick to the monthly grocery budget. Having to constantly buy meat, at times rotten because vendors also used ice to keep the meat fresh and this made it very hard for me to save money towards other needs. When I go to work, I know that my children have access to good food during the day because, as you may know a shack is very hot, so when we leave cooked meals in the pots, the food gets rotten and difficult to eat" Respondent 1.

From these views, it is undeniable that socioeconomic status has a direct link to food security. Residents of informal settlements are generally low-income earners, which has implications on the diet or type of food they can afford to buy to sustain them for a month. Lack of access to electricity worsens the circumstance of food insecurity because buying food such as milk and frozen meat in bulk is not an option. Yet, this could reduce the cost of food on a monthly basis as compared to buying single items on a day to day basis. According to Naicker et al. (2015), residents of informal settlements face a much higher level of food insecurity due to very low income and lack of full-time employment. This contributes to undernutrition or malnutrition because some of the coping strategies employed during food insecurity include decreasing of the variety of foods eaten. As such, consumption of vegetables, fruit and protein would decrease. Although household income did not improve amongst the residents of Slovo Park, having access to electricity helped households save the little money they earn by enhancing the opportunity to buy food in bulk due to better storage capacity. This also had a direct impact on food security.

5.1.5   Improved livelihoods

A resident who relies on income generated through rentals indicated that access to electricity has enhanced their livelihoods. Even the Project Officer from CoJ highlighted that "those with rental business have dramatically increased their fees after electricity installation" Respondent 12. However, the landlord expressed her concerns that the upgrading might have negative effects on their livelihoods. For example, relocation of rentals will limit the demand and provision of housing might mean they can no longer have shacks rented in the yards. This was a view stated by Respondent 2, who indicated that "I mainly rely on the income I get from the rentals. If the upgrading, for example, housing provision would mean I can no longer accommodate rented shacks, then this upgrading will have a negative impact on my livelihood".

The above statement indicates that stand owners benefiting from rentals would prefer not to be disadvantaged by the upgrading, especially during the housing provision. Once again, it is evident that the community of Slovo Park bought into UISP without fully understanding what it entails and this is a concern. Relocation of some of the community members is inevitable in many cases of in situ informal settlement upgrading. This is mainly to reduce overcrowding in informal settlements and avoid using unsuitable areas within the settlement. However, Huchzemeyer (2006) highlighted that the UISP process considers the socio-economic viability indicators that will trace the households' livelihood strategies. UISP intends to respond flexibly to demand, rather than simply allocating the same product equitably to all households within a community or every informal settlement.

5.2 Limitations of UISP

5.2.1   Ineffective community participation in planning UISP

It was discovered from the interviews that the community was frequently invited to an information session hosted by the Slovo Park Community Development Forum (SPCDF). During these meetings, different opinions were shared but not necessarily considered. The aim of these meetings was to share information on the plans derived for the upgrading and provide progress report. Respondent 7, who is also a committee member in the SPCDF, expressed the following when he was asked if he perceived community as actively involved in the planning of the in situ upgrading programme. "Yes, under the guidance of SERI who also helped us with the court case against the City of Johannesburg". While the following respondents' views to the same question were as follows: "the committee in representation of the community was actively involved. I would not say the community was passively involved" Respondent 5. "Not directly, the community was frequently invited to meetings which were basically information sessions regarding the upcoming implementations" Respondent 1. The municipal official indicated that "all inputs, audio recorded and/or written were taken into consideration when developing layout draft mindful of geotechnical, and environmental impact assessment advice" Respondent 12. "…but community participation was limited to the SERI, Centre for Urbanism & Built Environment Studies (CUBES) and the Slovo Park committee. The ward councillor including the Community Development Workers (CDW) were not participating. My view is that individual residents must be afford an opportunity to come up with the intervention such as reclamation facilities without necessarily being led by a team, which in my view do not necessarily share their interests" Respondent 11. "…beneficiary education of prescripts of the UISP policy is critical so that the community can buy into a programme they understand holistically, and this is something the municipal officials are not satisfied that it was fully conducted" Respondent 12.

Community participation is a crucial aspect of the UISP process, in fact, it is what distinguishes UISP from all other housing strategies under the umbrella of the NUSP. Failure to facilitate this important stage of the UISP process has the potential to create community's misunderstanding and conflict during implementation. Although a community may elect representatives, it is important that the representatives share the same ideas as the community. This helps eliminate resistance or failure to comply with the regulations of the products received from the upgrading programme. It also helps ensure that the products provided are suitable to the needs of the community. Conducting a real community participation would require committees representing beneficiaries to become involved at all levels from strategy level down to project implementation level. El Menshawy et al. (2011), also indicated that real community participation is essential. Wekesa et al. (2011) also emphasised that the physical planning aspect of the process should not be concluded at the top level, but should be based on the inputs derived from public participation in order for the end product to be accessible and affordable to the real end-users.

