

Is Access to Adequate Human Settlements Still a 'Wicked' Problem for Africa? Revisiting South Africa's Policy and Strategy Landscape

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Abstract: This paper unpacks the multi-faceted angles to the human settlements challenges affecting the Africa in general and South Africa in particular. Despite the massive milestones that have been made towards realising the universal right to adequate human settlements globally, many African countries are far from making this right a reality for all their populace. The paper argues that migration in its various forms, the question of land and ownership where a skewed ownership promotes inequalities contribute immensely to lack of access to adequate housing by many in the country. Inequalities accompanied by slow economic growth, increase in population growth which entails ever increasing demand for housing and accompanying services makes it extremely difficult for government to achieve human settlements goals. An evaluation of the government's efforts to address human settlements through such strategies as building low-cost houses for the poor have had mixed successes. The criticism levelled at such approaches lies more on how they were rolled out more than on the correctness of the decision. While there are a number of positives from the strategies that have been employed so far the sustainability and efficacy of such are brought into scrutiny. The paper endeavors to explore possible ways by which the many-headed challenge of Human settlements could be tackled for better results. Using the lenses of participatory development, the paper reviews literature to draw some insights on what could possibly explain the setbacks that have been experienced by South Africa despite some strides that have been made to date. The paper acknowledges the massive success in giving the poor a roof over their heads; however, it laments the overemphasis on the quantifiable outcomes at the expense of social and quality considerations.

Keywords: Amenities, Informal settlements, Livable habitats, Poverty, Sustainable development

1. Introduction

The compound challenges associated with human development in general and human settlement in particular demand constant assessment to determine whether it could still be regarded as 'wicked'. This is particularly significant in the developing context of the Africa in general and South Africa in particular. This paper revisits the Problematiques associated with human settlements and assesses progress made to address the main challenges faced by countries in Africa in the provision and development of human settlements. It further endeavors to explore South Africa's policy and strategy landscape with the aim of underlining positive initiatives and to flag areas of concern. Cases of other African countries are considered to pinpoint potential best practice that could serve as a reference point for South Africa. Key components of human settlements are utilised to develop an assessment tool to assess South Africa's progress in providing access to

adequate human settlements. Utilising participatory development lenses the article employs the review of literature and analysis of official documents to arrive at its conclusions and recommendations.

2. Complexity of Human Settlements Provision and Development in Africa

A starting point in the human settlements discourse is to appreciate the complexities around the challenges associated with it. The concept of human Settlements entails a collective of facilities and amenities that make for habitable environment. As postulated by Eberhard (1977) human settlements entail:

- Shelter of various kinds in which to live, work, learn, worship, and play. Important about any system of shelter is the fact that it has to be safe, provide for the common good, and supports a healthy environment.

- Paths and means of movement are required between shelters.
- Information-communication systems are needed for members of the settlement to know what is going on, beware of danger, manage their joint endeavors, control the flow of traffic or people etc.
- A system for managing the 'metabolism' of the settlement is required. Food, water, and raw materials of many kinds need to be brought into the settlement; processed into things to eat, to wear, to use in building, or into forms of energy for heat, light, and work; and eventually the by-products or waste need to be disposed of.

These are also seen as the hardware of human settlements while the software includes among others health care, education, recreation, political processes, worship, entertainment and security measures (Eberhard, 1977:11). Underlining the importance of human settlements for diverse and inclusive cities, Wachter, Smit and Kim (2018) point out that shelter is a necessity of life and an anchor of economic activities by households. The human settlements predicaments that some countries find themselves in relate to the ever-shifting targets. South Africa is a good example where statistics shows that since 1994 to date 4.5 million houses have been built yet the number of people in the waiting list for social housing programme keeps increasing (Department of Human Settlement, 2019). The former minister of Human Settlements, Ms Lindiwe N Sisulu acknowledged the enormous challenge faced by government in meeting the demand on the backdrop of growing heightened expectation and anger (Department of Human Settlement, 2019). In her speech to the National Council of Provinces, the minister highlighted some of the fundamental challenges the government is faced with in its attempt to ensure the right of access to adequate housing becomes a reality. One of these challenges is urbanization of which South Africa is urbanizing at a rate of 2.4%. The challenge is exacerbated by the growing influx of immigrants from neighboring countries who come mainly in search for better economic opportunities making the competition for space stiffer and more expensive. The question of approaches in making the right of access to adequate housing a reality for the country is at the Centre of some of the challenges being experienced currently. South Africa is one of the countries if not the only country where

government provides free housing to the less privileged. It is tempting for some writers to criticize this social policy for promoting dependency. However, a closer look at the circumstances surrounding the targeted beneficiaries justifies the move, although the beneficiaries can be better screened to ensure that the intended indigent are actually the beneficiaries of these necessary policies.

