

International Housing Coalition

IHC

Housing for All

Urban Upgrading in South Africa: Policy and Reality

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Preface

In 2004, the Government of South Africa established an informal settlement upgrading program and initiated sixteen pilot projects. A study of these projects in 2009 revealed that only two were involved in genuine *in situ* upgrading, while five conducted modest *in situ* upgrading and nine did not conduct any actual upgrading. The question is why? This study aims to understand the motivation and ideas of the parties involved in the implementation of the nine projects which were not *in situ* upgrades. It was hoped that this study would provide a better understanding as to why the policy, well prepared and fully funded, was not being implemented as planned. Those responsible for project implementation were interviewed in order to obtain their perspective of what was done, and why.

This study was sponsored by the International Housing Coalition (IHC). Richard Martin is an architect/town planner who became involved with informal settlements when he started working in Zambia in the 1960s. He taught in the field of sites and services and upgrading at Bouwcentrum International Education. He has written widely and worked in many countries in Africa in the field of housing and informal settlements. The IHC would like to thank everyone who provided information for the report or who commented on a draft. In particular, Nicole Weir of the IHC staff provided helpful comments and edits and Kerry O’Neill edited the report.

The IHC is a non-profit advocacy organization located in Washington D.C. that supports “Housing for All,” and seeks to raise the priority of housing and urban development on the international development agenda. The conditions of slums and poor housing of slum dwellers are of particular concern. The IHC supports the basic principles of private property rights, secure tenure, effective title systems and efficient and equitable housing finance systems—all essential elements to economic growth, civic stability and democratic values. To learn more about the IHC visit its web site at www.Intlhc.org.

The views expressed in the paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the International Housing Coalition.

Bob Dubinsky, CEO, IHC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Typically, especially in Africa, governments endorse “enabling environment” policies (e.g. site and service projects or *in situ* upgrading,) but they don’t implement them. The question is why? The hypothesis of this short paper is that there are technical issues, which are used as a device to resist such policies, and underlying these technical positions are old-fashioned prejudices regarding the appearance of the city, and the risks of giving power to the poor.

A New Upgrading Policy

In 2003, South Africa introduced a policy worded, in part, thus:

The Department will accordingly introduce a new informal settlement upgrading instrument to support the focused eradication of informal settlements. The new human settlements plan adopts a phased in-situ upgrading approach to informal settlements, in line with international best practice.

The Department of Housing initiated 16 pilot projects to demonstrate how the policy could be implemented. How did those projects perform, and what lessons could be learned from the experience? A study, with Cities Alliance funding, was undertaken of all 16 pilot projects to answer these questions. That report found that of these 16, only two were genuine *in situ* upgrading projects, and while five included some element of *in situ* upgrading, nine municipalities adopted solutions that could not be described as upgrading.

THE STUDY: SOUTH AFRICA

Using that study as a starting point, this study aimed to understand the motivation and ideas of those implementing the nine projects which were not *in situ* upgrades. It was hoped that this would provide a better understanding as to why the policy, well-prepared and fully-funded, was not being implemented as planned. Those responsible for project implementation were interviewed in order to obtain their perspective of what was done, and why.

The analysis and findings are presented under six themes.

1. Process

Partly due to the inherent complexity of upgrading, the people whose job it is to implement upgrading may feel that the policy makers would never have come up with such a policy if they knew how difficult it was to implement. Issues that particularly concerned staff included the process of registering beneficiaries, and sorting out those eligible for subsidies from those who are not.

2. Politics

One of the elements of the hypothesis was that political opposition to upgrading existed, probably due to the prevailing preoccupation of many politicians with the need to make the city look beautiful. The survey showed that the technicians were perhaps more concerned with this aspect. Political activity had much less to do with the principles or practice of upgrading, and more to do with the need of Councilors to get and keep votes.

3. Community Involvement

Few of the respondents felt comfortable with the community engagement component, and most saw it as more of a public relations exercise than a genuine attempt to give the residents a say in the project. Another feature was the officials’ sense of paternalism.

The lack of trust between the Municipality or project staff and the community was also shown to be a common phenomenon. It is, of course, in part a legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle, but the lack of experience in community involvement, and tendency to treat debates on technical matters as the exclusive domain of experts, contribute to it.

4. Land invasions

In South Africa, the authorities and private landowners have become more effective at controlling haphazard squatting; in response, communities have adopted a more aggressive method, namely land invasions. These are typically organized by communities currently sharing housing in formal townships, or even other squatter settlements. The officials interviewed were frightened that upgrading would encourage more land invasions.

5. Aesthetics/shacks

In South Africa the shack has become both a symbol of need and defiance by the poor against the established order. It has also become a very important component of housing delivery. However, the survey showed very strong objections by officials against shacks and an almost missionary zeal to demolish them. There was little recognition of their role in providing accommodation.

6. Town Planning

The final constraint noted was a preoccupation with imposing rigid town planning rules such as plot sizes, and the difficulty of accommodating varied plot sizes, road widths, etc. Using the logic of minimum standards, many projects required resettlement of all households. To make matters worse, rigid standards for infrastructure provision were often applied.

DAR ES SALAAM

The study draws a comparison with upgrading projects being undertaken in Dar es Salaam.

The settlements in Dar es Salaam are the result of spontaneous development. In view of the poor infrastructure in these settlements, there has long been a demand for improvements from the residents. The World Bank is currently funding such a project, which provides a useful contrast to what has happened in South Africa.

There are four elements of importance:

1. The upgrading is demand led. In this preparatory phase, community leaders work together with the local municipality to explain the project and help the community to mobilize around the fund raising.
2. The design does not interfere with existing layouts; with few exceptions proposed roads follow existing tracks.
3. All Tanzanian communities, whether formal or informal are covered by a bottom-up local governance system.
4. The program concentrates on basic needs, although there are further stages in terms of regularization of land tenure and boundaries, and the introduction of improved water and sanitation, that will come later.

Lessons learned

South Africa

The interviews showed that those responsible for upgrading will find excuses for not doing it. Of these their strongest weapon is the fact the informal settlements do not conform to town planning and township regulations. Their comments about land invasions suggest that they if they were to proceed with upgrading on any scale, it would provide an incentive for future invasions. Their attitudes to shacks illustrates that there is a strong aesthetic motive in wanting to replace informal settlements with the formal product of government houses.

Tanzania

The first and most important lesson from Tanzania is that the demand for upgrading should come from below and be facilitated by the authorities. Of course, under a World Bank project the system has to be much more formalized than that, but in essence this is what the project allowed the communities to do.

Second, upgrading is not seen as a mechanism to change the nature of the settlements from one thing to another. It is nothing more than a stage in the gradual improvement in the environment of deprived housing areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The biggest lesson from South Africa is therefore that new policies require new skills. It is not enough simply to spell out a policy, and throwing money at the problem is not the solution.

The fact is that *in situ* upgrading requires an inclusive and participatory way of working to which conventional engineering and town planning have scant relevance. Imparting these skills takes time. Learning by doing is an excellent tool, but should be supplemented by focused hands-on training in the skills of participation and incremental development.

But there is usually another quality in those who successfully implement upgrading. It has to do with an appreciation of the values, ambitions and needs of the poor; how every piece of roof sheet, every concrete block, every door frame represents a step on the ladder of progress. It is less to do with the technical disciplines of engineering, town planning and so on, and much more to do with understanding the values and needs of the poor.

Urban Upgrading in South Africa: Policy and Reality¹

It was a victory for the poor, when, arising out of the first UN-Habitat Conference in Vancouver in 1976, the term “enabling environment” entered the housing lexicon. One cannot avoid the conclusion that this switch from the stated policies of the preceding twenty years to one in which individual interests, skills and investments were recognised must have owed a lot to the work of John Turner whose powerful message – Housing is a Verb – had made such an impact.

