Appraising the effectiveness of South Africa's Low-Cost Housing Delivery approach for beneficiaries in uMhlathuze village and Slovos settlement

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Abstract

The question of basic housing for the poor majority of the world's population remains a festering global development challenge given the plethora of housing delivery models which abound. In South Africa, the Capital Housing Subsidy Scheme and the Comprehensive Plan for Development of Sustainable Human Settlements are the dominant policy models that the post-apartheid government has used to deliver low-cost housing for poor South Africans. In spite of significant strides made by the South African government in providing humanitarian housing to the poor indigenes of South Africa, there is not much in the literature that looks at the effectiveness of the low-cost housing delivery

approach used to provide housing to beneficiaries who have been living in these subsidized housing units. As a contribution to filling this gap, this paper assesses the effectiveness of the existing housing delivery approach using human settlements developed in selected municipalities — uThungulu District Municipality, in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings show that while beneficiaries appreciate having shelter and being afforded housing ownership rights by the government, they are equally concerned about the quality and sustainability of structures provided. They contend that the houses delivered have failed to meet their needs and expectations mainly because they were excluded from the planning and implementation of housing delivery.

Keywords: *Beneficiary participation, Housing subsidy, KwaZulu-Natal, Low-cost housing delivery, South Africa*

Introduction

Provision of houses to the poor has been one of the major preoccupations of development practitioners across the world especially in developing countries. Franklin (2011) notes that cities in such countries are faced with the problem of housing, which is usually associated with rapid rates of urbanization that brings predominantly poor people to the cities. Due to congestion, most of these migrants remain trapped in slums, on the periphery. Walley (2010) and Jiboye (2011) identify various reasons that contribute to the inadequacy of the housing stock for low-income groups, and these include inappropriate and wrong perceptions of the housing needs of the low-income earners who constitute the vast majority of urban dwellers; planning inconsistencies and weak organizational structure as a result of political instability; poor execution of housing policies and programs; lack of political will and astuteness to the actuation of government housing programs to logical conclusion and undue politicization of government housing programs.

In South Africa, the provision of housing to the poor remains a significant issue which is largely attributed to the discriminatory policies of the colonial and apartheid era. In order to address the imbalances of the past with regard to human settlements and to create sustainable living communities, the government of South Africa has taken giant strides to provide housing to the poor. Various post-apartheid policies and legislative developments have been adopted to realize this right. Section 26 of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) guarantees the

right to housing for all South African; the State has to make use of all available measures at its disposal to ensure that this right is realised. However, how the right is guaranteed is not clearly defined in terms of whether it is a quantitative or qualitative right. There are also concerns about the use of the term 'adequate housing', as it does not clearly define whose adequacy is considered (provider or recipient), and how the concept is defined as this relates to how the end product is received by the beneficiaries. Likewise, The Housing Act (1997) makes provision for the facilitation of sustainable housing development processes, and for this purpose lays down general principles applicable to housing development in all spheres of government. It also defines the functions of national, provincial and local government, with regards to housing development, and provides for the financing of national housing programs. Section 2 of the Housing Act, (1997) compels all three spheres of government to, among other things, give priority to the needs of the poor, with respect to housing development. Dawson and McLaren (2014:16) however, assert *that the State has no direct obligation to provide a specific set of goods on demand to inadequately housed individuals but had to adopt and implement a 'reasonable policy' within its available resources, which could ensure access to adequate housing over time.*

Indeed, the South African Government boasts a remarkable delivery of more than 3 million houses that have been delivered to the poor since 1994; addressing a backlog that was estimated at 1.6 million in 1994, and which has widened to approximately 2.1 million required housing units by 2010 (Eglin & Kenyon, 2017; SERI, 2013; Tissington, 2011). Despite the legislative framework guaranteeing the right of access to housing, and which also mandates the government to realize this right, Tissington (2011: 9) notes that the government *does not want to create a beggars' culture where people just expect to be given free houses from the State. This is just a safety net for the poorest of the poor, but cannot go on forever.* Concern has been has raised about the provision of low cost housing in South Africa, that it is characterised by higher levels of beneficiary movement out of the provided structures, back to the slums or squatter settlements (Gilbert, 2004). The movement is attributed to the dissatisfaction with the structures provided on the basis of size, adequacy of space and quality of units, and that there is tendency to locate low-cost housing settlements far from livelihood-generation opportunities (Gilbert, 2004). Furthermore, Gilbert alludes to the multiplicity and shifting needs of the poor, and the argument is consistent with later arguments by Mitlin