3. Urbanisation and Inequality

The stable growth that followed attainment of democratic governance and the attendant efforts to address poverty have not reduced the number of people living in inadequate human settlements. Perhaps the South African challenge is no surprise since it falls within the Southern African region, which has the highest levels of inequalities according to (Manirakiza, 2014). The negative side of urbanization in this region and in other parts of the world is that it is often accompanied by high levels of inequality. While there is flourishing housing market in formally designated places the affordability relegates a huge population of the urban dwellers into illegal settlements like Khayelitsha in Cape Town or Diepsloot in Johannesburg. Urbanisation has seen a lot of people move from rural areas to cities for search of opportunities. The urban areas present a wide array of industries, which attract the rural dwellers. Unfortunately, most of the immigrants into urban areas do not always find viable means of livelihood to afford adequate housing and other services and facilities that make for sufficient human settlements. As observed by Manirakiza (2014) "urban development policies tend to focus on the creation and improvement of infrastructures which facilitate business, with little emphasis being laid on social issues and housing problems, or the promotion of full access to the opportunities of urban life for different socio-economic categories of urban residents".

It is a fact that economic growth has not been high enough to grow the economy to cater for the growing population. However, more important than the economic growth is the high level of inequality bedeviling many communities in the developing world. It is the challenges of distribution of the said economic growth. South Africa had the notorious distinction of being the most unequal society in the world in 2010 (Hendricks, 2010). The unfortunate reality of this inequality is that it is historical and has race and gender connotations as well. The history of separate development entrenched poverty

among the blacks and granted privilege to the white populace. While the country has undergone change following the demise of apartheid rule in 1994 the economic realities are stubborn to be eradicated as their impact is generational. The apartheid policies particularly relating to land and access to the city are still relevant in explaining the challenges faced by the succeeding governments in tackling the question of access to adequate housing. This is true in many angles however, the glaring one relates to the access to land. The reality of land ownership is such that the bulk of the land is in private hands and the state has to follow a long process to acquire and avail land for infrastructure development necessary to ensure access to adequate housing. While there is a flourishing housing market, the economic conditions of those without access to adequate housing makes it impossible for them to benefit from the new housing developments. The challenge of unequal developments and fewer opportunities in rural areas have seen high influx of young people into the urban centres in search for employment and better opportunities. The high rentals in the cities force these immigrants into the city to find alternative shelter in informal settlements with no legal services. Most of these settlements are nearer to heavy manufacturing industries where the dwellers can easily access places of work. Staying far from workplace means transport costs will eat into their meagre wages. Despite the labourers in the manufacturing industry there is a segment of the populace that has stable sources of income but cannot qualify for loans to buy houses.

4. Human Settlement Policy Development and Implementation in South Africa

Despite several international conventions that have been ratified achieving adequate and sustainable human settlements has been a challenge internationally. Some of the international policy pronouncements like the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements 1976, note that the condition of human settlements largely determines the quality of life, the improvement of which is a prerequisite for the full satisfaction of basic needs like employment, housing, health services, education and recreation. South Africa through the department of Human Settlement has enacted a number of policies including the 2004 Breaking the New ground framework. The policy framework is rooted on the country's constitution, which holds that access to adequate housing is a right for all citizens. The initial

economic policy of the ruling ANC government prioritised housing, it channelled a lot of funding towards the provision of social housing for the poor, and the programme came to be called RDP houses after the Reconstruction and Development Policy (1996). The housing programme have been very instrumental in providing housing to the poor among the poor to access housing. The programme has been lauded for the access to housing it has granted to many of the South African poor populace. This however, has not been without its challenges and criticisms. The question of intended beneficiaries, sustainability, the corruption around the recipients of the finished units and the problem of creating a dependency syndrome have been some of the common negatives levelled against the programme.

The sustainability of meeting the human settlements needs to many that are in need of social housing poses questions whether the RDP approach has been effective in providing access to adequate housing to the less privileged. However, it has been fraught by many ills mainly the lack of coordination from the various spheres of governments and between entities that should work together to ensure that the newly built housing units are serviced with basics like water and electricity. Perhaps the disjointed manner of the early years of the RDP also contributed to the move to look at Human settlements rather than simply housing. Criticism around the failure to coordinate work between sectors of government saw some units go without power a good while after being completed.