Since then, UN-Habitat itself has held many conferences, of which the World Urban Forums are examples. In these conferences the conclusions of Vancouver may have been added to, explored and adjusted, but the concept which recognizes the contribution of the individual to the housing process has survived intact. What is more, the conference resolutions, as well as those of the technical committees held at more frequent intervals, are endorsed by ministers responsible for housing and even presidents.

But, typically, especially in Africa, governments may endorse “enabling environment” policies (e.g. site and service projects or *in situ* upgrading,) but they don’t implement them. The question is why? The hypothesis of this short paper is that there are technical issues which are used as a device to resist such policies. Underlying these technical positions are old-fashioned prejudices regarding the appearance of the city, and the risks of giving power to the poor. Are we looking at a good old-fashioned class war, in which housing policy, especially as embodied in official standards, is used as the preferred weapon of mass destruction?

Thirty-four years of housing policy

Since 1976 there have, indeed, been massive changes in government involvement in housing. The 1970s were the heyday of the public-owned national housing authority/corporations, which had been established to provide low cost housing with public funds. By that time, the previous model of rental housing was beginning to be questioned, but it was assumed that only government agencies were able and willing to meet this need. Paradoxically, the message of the Vancouver conference began to be interpreted to mean that governments no longer had any role to play in housing. This version was enthusiastically welcomed by many states in Africa that were suffering very painful collapses of their economies at the time. It gave them *carte blanche* to economize by spending nothing on housing. This also accorded with the thinking of structural adjustment, which was then sweeping the continent. National housing corporations/authorities shrivelled along with their funding stream. Since then there has been a mild resurgence of the role of public funding for so-called low cost housing fuelled by an increasingly vocal middle class which has found itself caught between the formal sector mortgage market (too expensive) and the informal settlements. Ethiopia is the best example of the resurgence of lower middle class housing at state expense – resulting in windfall profits for those lucky enough to win the lottery to get a unit.

SOUTH AFRICA: EVOLUTION OF HOUSING POLICIES

Background

Most people are aware that South Africa suffered under the system of apartheid which, among other controls, prevented non-whites from owning property in the urban areas; designated remote areas as their “homelands” which were supposedly independent states; and located housing for urban residents (who were allowed to live in town only as long as they had a job) in separate dormitory townships.

One of the political tools that had been used to pressure the apartheid government was to make the black townships “ungovernable.” Communities were typically highly organized into street committees and area civic groups, and engaged in a mixture of passive resistance, non-payment of rent and service charges, and political protest. Paradoxically,

¹ The author owes a great debt of gratitude to Kate Clement who conducted the South African interviews after his sudden transfer to the DRC. Some of this material was developed with Ashna Mathema, co-author of *Development Poverty and Politics: Putting Communities in the Driver’s Seat* (Routledge 2010).

these methods of protest are now being used against the democratic government in an effort to improve local conditions. In the section about community participation below it will be seen that on occasion such confrontational tactics were being used in the projects studied.

The advent of democracy in 1994 brought an abolition of all apartheid controls. The cumulative effect of the release of controls on rural/urban migration, the abolition of race-based land policies and a major revival of the economy was to create massive pressure on existing urban housing.

In addition to pressures from within South Africa, immigration has been a major factor. South Africa has always attracted migrant labor from neighboring states, especially from its very poor neighbors of Malawi and Mozambique. In about 2001 a new factor emerged: Robert Mugabe's oppressive policies and Zimbabwe's collapsing economy pushed literally millions of Zimbabweans into South Africa.

As a result of all these pressures there has been spontaneous growth of informal – squatter – settlements. These are typically a mixture of South Africans and immigrants; both have seized the opportunity when it presents itself to take a piece of land, however small. The nature and process of this squatting is discussed in more detail below.

Policy

Predictably, when majority rule came to South Africa, housing was one of the most important tools by which the new government thought it could make a difference. The model chosen was very attractive in its simplicity: government would provide the funds and the private sector would identify land and build houses. In order to ensure that it did do in such a way to meet community needs, developers had to enter in a “community compact” with the prospective occupants. Housing costs would be subsidized on a sliding scale, and the poorest people would get their houses free. As it turned out, the vast majority of the applicants managed to place themselves in the poorest category and thereby get a free house. The houses were necessarily small, but were supposed to be seen as an extendable core.

The energy that went into making this program a success was remarkable and more than one million houses were built in the first five years. Today, the number is almost two million. Meanwhile, the number of families living in informal settlements continues to grow and at the last count it was more than 1.6 million households.²

It wasn't long before the initial policy began to run into trouble. Communities used the powers given to them under the community compact policy very aggressively in the hope that they would get bigger houses or plots, better roads, etc. Soon, the requirement for a community compact was abolished to prevent these confrontations stalling the delivery process. Further problems occurred because the system was supply driven and houses were built in remote sites, where land was cheap. As evidence of the lack of value to their owners, houses in such locations were being sold for a tiny fraction of their cost. Because of this it was decided that the public sector had to drive the process and select the land and developer. This provoked a new round of problems as massive sums were involved, and corruption flourished.

But most importantly, because the houses for so many people were free, the owners didn't bother to maintain them. Typically, there were no social facilities and the environment was bleak; these were dormitory settlements of the worst sort. To make matters worse, many of the units were badly built. Increasing political demands for higher standards without corresponding increases in costs led to the withdrawal of large construction groups due to low profit margins.

To counter the lack of pride in the house and its environment, the government introduced a minimum (albeit very small) deposit (about \$350) that had to be paid for each house.

There was a parallel policy – the so-called People's Housing Process – through which communities could access finance and technical assistance and build their own houses. But the bureaucratic hurdles to obtaining this support were so extreme that only those backed by large NGOs could succeed.

² Stats SA: *Community Survey*, Pretoria, 2007

In 2003 a new policy was formulated to overcome some of these problems, and most importantly to create integrated human settlements³.

The policy paper, nicely titled *Breaking New Ground*, starts by acknowledging:

The 1.6 million subsidy-houses that have been built have not become “valuable assets” in the hands of the poor. In addition to this the inability of recipients of subsidy-housing to pay for municipal services and taxes has meant that such housing projects have been viewed as liabilities to municipalities and have not assisted many of the country’s major cities struggling to come to grips with rapid changes to economic conditions since South Africa’s inclusion into the global economy.(p.4)

Referring to the lack of a soul in the new developments, it states:

The dominant production of single houses on single plots in distant locations with initially weak socio-economic infrastructure is inflexible to local dynamics and changes in demand. The new human settlements plan moves away from the current commoditized⁴ focus of housing delivery towards more responsive mechanisms, which addresses the multi-dimensional needs of sustainable human settlements. (p.8)

The plan itself tackles the question of policy in a very broad manner, looking at the needs of all income groups and the resources that can be brought to bear to meet these needs. The starting point is to look at housing development as part of human settlement:

Through this new plan, the Department will shift towards a reinvigorated contract with the people and partner organizations for the achievement of sustainable human settlements. “Sustainable human settlements” refer to:

well-managed entities in which economic growth and social development are in balance with the carrying capacity of the natural systems on which they depend for their existence and result in sustainable development, wealth creation, poverty alleviation and equity. (p.11)

At the top of the list of new interventions is, surprisingly, *in situ* upgrading, which the paper introduces as follows:

At the heart of this initiative is the move beyond the provision of basic shelter towards achieving the broader vision of sustainable human settlements and more efficient cities, towns and regions. . . In line with the National Spatial Development Plan and the Draft National Urban Strategy, the Department will enhance its contribution to spatial restructuring by:

Progressive Informal Settlement Eradication

Informal settlements must urgently be integrated into the broader urban fabric to overcome spatial, social and economic exclusion. The Department will accordingly introduce a new informal settlement upgrading instrument to support the focused eradication of informal settlements. The new human settlements plan adopts a phased in situ upgrading approach to informal settlements, in line

³ Department of Housing: *Breaking New Ground*, September 2004

⁴ In this context, commoditized can probably be interpreted to refer to a housing delivery system in which the most number of units are being delivered at the least cost, without reference to the environment created, and disregarding the need for community and economic facilities

with international best practice. Thus, the plan supports the eradication of informal settlements through in situ upgrading in desired locations, coupled to the relocation of households where development is not possible or desirable.