5.2.2   UISP, a prolonged programme

During an interview, Respondent 12 indicated that:

"Quality of lives among dwellers improve as delivery of constitutionally rights services is effected. The provision of water, toilets, electricity, and other amenities improve lives…". "It has to be noted that this is 100% government subsidised programme, so full implementation of upgrading can take 10 years depending on population of occupants; land rights; suitability of ground in terms of habitability; and availability of funds from coffers to attend to each activities of every phase. Other factors which may derail completion is migration of residents" Respondent 12. Yet the respondents indicated that: "If this was not a prolonged process, it could be effective and efficient. We have tolerated bad living conditions for more than 2 decades in Slovo Park, therefore the incremental development process undermines the urgency of basic services. I would suggest that the duration intended to complete this programme be reduced to a shorter period so that our children can have a better future. We are no longer thinking of ourselves but our children" Respondent 1. "….Government should source out funds to simultaneously provide most of the basic services. This development will take a long time to be completed and most of us might not be alive to see most of the services. For example, our leaders, Mohau and Mampara passed on without witnessing/enjoying the fruit of their tireless efforts" Respondent 4.

These perceptions indicate that UISP has shortcomings in improving the quality of life of beneficiaries living in informal settlements and this is due to the lengthy period of completing a comprehensive UISP. Funding has been highlighted as a factor that delays implementation completion as this is a 100% government funded programme. However, these delays contribute to other factors which will further delay completion of an effective UISP process that would improve the quality of life of beneficiaries living in informal settlements. This includes migration of residents into the settlement. According to Amirah et al. (2011) city authorities have been unable to manage rapid urbanisation which resulted in the development of informal settlements. This has mainly been due to lack of financial and technical capacity. El Menshawy et al. (2011) also indicated that informal settlements upgrading is often avoided because it requires a large financial input to make provision of the entire infrastructure systems. As such upgrading stages would spread the costs over a longer period. According to Huchzermeyer (2006), municipalities apply for UISP funding which provides a one-off project funding of land rehabilitation. Beyond this, the relevant municipality is responsible for bulk infrastructure and maintenance of services post-implementation. This must fall under an approved municipal IDP which implies that products/projects will be provided on the priority and funds availability basis.

Interviewee responses		Overview
5.1 Success factors of UISP	• Regulating of informal settlement	Social networks are maintained, and livelihoods are uninterrupted. Stand numbers are allocated and electricity cables are installed to each shack, particularly the stand owner's shack.
	• Community Empowerment	Electrification project offered temporary employment to residents. It is also acknowledged that UISP still require the establishment of Community Builder Programme.
	• Safety within the community	Crime rate is reduced within the settlement due to the provided public lights.
	• Improved livelihoods	Stand owners increased rental fees subsequent to the electrification project.
	• Improved food security	Households are able to buy food in bulk and store in the refrigerator for the month.
5.2 Limitations of UISP	• Ineffective community participation in planning UISP	Indirect community participation resulted in the physical planning aspect of the process unknown to the beneficiaries. Thus, residents are unable to upgrade top structure. Affordability of the provided services presents a potential threat to the success of UISP. Poor socio-economies could result in the displacement of the beneficiaries.
	• Overcrowding	Excess rentals contribute to insufficiency of services provided by UISP, i.e. reliability of electricity.
	• UISP, a prolonged programme	A minimum of 10 years to complete UISP process is too long and opens opportunities of overcrowding.

Table 1: Overview of interview responses

5.2.3 Overcrowding

Participant in the interviews were concerned about excess rentals in Slovo Park and indicated that they contribute to the unreliability of electricity. Each stand has more than three shacks and this overloads the transformers, thus, power-cuts are frequent while the city responds to power delays. When asked to point out contributors that lead to the failure of the plans of in situ upgrading to focus on improving the quality of life in Slovo Park, respondents pointed out that "implementation of an informal settlement upgrading is a long and delayed process. Even people that did not live here initially, move here due to the attraction that the

initiated implementation brings, which in my view will hinder the success of the plan. The community is growing despite some families moving to other places. The identified land is already getting occupied by people that were not initially earmarked for that land" Respondent 7. "So far, this plan is unsuccessful because we still have excessive rentals and overcrowding which makes the provided services insufficient…. Government has the powers to identify suitable land and do relocations. The sooner this is done the sooner the effectiveness of this upgrading will be satisfactory. At the moment, although we have access to electricity we are overcrowded, as such this electricity is unreliable because the population exceeds the electricity capacity, thus the transformer bursts frequently. It is clear that the same will happen with all the other services government intends to provide for us" Respondent 8. It was also discovered during an interview with a renting participant that simultaneously, she feels disadvantaged by the delays in implementing the relocation phase. In her view, the in situ upgrading implemented in Slovo Park, which she also fought for will not benefit her because she does not have tenure security. Respondent 3 expressed these views by saying that "I am yet to be relocated. So, I cannot say I have security of tenure".