Reports on the management of recipients of this social housing programme indicate challenges on the management of those who are eligible to receive housing unit with reports of corruption in some cases resulting in protests. Some of the companies involved in the construction of the RDP houses were accused of doing shoddy work calling for more concerted effort to ensure compliance with the agreed upon standards. A lot of money has been wasted on the reconstruction of faulty structures a development which should not be an occurrence. The government has engaged made effort to build partnership with relevant players to improve the quality of social housing. One such partnership is with Cuban Government where technicians from Cuba have been involved in the social housing construction working together with local construction in the spirit of sharing expertise. One of the challenges of RDP housing programme has been the location

where due to limitation in terms of state owned land these houses are located in areas far from the place of economic activity for many of the recipients. Due to high levels of poverty some of the beneficiaries are alleged to have sold out their units to illegible occupants and moved back to informal settlements closer to opportunities of work or informal business customers. This is partly the reason why despite huge numbers of housing units built informal settlements have persisted. Given the governments' mega housing projects where RDP houses are built on a space of land to form a new neighbourhood, the non-participation in those who receive them creates an absence of sense of ownership. In line with the thinking in participatory development management the participation of those whom development is targeted should be consciously and clearly crafted at every stage of the process from planning to evaluation of outcomes. It is however, important to hasten in pointing that those within the communities who can participate only at a passive level like the aged and physically incapacitated. However, for the majority of the beneficiaries' development has to be done with the people and for the people.

5. The Dynamics of Planning, Increase in Informal Settlements

The challenge facing many countries in the developing world with regards to human settlements relate to the inadequate or outdated planning most of which is borrowed from the colonial regimes. The inadequacy of the colonial template lies in it being not accommodative of the changed realities of most countries. The exclusionary nature of cities is no longer or should no longer be a reality in the transformed realities of Africa's Populace. Manikariza (2014:2) a growing "body of evidence suggests that uncontrolled urban growth, land use and housing availability as well as affordability remain topical issues impinging for example on Kigali's sustainable development." The high rate of spontaneous settlements in Kigali highlights the need to tailor urban planning policies and related implementation strategies according to urban households' financial means, so as to transform Kigali into an inclusive city. An inclusive city promotes access to the opportunities of urban life for all, a place where everyone, regardless of their economic means is enabled and empowered to fully participate in the social, economic and political opportunities that cities have to offer' (UNHABITAT,2012). Manirakiza

(2014:5) argues that 'there is urbanization without improving of economies and the expansion of urban middle classes, and African urban livelihoods tend to remain insecure and highly in formalised'. Urban development tends to be accompanied by urban inequality.

6. Tackling the Human Settlements in South Africa

As alluded to in the preceding passages, human settlements entail liveable habitats, safe, resource efficient, connected to places of worship, schooling, health and leisure. In order to assess the gains that South Africa has made in this regard and the failures a working tool of key aspects of human settlements is presented in Table 1 on the following page.

The highlighted challenges with policy and strategies will require a re-think on the current strategies and pave for a well thought out way forward, which takes into consideration the views of various stakeholders. The multi-faceted challenges of Human Settlements in South Africa, which qualifies it as a 'wicked problem' status requires a multi-pronged response. A differentiated intervention that targets different people groups and programmes targeting the not so poor who cannot access credit lines have to be encouraged. The People's Housing Process presents that opportunity to allow those in need to collaborate with the government in realising the reality of accessing adequate housing. See Table 2.

7. Quality Assurance and Coordination of Partnerships

The cooperative governance model currently in place has to be strengthened to ensure that all efforts are well coordinated for all encompassing interventions (Bradlow, Bolnick & Shearing, 2011). The strengthening of intergovernmental forum like the Portfolio-committee on Human Settlements should be empowered to ensure concerted effort in the implementation of Human Settlements programmes. The participation of the targeted beneficiaries has to be prioritised at the conception of the interventions to the evaluation of the outcomes.

8. Creating an Enabling Environment

Bradlow *et al.* (2011) contend that within the human settlements terrain real people's participation remained a hope rather than a reality.