The upgrading process is not prescriptive, but rather supports a range of tenure options and housing typologies. Where informal settlements are upgraded on well-located land, mechanisms will be introduced to optimize the locational value and preference will generally be given to social housing (medium-density) solutions. Upgrading projects will be implemented by municipalities.

“There is a need to respond positively and proactively to processes of informal housing development which are taking place across the country. A more responsive state-assisted housing policy, coupled to delivery at scale is expected to decrease the formation of informal settlements over time. There is however a need to acknowledge the existence of informal settlements and recognize that the existing housing program will not secure the upgrading of informal settlements. There is also a need to shift the official policy response to informal settlements from one of conflict or neglect, to one of integration and co-operation, leading to the stabilization and integration of these areas into the broader urban fabric. (p.12)

It is very important to note the language: *The plan supports the eradication of informal settlements*. We can be fairly sure that the authors of this paper used the word eradication to imply transformation, not demolition. Nevertheless many leaders have used those very same words to claim that they were following the policy when they demolished informal settlements.

This broad policy document was supplemented by detailed implementation guidelines. The 59-page document describes the application of the policy, sequencing and phasing, costing, staffing, approval and management of such projects. Throughout, while recognizing that some relocation may be required, the document emphasizes the preference for respecting the existing fabric and, in a sense, working around existing housing units.⁵

Implementation of the Policy

The Department initiated 16 pilot projects in order to start the process and establish examples from which municipalities could learn. How well were those projects managed, and what lessons could be learned from the experience?

To answer these questions, a study of all 16 pilot projects was undertaken with Cities Alliance funding.⁶

The resulting report found that of the 16 pilots, only two were genuine *in situ* upgrading projects. While four included some element of *in situ* upgrading, the remaining ten could not be considered upgrading at all.

The report finds that likely reasons for the small number of *in situ* upgrading projects were:

- *Conventional, quantitative housing delivery continues to dominate development policies and approaches to the point that the provision of top-structures⁷ is perceived as the only ‘solution.’*
- *Holistic, integrated and locally appropriate solutions seem to have little traction among government practitioners, probably because of their limited experience with in situ upgrading and concern that such methods can be human resource intensive and complex.*
- *Limited appreciation of how progressive in situ upgrading protects and strengthens the survival strategies of the poor, while minimizing their exposure to external shocks.*
- *The persistent narrow view that a sustainable human settlement project is primarily about housing, plus identification of sites to be developed for social amenities by other sectoral departments.*
- *Capacity shortages of experienced project managers able to handle complex projects.*

⁵ Department of Housing: *National Housing Program: Upgrading of Informal Settlements*. Pretoria, October 2004.

⁶ Department of Housing/Cities Alliance: *National Upgrading Support Program*, Final Report, February 2009.

⁷ Top structure refers to a contractor-built housing unit as opposed to infrastructure and the site on which it is built.

The report continues:

These perceptions are compounded by the emphasis in official statements and in practice on the 'eradication' of informal settlements - rather (than) recognizing both the immediate and long-term benefits of in situ upgrading.

What is striking about these cases is that even though the implementing municipalities were under scrutiny, as implementers of pilot projects for an upgrading program, the majority chose a very different strategy. They claimed that they were “upgrading” the area while actually destroying the existing settlement. The question is why? Was it because the residents rejected the idea, because the land was unsuitable, because the elected officials refused to accept the concept, or what?

THE STUDY

Using the Cities Alliance study as a starting point, this study aims to obtain answers to these questions in cases **where the project was not an *in situ* upgrade**, but was actually something else. Whereas the Cities Alliance study had asked **what** had been done, and **how**, the present study looks at **why** – the motivation for those actions. It is designed to provide a better understanding as to why the policy, well-prepared and fully-funded, was not being implemented as planned.

The nine projects selected for study were as follows:

City, project numbers and costs			
City	Project	Approx number of housing units	Approx cost
Greater Johannesburg*	Etwatwa	1500	\$8 157 375
East London	Duncan Village	3500	\$19 033 875
Port Elizabeth	Zanemvula	6500	\$35 348 625
Polokwane	Disteneng-Seshego	1000	\$5 438 250
Naboomspruit	Phomolong	500	\$2 719 125
Rustenberg	Seraleng	3200	\$17 402 400
Klerksdorp	Jouberton	2084	\$11 333 313
Durban	Mount Moria	2100	\$11 420 325
Piet Retief	Ethandaku Khanya	1500	\$8 157 375
*The local government is known as Ekurhuleni			
Maximum subsidy per unit		R43 506	
Dollar equivalent		\$5 438	

Source: Department of Housing/Cities Alliance: *National Upgrading Support Program*, Final Report, February 2009.

The first two projects on the list included upgrading elements as well as relocation. The remainder consisted of resettlement projects.

There are many pitfalls to be considered in studies such as this. The most important is that officials are typically very nervous of giving their opinion, and even being seen to talk to an outsider without getting official clearance to do so. If such clearance has been received, it may be only to give the official line – *we were just following orders*.

Our interviews were directed at those responsible for project implementation. But, of course, the answers are bound to depend on who you talk to. Any project as complex as *in situ* upgrading requires multi-disciplinary collaboration, for example:

- Lawyers on security of tenure
- Town Planners on layout and township establishment
- Architects on housing options
- Engineers on infrastructure
- Social services on community participation
- Councilors on political leadership
- Accountants on cost recovery

In a large municipality there may be many people who have worked on the project, and therefore a variety of different voices to listen to. But the strategy was to have an in-depth discussion with one official who was deeply involved in the project and to get his or her perspective of what was done, and why.

Lastly, since this was a qualitative survey, it is impossible to make it statistically valid. Instead we can gather a sense of what is going on in people's minds, and what motivates them to do what they do.

As expected, it was extremely difficult to get interviews on this subject. Even after the National Upgrading Support Program team had undertaken detailed studies of each project (or was it because they had?) there was a sense that information should not be shared freely. Nevertheless, in the majority of cases, thanks to the friendly voice and style of the interviewer, Kate Clement, they began to relax and say what they really thought.

These thoughts were basically of two types.

- Implementation: how it could be done better, or just sharing the difficulties, which they experienced in implementation.
- Policy: not necessarily realizing that they had created their own policies in most cases by not following the national one, they seemed to enjoy giving their ideas.

The interviewees did not demand anonymity but it is felt more appropriate not to identify them or the location of the projects concerned. The extracts are therefore only identified by an initial.

The material has been broken down into six themes, which it is hoped will make it easier for the reader to follow. However, inevitably the themes overlap and a cut and dried division is not possible.

The themes are:

1. Process
2. Politics
3. Community engagement
4. Land invasions
5. Aesthetics
6. Town planning

1. Process

Some of the responses dwelt on the complexity of the process required, and some blamed the policy itself. This is partly due to the inherent complexity of upgrading, and the people whose job it is to implement upgrading may feel that the policy makers would never have come up with such a policy if they knew how difficult it was to implement. While implying that the requirements of policy were unrealistic the speakers were metaphorically congratulating themselves for achieving what they had in difficult circumstances. For example:

What do you think about the sector ideas and policies about upgrading in situ?