(2008) and Cross (2008), whose observation suggest that improvements might miss the target of building decent houses for human occupancy because of the diverse needs of the poor as well as their social expectations. The diversity and complexity of human settlement challenges may also be attributed to complicated linkages among households and complex livelihood generation strategies which in turn have enormous implications with regards to housing needs (Smith, 2008, Choguil, 2007; Thwala, 2005). The crux of the argument these scholars have made is that the housing delivery processes are characterised by severe capacity challenges at local government level due to other societal problems requiring attention and competing for priority with housing provision in the country.

Rust (2012) highlights another pressing problem, the existence of a 'gap market' which falls outside the subsidy quantum; it is comprised of households whose income is above R3 501 and below R10 000 (later extended to R15 000) — a market that does not qualify to obtain the capital subsidy scheme. The household joint earnings of this category of people seems to be too much for them to be provided with free houses, at the same time they do not earn enough to obtain a mortgage bond. These households are without adequate shelter and they constitute between 20-25% of the South African population. Dawson and McLaren (2014) are of the opinion that irrespective of a shift in policy direction with the introduction of the new plan known as 'Breaking New Ground', the State using the current model of subsidized housing will never meet the demand for low-cost housing demands unless other proposed alternative approaches are adopted. This category/group of households and their housing needs which are different from those whose monthly income is below R3 501 to nothing, and who traditionally are the target beneficiaries of low-cost housing for the poor, should be factored into housing provision as well.

However, fundamental to these housing delivery challenges and its effectiveness is the issue of beneficiary participation in the planning and implementation of housing delivery. The main question this raises is how effective housing delivery can be if the targeted beneficiaries are not part of the process from start to finish? In this light, this paper seeks to get the views of selected beneficiaries and policy implementers on the current approach to housing delivery in South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal specifically. It also gauges the level of their satisfaction with the quality of housing they received in terms of meeting their needs, and their

satisfaction with the surrounding environment and infrastructure. Concisely, the rationale of providing low-cost houses to the poor has been justified as a government strategy to help low income households gain access to housing with a secure tenure and at an affordable cost. However, there is limited information on the effectiveness of the low-cost housing delivery strategy; whether it satisfies the needs of its end users, and whether the approach comprehensively addresses their need for housing. Therefore, this paper assesses the effectiveness of the existing housing delivery approach using human settlements developed in selected municipalities in uThungulu District Municipality, in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings show that while beneficiaries appreciate having shelter and being afforded housing ownership rights by the government, they are equally concerned about the quality and sustainability of structures provided, which have been compromised because of their exclusion from the planning and implementation of housing delivery.

An overview of low-cost housing delivery issues in South Africa

The mid-year population estimates of 2017 suggest that the South African population is approximately 56.52 million, with the Black population accounting for 80%, Whites 8%, Coloureds making up 9% and Indians/Asians constituting the remaining 3% (Statistics South Africa, 2017). Furthermore, the rural/urban migration trends indicate that the country is experiencing high rates of urbanisation as is the case in other parts of Africa. The urban population in South Africa seems to have increased annually by 2.1 percent, and the figures show that between 1996 and 2001, the population in the major cities increased by 10.4 percent or by more than 4.2 million people (Trading Economics, 2016 & Sisulu, 2004). These increases translate into a greater demand for services including housing. For example, South Africa had 300 informal settlements in 1993 and this figure has increased to 2,700 (800%) by 2014, which exacerbates the demand for housing service delivery with implications for how policy implementation has been interpreted (Tomlinson, 2015). Increased rural-urban migration has also had a negative impact on service delivery generally within the country, coupled with other challenges such as the high rate of unemployment, continued inequality and high rates of poverty facing South Africa. The resultant effect of this is an increased demand for housing, education, health and

other basic services by the people of South Africa, majority of who are poor and live on the fringes.