Poor planning of in situ upgrading has compromised the efforts of improving quality of life of beneficiaries' post-implementation because access to electricity is unreliable in the Slovo Park informal settlement due to overcrowding. Not only that, individuals identified for relocation are not made aware of the details of implementation. According to Nikuze, et al. (2019), application for UISP funding should cater for both in situ upgrading and the relocation site. The local municipality has the responsibility to identify suitable vacant land for relocation. UISP principles and approaches apply also to the relocation site and this is done to minimise the additional stress that comes with relocation. Institutional incapacity in terms of financial and technical resources are compromising the effectiveness of UISP in improving the quality of life of beneficiaries living in informal settlements.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The existence of informal settlements in urban areas has been perceived as a result of ineffective housing policy, insufficiency of housing finance, unequipped public utilities and local municipalities to create tenure security to the ever-growing population in cities. Eradication of informal settlements in a form of relocation has been prominent in South Africa, especially through the BNG projects, in which qualifying households are provided with low-cost housing and basic services on an identified suitable site. This strategy has been criticised for its disregard for the impact it has on livelihoods and social networks critical for survival of the residents. ISUP is considered a "progressive informal settlement eradication vehicle" designed under the NUSP as it seeks to respond flexibly to housing demand and move beyond providing low-income housing in the peripheries of the city. Thus, integrating informal settlements into the larger fabric of the city, both geographically and socially. This paper reveals that in situ upgrading programme has regularised the settlement by officially allocating stand numbers and securing land tenure as the first step towards improving the quality of life of the residents of Slovo Park. As such, UISP has had a positive impact because it acknowledges the community's social networks by introducing minimal interruption to their current livelihoods while waiting for incremental upgrading implementation. CoJ officials confirm that the Slovo Park informal settlement is on course to ultimately be an approved settlement for township establishment and then to have a project subsidy number for permanent purposes.

The paper reveals that residents of Slovo Park are content with access to electricity because some componenta of their quality of life have improved since the installation of electricity within the community. These include the improved safety due to public lights installed, the use of electric appliances such as stoves to prepare meals and kettles for heating water to wash which have reduced health issues related to the previous use of paraffin stoves. The convenience of using electricity for preparing for work has added more time for resting. The likelihood of shack fires has declined drastically, and food security has improved because there are opportunities to buy food in bulk and store in the refrigerator. For stand owner's, access to electricity opened an opportunity for rental fee increase, which has made a significant improvement to their livelihoods.

Considering the above, various recommendations can be delineated including the following:

(1) that in situ upgrading is complementary to the community's socio-economic status. UISP should consider the socio-economic circumstance of the community. This paper reveals that Slovo Park has excessive rentals, and this is because rentals are a source of income to supplement low-income earners and in the case of

retired individuals, rentals are the main source of income. Therefore, if the plan is to eradicate informality, UISP should incorporate formal structures for rental in addition to housing to allow continuous access to this income. This way, the provided infrastructure will match the expected number of people in a community. If not, households will continue perpetuation of renting shacks, which will defeat the purpose of the in situ upgrading programme. The aspect of community participation plays a significant role in this. Top-down planning and implementation process allowing for little or no input from beneficiary communities should be avoided because they result in community resistance to possessing a sense of responsibility to ensure compliance with the city's regulations.

(2) That UISP addresses overcrowding as the first step. It is recommendable that every informal settlement upgrading begins with addressing overcrowding. This will ensure that services provided are adequate and reliable. This paper reveals that there is a concern that Slovo Park will remain overcrowded for a long time because individuals previously identified for relocation have not been relocated to the identified suitable site. Yet, other people are migrating to that site. If most people cannot be accommodated on the identified vacant and suitable land, they will remain in the community, overstretching the resources provided for the reduced population of Slovo Park. This will defeat the purpose of the upgrading process because the quality of life of residents of Slovo Park will remain unchanged. Therefore, if relocation of some of the residents was recommended, it is advisable that this is executed before basic services are provided. This will help with monitoring and discouraging migration into the settlement.

(3) That UISP facilitates community empowerment for the sustainability of the upgrading. The paper reveals that there is an expectation from the community that local development must involve the local community by means of job creation even if it is a temporary offer. Nonetheless, this is also an important aspect of the community participation process, it is as significant as the in situ upgrading planning process. An informal settlement such as Slovo Park has a high unemployment rate and an unskilled population. As such, they can only offer labour resources during a project and temporarily enhance their livelihoods. The challenge with this is that post-implementation, the livelihood circumstance of this community members remains unchanged. This is a factor identified by the CoJ municipal officials which recommended the need for an improved procurement processes that will cater for local needs in terms of introducing a delivery vehicle that will promote a Community Builder Programme. It is assumed that this would empower the community and enhance their skills. Community empowerment would not only enhance the livelihoods of the residents of this informal settlement but would also ensure sustainability of the provided services. This would be a significant effort toward improving the quality of life of residents of informal settlements.

7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Most of the residents of Slovo Park informal settlement do not understand the English language fluently. As such, the researcher had to translate interview questions from English to either IsiZulu or Southern Sesotho during the interview in order to accommodate the interviewee. This limitation contributed to time consuming task of translation of all transcripts to English. Fixing of appointments with the relevant municipal officials proved to be another limitation to the study. The researcher had to postpone the interview because municipal officials were unavailable on dates or times previously arranged. Additionally, the research had limitation by methodology, as such further study can be conducted using quantitative approach, with a larger sample and in other informal settlements to get a broader view of the topic.

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