Table 1: Key Aspects of Human Settlements

Item	Acceptable standards as per international conventions	South Africa's Performance	Areas of improvement (what could be done to fare better)
Policy: Ratification of Internationally recognised Human Rights provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection from homelessness and ensuring access to adequate housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitutionalised the right of access to adequate housing. Ratified the 1976 Vancouver Declaration and related policies The government statistics shows that there has been an increase of people who received houses from 5.6% in 2002 to 13,6% in 2017 (Republic of South Africa 2018). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy on Human Settlements in the country is very comprehensive. Much effort is needed in ensuring that policy intentions are turned into reality. A move towards increasing funding especially for PHPs is very urgent The challenge with this intervention is that there has been challenges on the quality of the structures with some residents pointing that the walls were weak and the roofs were faulty The other criticism levelled against this type of intervention is that the number of those in the waiting list has increased making this an unsustainable strategy. Wachter etal (2018) argue that policy solutions that simply focus on building affordable housing wherever it can be done at low cost will not be effective without taking into account the interlinked triangle of land use, transit and housing.
Handling informal Settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eradicating and or Informal settlements Upgrade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embarked on regularisation of informal settlements by way of upgrading them and in some cases where upgrade is not appropriate relocating dwellers to new low-cost houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More dialogue is needed with informal settlements dwellers to appreciate the governments' efforts especially in cases where upgrading is not feasible. The challenge with cases of having to relocate dwellers from informal settlements is that it disrupts the social networks and economic linkages, which have served as social capital and a support system for the inhabitants. This has tended in informal settlements resisting government's efforts. With the coming of BNG 2004 policy the government committed to working on upgrading the informal settlements except in case prone to hazards such as floods. While this is a good step it is important that control mechanisms be put in place to avoid developments of new informal settlements in areas not cut out for residential purposes.
Participation of intended beneficiaries in finding Human Settlements solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that various stakeholder participate especially the intended beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders are given space to make their contribution towards achieving human Settlements goals. The People's Housing Programme is one such platform that allows people to participate in the design and construction of their own houses. Some level of Social cohesion has been achieved in some areas such as Cosmo city where housing caters for high, middle and low-income dwellers within a mixed development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More financial injection towards PHPs as it empowers beneficiaries and give them a sense of pride and achievement This intervention has not been as massive in terms of increasing the number of people with access to housing due to individual preferences and the participation processes unlike the subsidised housing that is uniform. Capacity has been a challenge and the government has had to collaborate with Cuba for technical support in this area. The Engineers from Cuba have been involved in working with beneficiaries on the technicalities of People's Housing Process.
Institutional Framework	Well defined institutional framework that has specific focus areas to give a holistic approach to Human settlements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three spheres of Government are involved in Human Settlements delivery A whole government department is assigned the development of Human Settlements-Funding, Quality Assurance, etc Inter-ministerial Framework bringing related ministries into dialogue and cooperation in delivering Human Settlements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowering more municipalities to manage Human Settlements Improve coordination-Intergovernmental framework to be oiled to ensure shared priorities There is an urgent need to bolster a coordinated approach in the working together of government institutions involved in Human Settlements. The 31 May 2019 Alexandra demolition of informal settlements (ENCA online news) where the city leadership and provincial department of human settlements were finger pointing at each other on who to blame for the demolitions attest to the fact that the intergovernmental relations still need to be improved. The bringing together of human Settlements and water and sanitation into one ministry in the 2019 cabinet reconfigurations stands to help cut cost and synergise key sectors involved in the development of human settlements.