“I listen to the ‘perfect world’ upgrading strategies and realize that the people it comes from have not actually been out to do it themselves. Alterations are always necessary to get things to work. Otherwise things just won’t work in the future. The density of some settlements makes them imperfect. . . We have had to move people in some cases, eventually if we don’t do this it will be to the detriment of the communities.” (N)

From the interviews, it seems that two problems occur with regularity. The first is that after the initial planning has been undertaken, more people move in, and then claim a right to participate. The second is that, since in South Africa upgrading is part of the housing subsidy system, most foreigners are not eligible beneficiaries. To counter these problems, painstaking registration of the participants was undertaken in most cases. However, people who were registered one year may already have left and been replaced by others the next year. The situation is not helped by the fact that registered beneficiaries can expect to get a house constructed on their plot free of charge, which acts as a substantial incentive to corruption and deceit.

The process of dealing with mobile populations, and coming to grips with the situation in terms of upgrading strategies as well as simple documentation has created many problems and delays.

What kind of challenges are you facing?

“We have an overflow of people. We have people in some areas that are deep rooted there but cannot stay there. We have illegal immigrants. We have a certain size of plot that must be given.”

What is the process for deciding on who stays and who goes in an area?

“We register people to determine who is there; who owns land elsewhere and who is an illegal immigrant. We want to try to keep communities together but we have got a scarcity of land. The project steering committee then looks at the project planning, the number of people, size of land, etc. After this we make recommendations to politicians and stakeholders and there is consultation.” (B)

Here, for example, the business of counting households has become as important as the upgrading itself.

Do you have any in situ upgrading projects?

“We are busy with two at the moment. The most problem we are experiencing is that people have sublet in their (current) plots and to get them to move is difficult.”

How are you dealing with this?

“When we started we told the communities about government policies and about the 2014 target of eradicating shacks. We tell them “When we build you a house we will be taking down zozos (tin houses) and shacks and we won’t allow shacks.”

“We are still waiting for the Council to take the next step. We are looking at what options are available. In some of the plots you find that the owner doesn’t qualify for a house because he or she is illegal or already has a house somewhere else. We are still looking at how we can handle this and what the policy of the Council will say.” (R)

We know of no examples where the community has been engaged as a partner to deal with the registration and controls. Though the beginning of the next extract makes it sound as if the process was very consultative, in practice what the speaker was referring to was a process of eliminating dual occupancy of plots.

How do you plan and engage communities for upgrading projects?

“Luckily when we consult communities the projects already have serviced plots. We informed people and told them about the plans and find out whether they are comfortable. Already the plot sizes are set. If the plot is big, people feel they can sub-let into shacks but they are not supposed to be doing this.”

What are people saying about this?

“They say, ‘Where do you think we should go now?’

And we would say ‘Go where you came from.’ And they get upset.

We have a combination of people from inside the town and outside. All our informal settlements are like this. We even have foreigners and mine laborers.” (R)

This is an example of the process typically followed:

How will you decide which people stay and which ones move? Are you worried about possible conflict?

“We have verified the current residents and registered them. Now we are waiting for the allocation of housing units and then we will start the public participation. We have done the aerial photographs of the area. Next the land surveyor will do preliminary diagrams and then we will meet with community leaders in the area. They will look at the diagrams together with the leaders. We will do continuous engaging with and reporting to the community, the community leaders and the municipality together.” (P)

The technicalities of obtaining reliable and up-to-date household data affect many projects:

“It is very problematic for services, the de-registration and re-registration of families and services have to be re-done. We are struggling to get a school to fit in the area. You can’t even drive through the areas.

The dynamic nature of populations also makes this very challenging. Even now our database is still not reliable because the population moves so much. People are migrant⁸ workers with homes elsewhere who are here temporarily, others are selling their RDP (government-subsidized) properties, and others are illegal immigrants. It is very difficult to keep an accurate record and I don’t think we should waste too much time on this. If a property changes hands OK, as long as the person living there next is registered to pay for rates and services that’s the best we can hope for. People are receiving a free asset from government.” (E)

2. Politics

One element of the hypothesis predicted political opposition to upgrading, probably due to the prevailing preoccupation of many politicians with the need to make the city look beautiful.

As will be seen below, the interviews show that the technicians are perhaps more concerned with this aspect than their political masters. There was only one reference in all the interviews to upgrading being resisted by existing property owners, and that was a theoretical remark. There were no references to political opposition to upgrading on such grounds. This unexpected result may be attributable to the deeply divided urban fabric of South African cities, which separates the better off (once the whites, but now all colors) from the so-called black townships, or, to put it bluntly, the rich from the poor.

No, political activity has much less to do with the principles or practice of upgrading, and more to do with the need of Councilors to get and keep votes.

⁸ Migrant worker in this context refers to a South African whose family lives elsewhere, and has come to town searching for work.

“Before the last elections the issue of an unpopular ward councilor also affected the project. The agendas of getting rid of this councilor and maintaining the rental income were actually expressed through the issue of dissatisfaction with plot sizes.

As a result construction had to halt in these two areas. Contractors were being threatened with violence if they went on site. Due to late completion and delays penalties and fees had to be paid by the Council to contractors. We had to go to Council and tell them how much was being paid every day because of project delays.” (E)

“There are also issues of political power. It is not in the interests of a ward councilor for people from his area to move to another densified settlement in another ward, even if it’s better from a services, planning and transport point of view. This movement of people will erode his voter base and his budget so he doesn’t want this to happen. So we end up with an unsustainable duplication of services.

The politics needs to be taken out (of the administration) of local government.” (E)

Can the councilors assist you with this?

“Some assist and some compound the problems.

When councilors go on-site they sometimes change the information to suit themselves and make themselves look good and blame the officials.” (R)

“As politicians move around they report to us. Politicians and officials developed and implement the land invasion policy together. Politicians like information and we need to tell them what we expect of them. When they start to look they see it’s serious. If they (the communities) do it (land invasions) once, they will do it again and again, so the sooner you put your foot down the better. When we develop areas its part of their constituency, it’s what they promise people. When we come up with a housing development, it helps them out.” (K)

There is only one case where a Councilor was actively involved in facilitating project activities:

“In some cases the houses are in the way of roads and if we can we make the road go around the house. If not, we relocate the people. We look at the costs to decide which option to take.”

What response do you get to this?

“There is a reluctance for people to move – people never want to move.”

What do you do then?

“We call in the councilors to deal with it. Then we also get issues with land invasions.”

So you work with the councilors – what was your experience with that?

“They help sometimes; some of them didn’t want to get involved. There were different political affiliations and this influenced things.”

Sounds complicated.

“Yes, we don’t like to get into politics but sometimes we can’t avoid it. This also caused problems and delays for the project.” (F)

3. Community Involvement

Community engagement is recognized by all parties as being important, but means very different things to different people. The national policy attached importance to the principle and planned to supply Community Development Workers to assist municipalities with the process of community involvement:

“In order to bring government housing programmes closer to the community, a cadre of community development workers is to be established. It is envisaged that 250 CDWs will be appointed over the next 3 years and that each Province will have 1 CDW Provincial Coordinator who will be responsible for daily activities of CDW’s throughout the Provinces. The CDWs will be used to create awareness, provide consumer education, undertake assessments and surveys, handle complaints and provide after hour support to communities. This will be done in consultation and collaboration with Provincial Housing Departments, municipalities and Ward Committees. It is envisaged that the first Pilot Projects will be launched in October 2004.”⁹

For reasons that are not very clear, this policy was never fully implemented. In any case, the number of persons proposed was far too small for the scale of the problem. As a result each implementing agency devised its own plan for how to engage communities, and principles to be adopted in so doing.