Indeed, the majority of the South African population is concentrated in the periphery of the major cities living in squalid conditions outside the reach of health care infrastructure. Worsening poverty and social inequality between the rich and the poor also impacts negatively on the provision of sustainable housing and other basic services. For example, over 60% of the Black population in South Africa is said to be living below the poverty line with more than 7 million city-dwellers residing in informal housing either in backyard shacks or squatter settlements; this has always been a cause for concern. According to Khoza (2014) the majority of people in South Africa are still at the receiving end of skewed income and development patterns against the poor. More than a million households have been reported as having their water cut off and electricity disconnected because of lack of affordability and two million have been evicted from their homes or land since 1994 (Bond, 2003). Herve (2009) concurs that the disconnection of services is not due to the culture of non-payment which was common during the apartheid era, but is as a result of real financial inability to pay. This poverty further increases the pressure on government in terms of housing service delivery as it increases not only the demand for sustainable housing, but also of those in the gap market. As a corollary, this also increases the housing backlog.

The statistics show a widening gap between the backlog and housing provision in spite of the well-articulated policy frameworks of the government. The goal of eliminating the backlog and providing the poor with the first step on to the housing ladder is far from being realised. The notion of rights to decent housing remain substantially more of a lip service to the people. The backlog is increasing despite the increase in the housing allocation budget as cited by Cross (2008) that the housing budget increased by 23 percent between 2004 and 2008/2009. Similarly, Dawson and Mclaren (2014) report an increase of the national housing budget from R14.3 billion in 2008/2009 to R25.1 billion in 2012/2013 housing budget. The 2018/2019 Human Settlement budget is set at R33.6 billion (National Treasury, 2018). A major concern is sustainability as the budget shows consistent and rapid increase. An ongoing demand for access to adequate housing is reflected through mass protests and the increase in informal settlements development. Hamdi (1991) hammered on the need for an alternative strategy as early as 1991 before massive

provision and the notion of rights and ownership stating: the more governments built houses, the less they seemed to achieve because the more they built, the more demand they created and the more they needed to build, the larger they grew, so the more they had to build to balance their books and legitimize their purpose, socially and politically. The larger they grew the more energy they spent and the more money they consumed, until they progressively ran out of both' (Hamdi, 1991:11).

The tendency is to blame the current crisis as largely on accelerated urbanisation and the dismantling of the apartheid influx control measures during the late 1980s. The increased demand may not only be attributed to migratory patterns and movement from rural to urban areas but there is also to the natural increase of the urban population causing a spillover to the informal settlements or construction of backyard shacks. The housing backlog in South Africa has to be viewed in relation to existing and historical economic inequalities, chronic unemployment, on-going impact of intentional residential discrimination which was shaped by the apartheid system and the quality of houses provided, which to a certain extent encourages 'down raiding'. This suggests that provision or delivery of low cost housing has to look at issues of livelihood generation, poverty reduction through employment creation and adoption of strategies for addressing issues of inequality in terms of gender, race and income distribution. The informal settlements and squatter camps seem to play a vital role in providing accommodation to the poor who normally prefer to reside closer to sources of employment where new forms of social organisations grow adaptive to the socio-economic requisites of survival in the city.

The status of low Cost Housing Delivery in KwaZulu-Natal

The South African government remains committed to improving the living standard of all citizens. Progressive policies and legislative frameworks have been adopted to realize this right. Housing has particularly been viewed as forming the basis for addressing other social challenges such as poverty and inequality. However, a growing demand for access to basic services has been noted in almost all provinces. The right to housing is guaranteed for all South African citizens and all have an equal chance of gaining access to 'decent shelter' irrespective of

common discriminatory attributes such as race and gender. How is the right faring in KwaZulu-Natal?

The Province of KwaZulu-Natal is the second largest province in South Africa in terms of the population figures. It is home to 25,3% of the total population and contributes significantly to the national economy (Statistics SA, 2017). It is a predominantly rural province but described as one of the most affluent in the country in terms of its industrial base and minerals. Ironically, the province is heavily plagued with the 'triple challenge' of unemployment, poverty and social inequality which influence access to adequate housing. In terms of dwellings, the highest concentration of the population is found within eThekwini, uMsunduzi, Newcastle and uMhlathuze complexes in that order and this is reflective of the housing, education, health and sanitation challenges which plague the province as a whole. For example, in the General Household Survey Report, Statistics South Africa (2015) indicated that 15.3% of households are living in state-provided dwellings,13.2% of this group complained of structures having weak or very weak walls, and 15,2% complained of weak/ very weak roofs. The report on the status of informal settlements in KZN suggest that households have grown faster in the province than the individual populations. Migration for economic reasons have played a significant role in shaping the population distribution across the province. A statistical change is noted relating to the slight decrease in the 12% households who were in informal settlements in 2011. The change noted may be attributed to the structures that are freely provided by the government through the Capital Housing Subsidy scheme which has substantially provided houses to poor households.