Source: Author

Table 2: Policy and Strategies

Strategies	Brief Description (DHS 2019 online)	Current challenges	Possible improvements
Social Housing: BNG	The programme provides for grant funding to establish, capacitate and capitalize social housing institutions which may develop, hold and administer affordable rental units within identified restructuring zones. It provides good quality social housing for the upper end of the low income market(R1500-R7500), with the primary objective of urban restructuring and creating sustainable human settlements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate resources to meet demand Focus on the quantifiable outcomes at the expense of strategies for community involvement despite a strong rhetoric of participation and partnership (Isandla 2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive measure to harness private sector resources to beef government efforts
People's Housing Processes	The Enhanced People's Housing Process aims to support household who wish to enhance their housing subsidies by building their own homes. This can be accessed through the Integrated Residential Development Programme, Project Linked Consolidation, Institutional or Rural Subsidies as well as technical and other forms of assistance in the house building process. This subsidy is given to people who want to build or manage the building of their own homes. The people or beneficiaries are in charge of their own house construction process and are supported by a support organization. Additional support is made available for support functions. This is different from Project linked Subsidy where a constructor builds houses for many people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the room available for beneficiaries to exercise choice this tend to take a longer period to cater for a big number of beneficiaries than social housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More investment on this people driven development including mobilising private sector participation. The strategy involves a more stakeholders as compared to provision of low cost housing, which is mainly executed by the state. This makes it difficult for the government to exhibit progress since the focus of this approach is more on quality than quantity.
Integrated Residential Development Programme (IRDP)	The programme entails planning and development of comprehensive housing projects. The programme follows a phased process. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Phase: land, Services and Township Proclamation - planning, acquisition of land, township establishment and the provision of serviced residential and other land use stands to ensure an integrated sustainable community 2. 2nd Phase: Housing Construction - this phase involves house construction for qualifying housing subsidy beneficiaries and the sale of stands to non-qualifying beneficiaries and to commercial interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited resources to meet the demands through this strategy. The strategy involves investment by the private sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for skilled people to engage and manage the process as it involves a number of stakeholders some who are profit driven.
Finance Linked Individual Subsidy Programme (FLISP)	This subsidy can be used to: Buy new or old residential stand, a vacant serviced residential stand, linked to an NHBRC registered home builder contract or to build property on a self-owned serviced residential stand, through an NHBRC registered home builder. It is a subsidy targeted at the low to middle income households with access to adequate housing. To qualify a household has to be in the gap market i.e those that do not for a fully subsidised house at the same time they do not qualify for a mortgage bond. It is applicable to persons who have never received state assistance and have income of between R3501 and R15000. It is disbursed as a once off subsidy towards the repayment of the bond.	<p>Funding remains a challenge given the slow growth experienced by the country. This has seen budgets cuts like in the 2017/2018 financial year where the department's budget was cut by R3,5 billion.</p> <p>Financing institutions tend to charge high percentages on the loans they offer which tends to affect would be beneficiaries (Ntshangana 2010)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government to continue to engage the banking sector on fair lending.
Community Residential Units	The programme supports the upgrading of government owned communal rental accommodation also known as hostels. It aims to facilitate the provision of secure, stable rental tenure for lower income persons/households. This housing stock remains in public ownership and cannot be sold or transferred to individual residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties in upgrading the hostels to cater for families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider ownership possibilities for occupants.
Informal Settlements Upgrading	This entails the structured upgrade of informal settlements. It encapsulates in situ upgrade of informal settlements as well as where communities are relocated for a variety of seasons. It involves extensive community consultation and participation, emergency basic services, permanent services and security of tenure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undoing the service delivery and challenges faced by informal dwellers remains difficult despite the government efforts to date. High risk associated with location of informal settlements i.e low lying areas that pose risk of flooding during adverse weather conditions (e.g the 2016 floods that swept away a child in Alexandra). Lack of space between units which saw Khayelista informal settlements dwellers losing their shacks to fire in 2018. In March 2019 an electrical power line fault resulted in 100 shacks destroyed by fire iStjwetla, Alexandra in Johannesburg (Pijoos 2019). Another fire which started in one shack spread to destroy 600 shacks in December 2018 <p>These and many others serve to show that informal settlements are prone to disasters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to maintain the upgraded areas to ensure they do not degenerate into sites of risks.

Source: Author

There is a need to ensure that urban planning reflects the new realities and that room is created for all to be able to access adequate housing. This enabling environment can be created by ensuring that access to residential spaces well located to socio-economic opportunities is made a reality. There is a need to re-think urban planning to ensure that while allowing business to thrive ordinary people are also able to thrive along with it. A re-think of the city as both a space for trade and residency has to be reflected in the manner land is used in urban areas. Re-alignment of land use and planning to the prevailing circumstances of the populace should be done. What was previously an exclusionary right has become a national right hence a new thinking has to go into land use management in cities. When an enabling environment is created for example in re-zoning some informal settlements and partner with the occupants in formalising them in the long run people will improve the structures and if proper services like water and electricity are provided the inhabitants will be motivated to participate in the improvement of their dwellings. The upgrading of informal settlements will be a great success if the environment is made conducive for the dwellers to take part in the enhancement of their living space.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

South African government like most African countries grapple with the challenge of creating an enabling environment in which human settlements access is made possible to all. The efforts towards ensuring adequate housing for all remains a complex exercise given the multi-facets of human settlements. The paper acknowledges the achievements that have been made policy wise and practically. It however, underlines the areas that require revisiting to realise the full potential of policies in place and the sharpening of current strategies such as increasing investment towards a people driven housing process, land use management and well-coordinated interventions. The paper also emboldens the need to embark on alternative innovative building technology in tackling the huge demand for access to adequate human settlements. The paper endeavoured to give a balanced evaluation on the state of human settlements in South Africa.

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