The sense that comes from the interviews is that few of the respondents felt comfortable with the community engagement component, and most saw it as more of a public relations exercise than a genuine attempt to give the residents a say in the project.

To introduce this subject, here is a nice example of the indignation felt by an official when people claim an interest in their own settlement:

“I prefer green-field development to in-situ because in-situ it’s a lot of problems. The first group of people starts behaving like they own the land and then when we want to implement the Council resolutions and policies the people paint us as corrupt.” (R)

Another feature is the officials’ sense of paternalism. Whereas, on the face of it, the consumer’s response of wanting to build his own house is rational, it is dismissed as ignorant. The irony is that the respondent sees no link between the insistence that the state builds the house, and the lack of “ownership” felt by the occupant.

“Another challenge is a lack of education. We build a house for a person and say they do their own calculation of subsidies and want to change the contractor for a cheaper one and receive the difference themselves or they say ‘give me the money I will build my house’. This needs consumer education. Another challenge is that they don’t feel like they own it (the house) and they expect the Council to fix it. We support government but we are also looking into rental housing. Community residential units will help a lot with people in transit – that will help a lot.” (K)

The next extract reflects the feelings of a very experienced project manager who has been thrown into a situation which he did not have the skills to control. His team was faced with a militant community, which effectively used force to enforce its will. As a result, the balance of power was totally one-sided and the project management team, as the agents of the state (the benefactor), became the victim. This sort of situation is more common in South Africa, where the beneficiaries have nothing to lose by being militant, than in a situation where they contribute to the costs.

Do you have any pearls of wisdom for in situ development?

“I wouldn’t advise in situ development for a project. I would recommend that people are relocated to a temporary camp; you develop and then move them back and relocate the overflow. If you spend R100 000 on green-field development you will spend R300 000 on in situ for the same project. It’s three times as much if people stay during the *in situ* development.”

So you would rather people move out while the construction happens and then they move back when it’s all ready?

“Yes that’s it.”

⁹ *Breaking New Ground*, p. 26.

Are you confident that this way you can end up with a sustainable community?

“Yes. Most people are happy to have a place, a home. A place that they own, it makes them feel important. Sustainable, yes.” (F)

What are the biggest obstacles to in situ developments?

“Making the beneficiaries and communities understand we are trying to make things better - getting the community to understand development, project planning, finance and construction, the lot. There are too many meetings to sort out one issue. There are so many meetings.”

“On many occasions the community stopped contractors working until their demands are met. There are issues on an ongoing basis. I worked on the project for five years. In this time I became totally disillusioned. You do so much for people and they don’t appreciate it. There were meetings towards the last part of the development where I would say ‘get me a plane ready to take me outta there!’ There were too many smokescreens by the community.”

“You bend over backwards to provide the best, to give the resources and logistics that they ask for but you don’t get a positive response. I am yet to see a community that really appreciates it. OK there are some places where the people do appreciate the work but in so many time and again they don’t.”

What do you think is behind this attitude?

“They have been given houses free of charge but from the moment we arrive it’s ‘who are you? What’s your intention?’ There is a lot of suspicion. Government has made x amount of money available but they want to be paid more than that. They want bigger houses worth more than that, they don’t understand we don’t get paid if a job is half done.”

Do the community members work on the projects?

“They demand that they are sub-contracted otherwise they will stop the sub-contractors. We had to bring on local sub-contractors. Quality of work is an issue.” (F)

The lack of trust between the Municipality or project staff and the community is also a common phenomenon. It is, of course, in part a legacy of the anti-apartheid struggle, but the lack of experience in community involvement, and tendency to treat debates on technical matters as the exclusive domain of experts, contribute to it.

“There are also cases where people don’t trust our technical information. We had another area where people were settled on a former waste site and the people wouldn’t believe us.” (K)

The following extracts reflect the same thinking:

If you were the Minister what would you do?

“First I would educate people about project – they must let professionals, engineers, project managers etc. do their work – so they don’t mess the contractors around. Communities are stopping contractors and holding projects and contractors to ransom. On our project the delays because of the community stopping contractors was R2-3million, that’s enough to build 50 houses.” (F)

What about the plot size – is it an issue?

“Not a major issue, only with two-three people. Sometimes as officials we create these problems because we take them for granted.”

For example?

“We find that when we are explaining to them you will be withholding some information. In our cases there are community leaders who have the history of the area. There may be an informal settlement

that stays four, five, six years and a new project coordinator may come in and say 'you are in – you are out' and the people in that area who were there all along say 'wait here we had a previous agreement'." (R)

Paradoxically, although the following extract is an example of community input into a project, the very fact that they had such an impact was considered an indicator of failure by the respondent.

"This experience of upgrading was not very positive. In an earlier project I learned about the importance of the dynamics of the settlement.

In this case the municipality decided to relocate people and their first step was to demarcate the area according to town planning requirements. They mapped out the area with plots and services and they engaged the community.

The plan was then to move people temporarily so that roads could be built and services like water put into place. But the people didn't trust the municipality; they were scared that if they moved off the land they would not be able to move back. They did not feel secure to move and refused to do so. They insisted on staying while the upgrading was being done.

As a result the municipality had to install the services while the people were still living there and so now the roads are too narrow and the services are not the best. I consider this case to have been a bit of a failure in terms of an upgrading." (P)

4. Land invasions

Squatting – occupying the land of someone else without their consent – can take many forms. It is often a gradual accretion in a location which the landowner does not monitor, or has abandoned efforts to control. But it can also take the form of overnight land invasions.

In South Africa, the authorities and private landowners have become more effective at controlling haphazard squatting, and land invasions have allegedly increased. These are typically organized by communities currently sharing housing in formal townships, or even other squatter settlements. Typically these communities are heterogeneous, including migrants from other countries as well as those from many parts of South Africa. Leaders are elected, and lines of communication agreed. Land is identified, and secret plans are prepared to move the whole community onto the land overnight. Plots are laid out, sometimes with the help of a surveyor, and allocated. One day there is nothing; the next day there are hundreds of shacks being built.

The majority of the land invaded falls into two categories. The first is land which the invaders know to be unsafe. By occupying such land they make themselves eligible for emergency relief – resettlement and receipt of a free government house. The second category is invasion of well-located land, with a view to making it so difficult for the authorities to evict them that they will eventually become eligible for upgrading and will receive security of tenure.

The court process to evict invaders is such that it is very difficult for landowners, whether public or private, to evict the squatters¹⁰ (even when they have only been there for a day or two, provided they have established a residence) unless alternative accommodation has been provided. These difficulties perhaps explain the tenor of the statements below.

¹⁰ Under the *Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act, 1998*, the owner must identify the persons occupying the land and serve notices of the court hearing at least 14 days before the case is heard. If the owner claims that he cannot do it, the court will typically postpone the case "considering the rights of the unlawful occupier" (s.4.4). Although the act gives the court the power to order evictions on the basis of unlawful occupation, the process itself is a major obstacle in effective control due to the difficulty of obtaining names and following the correct procedures for service of the summons to appear in court. Also, if the person has occupied the land for more than six months, the court may grant an order for eviction if it is of the opinion that "it is just and equitable to do so after considering whether land has been made available . . . by a municipality . . . or other land owner for the relocation of the unlawful occupier." (s.7)

“But there is probably a more fundamental attitude at work. ‘If we allow informal settlements, where will it end?’ Land invasions are also being used as a political tool. They are a way for people to get higher up on the priority lists.” (N)

“People went in and services came after. We had to move the people around for the services. We had to do layouts because of roads, open public spaces and business sites. Most of the time invasions of land are mostly state-owned land. Some people find out which is state-owned land and encourage people to invade. In this way people are pushing the Council.” (R)

“We try to eradicate them (informal settlements) faster than they can mushroom. We establish an alternative township, legalize it and ensure there are services and plots. We demolish and apply forced removal because we don’t want these because they add to the crime. With land invasion we have developed a land invasion policy.” (K)

Land invasion is the one area where politicians are involved:

“As politicians move around they report to us. Politicians and officials developed and implement the land invasion policy together. Politicians like information and we need to tell them what we expect of them. Where they start to look they see it’s serious, if they (the communities) do it (land invasions) once, they will do it again and again, the sooner you put your foot down the better. When we develop areas its part of their constituency, it’s what they promise people. When we come up with a housing development, it helps them out.” (K)

The example below is not uncommon. People hear about serviced land, but ignoring allocation procedures, invade the land and take occupation.