In the same vein, an increase in the number of informal dwelling units either in the backyards of formal units or far removed from formal units has been observed. The increase in informal dwelling units does not necessarily reflect failure to address the question of delivery to low income groups, but suggests the spillover of the urban poor to the urban periphery, the natural increase of the population in urban areas and the beneficiaries who move back to squatter settlements out of dissatisfaction with the quality and type of houses provided. For example, Khoza (2014) also contends that when beneficiaries are dissatisfied with the standards and conditions of products presented, they tend to neglect the houses at the expense of the government grants. Presumably, people move to areas where development is taking place in order to be counted as beneficiaries when the township registry is

developed. This consequently adds to the existing backlog in housing delivery, and calling to question the effectiveness of the approach. In this way, Pithouse (2009) also highlights a systemic failure to properly implement the policy frameworks guiding provision of housing to the poor, arguing that there are contradictions between the law and formal policy positions. He also contends that the approach is top-down and highly authoritarian, thus underscoring the need for a participatory approach to housing delivery if the housing crisis is to be addressed.

A theoretical consideration for effective housing delivery

Beneficiary participation is key for effective low-cost housing delivery globally. Mathbor (2008) describes participation in housing delivery as a process where the beneficiaries organize, decide and implement their decisions according to individual family needs, aspirations and affordability. For effective delivery, people need to organise the planning, designing and building of their own houses. In a pivotal study on housing delivery and beneficiary satisfaction which is relevant to the Global South, Salleh and Salleh (2011) blame the failure of many government housing projects to inadequatcy or lack of knowledge and understanding on the determinants of Residential Satisfaction (RS). Questions that need to be constantly reflected on in housing delivery relate to whose adequacy is necessary in housing provision. Who decides on what to provide or what needs to be provided? To what extent do the intended beneficiaries participate in their own housing development? In summary, to what extent are the needs of the end users considered in housing delivery plans and processes? These questions aptly underscore the fact that appropriate delivery of low-cost housing calls for providers to understand what housing means for potential beneficiaries.

Miraftab (2003) further underscores the essence of people's participation in their development process by maintaining that the actual sustainability of any development project is determined by the depth of community entry in the project cycle. Mafukidze and Hoosen (2009), in support claim that a participatory process in the provision of services enables people to better understand their own interests and the interests of others, and makes them to realize what would be best for the entire group. Participation involves interaction between the intended users and other stakeholders, which is highly dependent on the conception of a participatory process (Miraftab, 2003). Similarly, Arnstein (1969) in

Aigbavboa and Thwala (2013) state that the idea of citizen participation is a 'little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you'. They argue further that beneficiary participation involves recognition, the use of beneficiaries' capacities, and avoids the imposition of priorities from the outside. It boosts the odds that a programme will be on target and its results will more likely be sustainable and satisfactory if it meet the needs and expectation of the beneficiaries. Davidson et.al (2007) argue that beneficiary participation has significance in that it allegedly allows for cost reduction through the utilization of local labour and expertise. Additionally, it potentially leads to the implementation of appropriate responses through the involvement of locals in collective decision-making, through the assessment of their needs and expectations. In this way, it facilitates directing scarce resources towards the more needy, identified by fellow locals (Davidson et.al, 2007).

The participation theory, which recognizes the role of beneficiaries' participation in meeting their needs and expectations is also applicable to planning and implementing housing delivery. It is clear that low-cost housing delivery approaches can be more effective if beneficiaries are not only being selectively involved, but are invited as active participants in their own development. It is for these reasons that beneficiary participation is deemed to be an important aspect to be taken into consideration for effectiveness of low cost housing delivery approaches.

Methodology

The study from which this paper is drawn was conducted within two local municipalities, uMhlathuze and uMfolozi, in KwaZulu-Natal, which are characterised by the rapid growth of the urban population resulting in the proliferation of informal and slum settlements around urban nodes. The two settlements namely: uMhlathuze Village situated within the City of uMhlathuze and Slovos Settlement located in uMfolozi local Municipality, were used for this study. These areas are situated within uThungulu District Municipality, the third largest district municipality in the province, characterized by an ever increasing need for shelter. The selection of the study areas was based on the prospects of access to job opportunities in large industries in the district municipality and their close proximity to the urban nodes which promotes migration into the area. These factors underscore the high demand and need for shelter.