What is the attitude of the other residents of the town towards the informal settlement projects?

“Last week we moved people from one area and they are facing a lot of challenges. We have one instance where a ward councilor instigated the people to illegally invade and occupy land because people had been waiting too long. The area was supposed to have been pegged out a long time ago but there were delays in the project and eventually the councilor got the people to move in illegally. Now there are not even services on that land.” (M1)

“We can’t just remove everyone at once because others just move straight in. The law protects the invader. As soon as people have a shelter, there is a legal process required to remove them.” (N)

There is more proactive behavior at work here:

“People come from far to here. Some will come from the Eastern Cape and come here and they have benefited from housing in the Eastern Cape and here. Now we find people that have benefited twice and also foreigners.”

How do you deal with this problem?

“If we have plots we will offer them. If we don’t counter these informal settlements, they will come in full force. We have to establish townships as much as possible.” (K)

5. Aesthetics/shacks

It is not clear why South African urban areas are so dominated by what are commonly called shacks. A shack is, by definition, a temporary building, but the poor of South Africa have perfected the concept. Typically shacks are built of second hand materials, but ready-made walls made of corrugated iron are available for sale in all urban areas. The question is why people continue to use corrugated iron as the material of choice when it is so hot in summer and so cold in winter and why they seem to prefer to make a shack look temporary.

We may speculate that people build in that way in order to attract government support for their housing. If they were to build in permanent materials they might be considered to be “housed” and therefore no longer eligible. Talking to the residents of shacks it is clear that they do not, by any means, constitute a class that is so poor that they cannot afford to build a more permanent dwelling. Some are poor, but many are not. Looking at similar settlements and income groups in the neighboring countries of Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Malawi, shacks are considered shameful, and people build permanent-looking houses at their earliest opportunity.

Whatever the reasons may be, the shack has become both a symbol of need and defiance by the poor against the established order. It has also become a very important component of housing delivery. It is, if you like, the private sector’s response to the inadequacies of the public sector. To be more specific, the public sector typically provides a house of about 40m², three rooms. The private sector in the form of the householder, supplements this by building additional rooms in a shack. This provides space for family members and often rooms to rent as well. Thus, shacks are an important part of the housing delivery system.

This view is not shared by the majority of civic leaders or their staff, as the following extracts show.

What will happen to the shacks that are in these areas now?

“We are going to do away with the shacks.”

What about the materials of the shacks, will people be allowed to keep them?

“Most people don’t want to get rid of them (the shacks) because the BNG (Breaking New Ground program) houses are too small. We have a consumer education program for the people because they must get rid of those shacks and they can extend the houses that they get.”

What is it that you don’t like about the shacks?

“Corrugated iron doesn’t look well. When people move into their homes they rent the shacks so they don’t want to lose this income.”

What do you say to the people in the education program?

“We have told them there is a time we are going to come hard. Really it is not hygienic. When it’s hot they are too hot and cold it is too cold. They are a fire hazard and this is a big problem. They don’t look nice, some are rusty.” (L)

Shacks will, some people fear, take over:

What happens to the shacks that are in the original area?

“Shacks must be demolished, we don’t want to encourage more.” (B)

Shacks may be built to expand the housing stock, but is that what matters?

“In Dikang there are beautiful houses, it was a green-field development and as people moved into their houses they took their shacks with them and put them up again. Areas are now informal and formal because people are bringing their shacks. We don’t want mkukus (shacks) but they will tell us that they need the space. Nearly all the houses have them. It is implying that the houses are too small.” (K)

“With *in situ* upgrades we run community education before the project. But there are challenges. When we are building a 4 room house but people have a big shack and now when they move on site and the house is smaller where is the family supposed to go? We also have places where people don’t want to move their shacks. When shacks are demolished they might not go.” (F)

“If people have shacks we ask them to move the shack so we can fit the project house. All the people have services and a yard.” (K)

The extract below is from the only provincial official to be interviewed. This was because the implementing municipality had been placed under administration by the province due to alleged corruption:

“Municipalities are not strict on bylaws or don’t enforce them very well. Municipalities must make sure there are no shacks. Municipalities are not doing enough because they must enforce bylaws about the shacks.”

“We do workshops and give policies but implementation is a challenge.”

What are your suggestions for municipalities facing these challenges?

“They need to have a solid position on bylaws and maybe penalties. When communities say they are not taking down shacks this is the same as saying ‘I’m not paying for services.’”

“They (municipalities) should be able to penalize people if they don’t do what we say. People are like that. It’s an ongoing monitoring issue.” (M)

6. Town Planning

Above, the emphasis has been on the difficulties that municipal officials face when they tackle upgrading projects – difficulties which could be a factor in whether to adopt an upgrading strategy or not.

The final constraint is a peculiarly South African one. Town planning, township standards and land registration are all linked in a system that has worked extremely well for the formal sector, but is inappropriate for upgrading.

The rigidity of the system is such that different plot sizes are difficult to accommodate and spontaneous adjustments to suit the topography, or the needs of individual families, even harder. To make matters worse, there are also rigid standards for infrastructure provision, which are, some might say, based on the ideal rather than the necessary. The Cities Alliance/Department of Housing study reported that these standards were being applied to a large extent.

The Assessment Team noted the influence of conventional ‘Red Book’ township design standards on local infrastructure services provision in upgrading and greenfield projects. These standards appear to be relatively high and expensive, considering the anticipated usage in low-income residential areas and relative to the clear service level intentions set out in NHC Part 3 of the National Housing Code. (p 26)

However, if we look at the Housing Code relating to upgrading, it specifically states:

Norms and Standards: *The Norms and Standards in respect of Permanent Residential Structures contained in Annexure A to Chapter 3 of Part 2 of the national Housing Code shall not apply to this program.*

Stand¹¹ Sizes: *The informal layout of informal settlements generally precludes the determination of uniform stand sizes. The imposition of rigid requirements not only leads to considerable project complexity but inevitably leads to the displacement of households. It is accordingly not desirable to determine uniform or minimum stand sizes. Rather, actual stand sizes should emerge through a process of dialogue between local authorities and residents. (p.7)*

As the following passages show, the implementers of the projects either ignored or defied these provisions of the Housing Code, using the necessity of implementing formal township policy as an excuse for not upgrading.

¹¹ i.e. Plot.

“In that area the land is not dangerous, the problem is that there are too many people staying there. There are under 300 people living in that area but for the town planning scheme a minimum of 300m² is required per property and this area is too small for that size of property for everyone. Therefore some people will stay and some people will have to be relocated. It’s difficult to upgrade an informal settlement when there was nothing done on the land before. You may find the layout shows more than two-three shacks on one plot and some people fight about who was there first and who was there later.” (R)

The typical thought process is illustrated here: we prepare the plan with standardized plot sizes, then impose it on the existing settlement. If people have to move because of that, too bad.