For primary data, a sample of 90 participants comprising of low-cost housing beneficiaries and owners of mortgaged properties in close proximity to the low-cost housing settlements was drawn to get attitudes towards the implementation of the housing delivery process, meeting of housing needs, satisfaction with the product provided, and the challenges encountered in housing provision. A purposive selection of key informants was also conducted to obtain data from respondents directly involved in housing provision in the study area. The key informants comprised government officials, developers and other stakeholders in housing provision. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect relevant data from the selected households and key informants were also interviewed in an attempt to gauge perceptions on the effectiveness, successes and challenges experienced in the low-cost housing delivery process. A structured observation guide was also used to enable a look at the condition of houses received and the surrounding environment. The participants were afforded the opportunity to freely express their feelings, ideas and experiences about the housing delivery process.

The study also benefited from documentary evidence available from peer reviewed articles and policy documents on housing delivery approaches and factors influencing housing provision. This triangulation of data collection methods was helpful in analysing the data using thematic analysis method as it helped to ensure validity by checking and balancing different views on the central theme of effective housing delivery.

Findings and Discussion

The central theme around which the study was weaved was the effectiveness of the Low-Cost Housing Delivery Approach to beneficiaries. Understanding the effectiveness of the current housing intervention approach is a pre-requisite for articulating new housing provision models and strategies to address housing challenges. Additionally, if the model is participatory, it will ensure proper construction of houses, and create a feedback system between beneficiaries and the providers of low-cost housing, and thus foster satisfaction with what is provided. Based on the broad research objectives and questions of this study, a thematic discussion of data collected is presented below.

Theme 1: Level of beneficiary participation in the current approach to housing delivery

When the participants were asked to offer their views on the effectiveness of the current approach to housing delivery, 91.1 percent in both case study areas perceived the government to have failed to deliver the houses, as per their expectations. The structures provided were decried as defective in many ways and the participants bluntly expressed their disappointment in the government for failure to provide them housing on the basis of needs and expectations. The housing development and delivery approach implemented was based on the dominant project-linked subsidy which is described as largely market-oriented, driven by the developers without any room for beneficiary participation in the housing development process. Pithouse (2009) contends that such a housing delivery approach is undertaken in a top-down and highly authoritarian manner reminiscent of the apartheid state approach to housing delivery. The beneficiaries expressed that they were only invited to sign 'happy letters' in order to gain access and be occupants of fully completed structures. They also indicated that locating the house in the village was the responsibility of the beneficiary after collecting keys. Bond and Tait (2003) allude to the failure of the government to accurately understand household-scale dynamics and express concern on the top-down approach of the housing policy and delivery process, arguing that an alternative participatory approach to the current model will effectively address delivery problems.

According to respondents in the early development stages of the housing development project, some of the beneficiaries of uMhlathuze Village were required to make a down payment ranging from R2000 to R4000. The first group in particular that moved to the village said that they had a pre-arranged loan facility with specified mortgage institutions. In both study areas, provision of housing units comprised of what could be described as uniform and monotonous structures characterising the top-down approach in the housing development system (Figures 1 and 2).

Source: Survey Data, 2014

The key informants also expressed their concerns about the housing delivery system and the complaints were basically on the size and quality of houses constructed by the developers. Some were of the opinion that the apartheid housing delivery model was better than the current RDP model, which provide houses that are smaller than the four-room houses of the apartheid era. One could deduce from the discussions held that the officials realized the need for a contextual policy which takes into account the prevalent conditions, the environment, the real needs of local people and the infrastructural capacity of the local municipality.

Overall, the current housing delivery approach which is state-led with a focus on the quantity of units produced was jettisoned by the respondents. This supports the position of scholars such as Dawson and McLaren (2014), Tissington (2011), Gilbert (2004, 2007 & 2014) and Bond and Tait (1997) who variously argued that the housing approach cannot meet the current and future housing needs of the country. This has underscored the need for a different approach which is participatory. Clearly, the underpinnings of the housing policy remain contradicting and lacking clarity in a number of areas which contributes to the ineffectiveness of the housing delivery approach. The initial policy was based on the incremental approach and the core housing concept, proposed by the first democratic Minister of Housing, the Honourable Joe Slovo, whose policy proposed provision of a starter house or a housing unit that is not fully completed with the assumption that the occupants would be able to improve the structures freely provided. The proposed approach to housing provision was developmental and