Will people be able to stay on the same piece of land and keep the structures that they have now?

“People are too close to each other now. After demarcation they will encroach on each other’s sites, as the boundaries will be changed. Some structures will be demolished and put in another spot. Relocated people’s structures will be demolished and moved to the new area.” (P) (wording slightly changed for clarity)

This is an interesting viewpoint whereby an existing informal settlement is considered unacceptable due to the lack of conventional attributes of regular plots and access roads. In fact, the settlement benefited from an excellent *in situ* upgrade about 15 years previously:

What about other areas where there are upgrades – are any in-situ? Was in situ considered as an option?

“There is an area where we are doing a rectification. This area is Soweto on Sea and it is where an in situ upgrading was done. They basically planned and built around what was there. They built where people were staying. There was no logic behind it. . . There are places where back doors open onto front doors and where you have to go through one house to get to another house. The area needs to be re-planned. There needs to be some de-densification and some in-situ upgrading. It is very problematic for services, the de-registration and re-registration of families and services have to be re-done. We are struggling to get a school to fit in the area. You can’t even drive through the areas.” (N)

Once more, the forces of order wrestle with disorder:

“We try to make logical sense of what’s there and what makes sense. We accept that there will be upheaval, everyone expects this when there is a resettlement or upgrade. Everyone expects to be unsettled. We don’t want to recreate slums. I don’t think there is a perfect upgrading informal settlement project, there is no such thing. There is always some unsettling and always some things have to be changed and moved to get them to work.” (N)

Here is another example of the planner who genuinely wants to make a difference, but doesn’t have any vision about how to work with the existing pattern of development on the ground, with different plot sizes, and uneven distribution of roads etc.

“In some places people have claimed an area of 700m² and in other areas 80m². How can we have a settlement where people have these different sizes of land? And there are no churches, roads, schools, community facilities etc at the moment. So how do we accommodate these and urban design elements like trees etc? From the ground the area looks formalized in a kind of order but if you fly over you see it’s not like this. Some of the land is also environmentally unsafe. That the footprint could be used is actually a misconception of a pattern but you don’t see the bigger picture and also the differences in plot sizes that are inequitable. The guy on the 700m² plot is renting out his spare land and making an income on this rental. The people renting from him might qualify in their own right for land as well. To

re-develop and give the tenants land and reduce his plot size is going to mean a loss of income for him.” (E)

It is appropriate to close this section with a comment on how to resolve differences relating to planning without having the tools to do so. The failure of effective community consultation, resulting in stand-offs in terms of plot size are a symptom of a bigger problem.

What happened then in the case of that project?

“The original plans fitted the entire community but according to the people now the plots are too small. It was only a small group of a few that mobilized the entire community on this issue of plot size. There are other projects where this size of plot is not an issue and the project proceeds ok. We re-planned to the new plot size that the community wanted. To do this we had to take out the schools and still it leaves 3,000 families without plots. We therefore need alternative land and we don’t have it so we have to do a lot of studies and surveys now to find this land, maybe purchase it etc. This will take years and will put this entire project back in the queue of housing projects. It could be then 7-10 years before this project is finalized. In the interim we have put in services, with 2 shacks per plot receiving water and sanitation services on the understanding that this is temporary. The people sign an agreement with the Council that they understand this situation. People (in informal settlements) are focused on basic needs and this doesn’t make a sustainable city. There is a lot of tension between planners and people and the short and long term visions for the city.” (E)

A comparison

Before analyzing the picture painted by these interviews in South Africa in more detail, it is useful to draw a comparison with Tanzania – in particular Dar es Salaam.

Approximately 70 percent of the population of Dar es Salaam lives in unregulated settlements without formal land tenure or building regulations, and typically with a very low standard of infrastructure. The system which evolved was that the landowners (who were previously, presumably, farmers) sold off small lots to individuals, who then built a house. Of particular concern is the lack of storm water drainage and resulting mosquito infestation and malaria; access roads; and security lighting.

The houses typically follow a standard pattern – the Swahili house. This consists of six rooms – three on each side of an entrance door. The passage between the rooms leads to an enclosed courtyard at the rear where household chores are undertaken, principally laundry and cooking. At the rear of the courtyard there is a rudimentary bathroom and latrine. Such a house is typically occupied by five families: the owner, who might have two rooms, and four tenants, each of whom has one room. Although often in poor physical shape – such as rusty roof, plaster falling off the walls, etc., the houses look permanent. The residents of these houses are, for the most part, much poorer than their counterparts in South Africa.

In view of the poor infrastructure there has long been a demand for improvements from the residents. The World Bank is currently funding such a project, which provides a useful contrast to what has happened in South Africa.

There are four elements of importance:

1. The upgrading is demand led. All settlements which wish to participate in the program must apply, and to prove their seriousness must pay a deposit of 5 percent of the project cost. This deposit is collected through house-to-house collections. Unless and until 80 percent of the households have contributed their share, the settlement will not be considered for including in the project. In this preparatory phase community leaders work together with the local municipality to explain the project and help the community to mobilize around the fund raising.

2. The design does not interfere with existing layouts: with few exceptions proposed roads follow existing tracks. In Phase 1, less than one percent of the houses have been affected by the upgrading by partial demolition of a room or two, and only 22 out of more than 30,000 dwellings have had to be demolished.
3. All Tanzanian communities, whether formal or informal are covered by a bottom-up local governance system. Each community has a local office of the municipality, which is run by a community member on a semi-voluntary basis.
4. The program concentrates on basic needs: although there are further stages in terms of regularization of land tenure and boundaries, and the introduction of improved water and sanitation, this will come later.

As a result of this system the settlements are seen as integral to the city as a whole, and though some better-off members of society may deplore their appearance, no one agitates for their removal. This is not to say that there have been no voices for middle class housing, of the four-storey concrete variety: indeed such a constituency exists, and is, to some extent, being served by the National Housing Corporation. But rather than demand that informal settlements be demolished and replaced by “planned” settlements, these middle class developments are located elsewhere.

For our purposes, the most interesting difference is in the manner with which community participation was conducted in the World Bank project. Suitable areas were selected for upgrading by a scoring technique, which considered suitability for upgrading, need, and proximity of services such as electricity and water. Once this was done, each sub-ward was divided into zones of approximately 220 houses. These zones then elected a Community Planning Team of one man and one woman who would be the intermediary between the council and the community. They worked with the local residents to agree on routes for the new roads and footpaths, established committees to manage public water taps and toilets, and assisted in the collection of utility bills. They interacted with municipal Technical Support Teams.

Using this process, the actual upgrading plan was prepared by the community. Parameters had been established in advance so each sub-ward knew how much money was available for them and could agree, within limits, how it was to be spent. The plan to which each sub-ward contributed (the Community Upgrading Plan) included a record of the planning process, investment packages, an initial resettlement assessment, project costs, implementation arrangements including roles and responsibilities of the community, costs for operation and maintenance, and finally the community cash contributions.¹²

The implementation of the cash collection system has been subject to some criticism as it took place about two years before anything happened on the ground, leading to considerable grumbling by the residents. But in general the project has been widely welcomed by the beneficiaries and citizens of Dar es Salaam. In terms of the need, Phase 1 of the project benefits ten percent of the total population of Dar es Salaam (about 3 million), and 19 percent of the residents of informal settlements. Subsequent phases are being implemented and planned with tremendous pressure from communities that have not been included to date.

LESSONS LEARNED

It is difficult to compare conditions in two countries with such different histories and physical conditions as Tanzania and South Africa. In spite of this, there are useful lessons to be learned.

South Africa

The interviews give consistent support to the view that those responsible for upgrading will find excuses for not doing it. Of these, their strongest weapon is the fact the informal settlements do not conform, and cannot easily be made to conform, to town planning and township regulations. Their comments about land invasions suggest that they if they were to proceed with upgrading on any scale, it would be seen by squatters as an incentive for future invasions. Their attitudes towards shacks illustrate that there is a strong aesthetic motive in wanting to replace informal settlements with the formal product of government houses.

¹² DEGE et al: *Mid-Term Review of the Local Government Support Project, Component 2*, January 2008, Dar es Salaam, Prime Minister’s Office, Regional Administration and Local Government, pp 16,17.

It is important to note that the elements of the official policy that did **not** suit the needs of municipal staff were ignored; in particular, the injunction in the policy that uniform plot size should not be required and that infrastructure should be tailored to local conditions. These were ignored because they are inconsistent with the notion that development should conform to an acceptable minimum standard. This standard of the formal house, typically free standing, with access directly to a road that is threatened by the appearance of shacks, is seen as essential in maintaining order in the urban environment.

There are two other elements of the South African situation that should be noted.

The first is that, partly because of the history of apartheid, but equally because low-income communities receive services housing and upgrading free of charge, some communities have established a militant attitude to all public services that makes development partnerships more difficult to establish. Experienced community workers could quickly turn these attitudes to the advantage of both parties, but too often the situation becomes unbalanced and confrontational.

The second is that, in spite of the history of community mobilization to fight apartheid, there is no tradition of community mobilization in the urban areas, nor skills within the public service in the field of public participation. This means that many well-meaning, but ultimately unskilled people cannot deal with the dynamics of conflicts between interest groups and the multitude of similar situations in day-to-day community work. As a result, they claim that community participation doesn't work.

This factor, together with the complexity of the process, and the fact that upgraded settlements do not always look conspicuously different from non-upgraded ones, combine into a coalition of reasons for giving up: "It's not worth it; we're better waiting for the time when we can do it properly and give them a government house."

Thus, within the South African municipal machine, a tool exists that polarizes society into those who have formal housing and those who do not. This tool allows those with power to effectively prevent upgrading by recourse to the rule (as they see it) of law.

Ultimately, the most egregious feature of South Africa is that municipal officials see the residents of informal settlements as a problem, not a solution. They are to be eliminated, and it is significant that Ministers of Housing and many others in power, in trying to sell the concept of upgrading have frequently used the phrase *the plan supports the eradication of informal settlements* to justify the policy.

Tanzania

The first and most important lesson from Tanzania is that the demand for upgrading should come from below and be facilitated by the authorities. Of course, under a World Bank project the system has to be much more formalized than that, but in essence this is what the project allowed the communities to do.

Second, upgrading is not seen as a mechanism to change the settlements from one thing to another. It is nothing more than a stage in the gradual improvement in the environment of deprived housing areas. Each intervention helps, but no single one will change the character of the settlements. It is just part of the gradual evolution of a community, a force which will, over time, bring the disadvantaged a little nearer to the remainder of the city in terms of physical and legal environment.

Thirdly, Dar es Salaam exhibits the most important feature which is so pointedly lacking in South Africa – a respect for the residents of informal settlements and their contributions to the housing.

Most importantly, the Tanzanians do not talk about eliminating informal settlements.

CONCLUSIONS

What overall conclusions can we draw from this? Experience in many countries suggests that although the South African attitudes might be more overt than they are in many other countries, there is, within the vast majority of governments and municipalities, a strong sense that upgrading is a second-class solution. Many share the South African view that upgrading may not be worth the trouble, and that ultimately, if money is to be spent on housing, it should go to a project which has more promise as a photo opportunity.

So if we, at international conferences, are once more to endorse bridging the urban divide, including the right to the city, bridging urban income gaps, reducing inequality and poverty, participatory democracy, cultural diversity in cities, women-friendly cities, sustainable urban development equal access to shelter, health, water, sanitation and infrastructure services, is there one message which will stimulate a change of mind? Is there any way in which those in power can be induced to share resources with the urban poor? Or, to be more specific, can we make urban upgrading accepted as the right thing to do?

There are two strategies that work in certain circumstances where the interests of the formal sector are directly affected. The first is the threat to health; if informal settlements can be linked to threats of disease – cholera, for example, funds can be found to drain swamps, bring in fresh water and improve health services. The second one is direct action.—the threat of civil unrest. Sometimes it works, but usually it backfires badly—a restive community is simply bulldozed. Mugabe did it. That caught the headlines, but there are thousands of other unreported cases all over Africa, every year.

There is a less dramatic tool. One of the surprise conclusions of the South African study is that politicians played such a small role in the decisions. Ultimately the decisions were largely led by the technical people. There is no doubt that many of the technical people felt that they had enough information to make a valid judgment, but in practice most had no idea about how to deal with upgrading. The study has shown that the rejection of the concept is based on a blend of technical difficulties and social prejudice.

- To start with the technical difficulties, based on the experience of South Africa, there are several issues that implementers did not understand or in which they lacked the skills. For example,
- How to manage the project – what skills are required among full time staff, what part time inputs are required, etc.
- How to involve the community, especially in collaborative planning.
- How to deal with ideas and changes which derive from the community.
- The role of standards—when they are important and when they are not.
- Alternative land tenure models.
- The role of the individual, the community and the state.
- Housing design.

There are some good courses on these topics, but they are expensive and require considerable time. When the author taught at what is now the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies in Rotterdam, it was clear that many of the negative attitudes (such as have been expressed by the participants in this survey) are widespread at a senior level in many governments. To change these attitudes to the extent that people are willing and able to practice bottom-up planning takes months of patient learning and discussion. What was more discouraging, many participants in the courses were unable to make a difference when they returned to their employer, as they were a lone voice amongst a sea of doubters.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How then can things change? The Indonesian model is really useful here: *Kampungs* (rather like the informal settlements in Dar es Salaam) are a feature of all Indonesian cities. The upgrading program in that country started relatively slowly, but two important features allowed the concept to flourish. The first was the inherently collaborative nature of Indonesian society, which facilitated community involvement and thereby made it easier to start. But the more important part was the scale at which it was implemented. It became the **norm**, and people whose job it was to implement such projects learned from each other.

The biggest lesson from South Africa is therefore that new policies may require new skills. It is not enough simply to spell out a policy, or throw money at the problem. Nor is it enough to hold short workshops or other forms of knowledge transfer in the hope that if people understand the policy they will implement it.

It is unfortunate that, in the South African case, the implementation of pilot projects, which were supposed to be demonstrations of what could and should be done, was often left in the hands of people who did not know what to do.

In brief, the lesson of this study is that there is no point in adopting a policy unless you have the skills to implement it. Implementation must be led from the front by people who really know what is to be done and how. The members of that team can then both share their experience with others and go on to participate with authority in the management of other projects. This happened in Zambia with remarkably good effect, and even ten years after the first upgrading project had been finished the staff from that project were implementing others using the same principles and methods.

The fact is that *in situ* upgrading, as Indonesia learned so well, is an art of its own. It requires ways of thinking and operating that are different. It requires an inclusive and participatory way of working in which traditional training in engineering and town planning has scant relevance.

Imparting these skills takes time. Learning by doing is an excellent tool, but should be supplemented by focused hands-on training in the skills of participation and incremental development.

Usually another quality is also present in those who successfully implement upgrading. It has to do with an appreciation of the values, ambitions and needs of the poor; how every piece of roof sheet, every concrete block, every door frame represents a step on the ladder of progress. Whereas we see squalor, the poor see hope; where we see shacks, they see houses; where we see chaos, they see development. Thus it is less to do with the technical disciplines of engineering, town planning and so on and much more to do with understanding the values and needs of the poor.