included provision of bigger sites to accommodate structural changes and provision of skills or other forms of training to facilitate improvements of structures at a later stage. However, no mechanisms were put in place in the initial policy design to support the poor in their endeavour to invest or structurally improve their properties. Adebayo (2011) argues that the government was aware of the inadequacy of structures provided through the capital subsidy scheme but that the inadequacy was somehow regarded as a short-term problem assuming that the beneficiaries would be in a position to transform inadequate to adequate shelter, if given secure tenure. This is linked to how far the beneficiaries have access to employment and their saving abilities. Choguil (2007) correctly claims that housing delivery to the poor can be counterproductive if the needs, expectations, aspirations and priorities of the poor are ignored because the real needs of the poor always lie beyond shelter. The poor have other needs such as food, security, employment and a need to have poverty reduced; these have to be taken into cognisance by housing delivery processes.

Theme 2: Satisfaction with housing quality and beneficiary needs

The respondents expressed appreciation for having accommodation and for being afforded ownership rights by the government. However, concern was raised about the non-existent title deeds, quality and size of the structures provided. 84.5% of the participants in both areas were dissatisfied with the quality of housing units provided. With regards to the focus on the needs of the poor, the majority (78.2%) expressed their dissatisfaction arguing that the structures provided were not habitable, were of substandard quality and had inadequate space as compared to the household size. The respondents also expressed their dissatisfaction with the size and quality of the structures provided. This is confirmed in a briefing paper prepared by the Parliamentary Liaison Office of the Southern African Catholic Bishop's Conference (2017) which claimed that the country is littered with thousands of small, basic and uniform houses outside towns and inside every township.

Understanding stakeholder satisfaction is a pre-requisite for housing project ownership, and contributes to sustainability of the project by increasing people's confidence. A substantial percentage (75%) expressed dissatisfaction with the structures provided and indicated that they were forced by the condition of the houses provided to immediately renovate

upon occupation. Some indicated that they plastered the interior walls to prevent residues or dust from falling off the walls and to prevent rain water from penetrating the walls. The dampness after rainy days was said to be responsible for illnesses and damaging personal belongings. When respondents were asked whether their needs have been addressed by the structures provided, a significant percentage expressed satisfaction with having ownership rights to property. However, there were complaints with the meeting of housing needs, as well as the size and quality of structures received. The question raised by this finding relates to the definition attached to the concept of 'housing need' by the beneficiaries and providers of structures. Who defines the need for housing and what elements are taken into consideration when defining the concept? The beneficiaries were grateful to the government for the free houses provided; however, they felt that their needs and expectations were not adequately addressed by the type and quality of units received. The majority (75%) expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with the structures and the neighbourhood. Gilbert (2004) and Tomlinson (2001) correctly claimed that the standard of housing products has been compromised and some of the new neighbourhoods are showing signs of becoming slums in the near future. It is maintained that countries such as Chile, Colombia and South Africa have used the subsidy scheme to provide housing to low income groups, but none has managed to provide good quality housing.

Concerns raised about the quality and size of structures may presumably be attributed to the manner in which the housing development process has been administered, which effectively disregarded the real needs and expectations of the intended beneficiaries and the notion that the state, in realizing the constitutional right to adequate shelter, has to provide housing units to the nation. The normal trend reported in literature relates to the construction and allocation of completed units on the basis of the slogan 'one-size-fits-all'. Ramohva and Thwala (2012) posit that negative perceptions and dissatisfaction expressed by the beneficiaries about state-provided housing normally revolve around poor quality housing units, size of the houses, location of the structures on the outskirts of towns and cities, and the type of services provided.

The fact that the beneficiaries expressed dissatisfaction with the product and gave various reasons for their attitudes, such as the size of plots and units, quality of the structure as well as lack of consultation,

explains the ineffectiveness of the model used in the housing delivery process. Tomlinson (2001) correctly claimed that the delivery model currently used by the government is driven by numbers and that more emphasis has been placed on ownership. However, it has been recognized that other tenure options need to be considered. The shift in policy is noted, in that the focus is now on the creation of sustainable human settlements, not on figures in the 2004 policy framework 'Breaking New Ground' (BNG) (Miltin & Mogaladi, 2010; Financial & Fiscal Commission, 2012). If the new policy succeeded is another question. Pithosue (2009) points to a systematic failure to implement the substantive content of the BNG attributed to the authoritarian approach adopted and perpetually being used. Pugh (2001) identified the challenge as due to tendencies of adopting and using ideas often transplanted thoughtlessly from the developed to the developing countries. Pugh (ibid.) suggests accumulation of a more appropriate housing knowledge for success in service delivery and makes a call for the redirection and reform of the housing delivery approach, characterized by stakeholder involvement in policy negotiations and implementation. It is concluded that the housing delivery efforts have failed to take into consideration the needs of the people and prevalent circumstances, and to recognise locally available resources.

Theme 3: Surrounding environment and infrastructure

The mortgage houses were constructed mainly to separate the low-cost housing units and the residents of a former 'white only' area from the village. The owners complained of the immediate physical environment where their houses were located. They felt misled by the developers and indicated that the area and surrounding structures suffocated and reduced the price of their properties. The owners expressed that they signed for their bonds under the impression that the RDP structures were to be confined to the area facing the nearby township and surprisingly observed construction of more RDP houses than the mortgage bond properties. They expressed concern about the presumed depreciation value of their properties because of the RDP structures surrounding them. The area was created as a buffer zone to protect property depreciation in the nearby suburb, common practice in post-1994 housing provision under similar conditions.

The beneficiaries also complained about the quality of infrastructural services such as roads and sewerage pipes, described as health hazards. Concern was raised that the pipes, particularly sewerage pipes leaked and the participants expressed that it has on a number of occasions proven difficult for the municipality to quickly fix the problems. Other complaints included major cracks on the walls, extremely poor wall finishing and that the most fundamental facilities such a permanent or mobile health facility was only available in the nearby township. The residents stated that a secondary school available in the nearby suburb but in close proximity to the village, is unaffordable, as it charges fees that are beyond their means. The majority of households were unable to enrol their children in the school.

So what?

An outcome of the lack of beneficiary participation in housing planning and delivery, poor satisfaction levels with housing quality and with the surrounding environment and infrastructure is the wanton selling of housing units which was found to be common practice in the study areas. Although fear and intimidation made it difficult to obtain in-depth information on the practice, it was clear from observation that the beneficiaries were found to be occupying structures either on a rental basis or other special arrangements. Some of the owners were openly selling to the willing buyer. The official identified this as a major problem stating that it proved difficult to verify ownership once people take control of their properties. The selling or down raiding syndrome is closely linked to the high rate of unemployment within the settlements, lack of affordability to maintain housing units, and dissatisfaction with the structures attributed to lack of participation in the whole delivery process, which renders the end product unacceptable to the users.

Some of the participants were classified as 'looking after' or being caretakers of the houses. The owners were said to be residing in the nearby townships or other parts of the country and some were in the suburbs and were guaranteed a rental income at the end of each month. Those classified as the caretakers of properties indicated that they were required to pay for the services provided.

A related outcome which was also raised by government officials interviewed is the rapid growth of the population and the increase in squatter settlements around urban nodes. This has contributed to the

increase in the number of households to be provided with low-cost housing units. According to government officials interviewed, this was a real concern at a time state resources available were increasingly becoming inadequate. The growth of slums was described as increasing rapidly and had tripled in all areas. The officials claimed that it had proven difficult to curb the increase. The increase in population created problems in allocation of houses to the beneficiaries and added to the movement of people to areas where there seemed to be provision of units. The concerns raised by the key informants are summed by Cate (2004) who suggests massive proliferation of shacks in close proximity to services and employment opportunities.

Criticisms were expressed by the key informant about the housing-delivery system itself and the size and quality of houses constructed. Some were of the opinion that the apartheid-housing-delivery model was effective and a better model than the current RDP model, which yielded end products that were smaller than the houses provided during the apartheid era. It was also expressed that the plots currently provided are smaller than those of the apartheid era which were larger and made provision for households to practice urban agriculture or structural investment in the original structure.

In support, Gilbert (2004) maintains that no one thought the current delivery system would be worse than what was done before, basing his argument on a comparative study conducted in three countries that used a targeted capital housing subsidy model; namely Chile, Columbia and South Africa. The study found a constraint in the distance between the housing discourse and the actual policy adjustment and implementation. One could deduce from the discussions held that the officials realized the need for an area-specific (contextual) policy framework which takes into account the prevalent conditions and the environment as well as the real needs of local people and capacity of the local municipality. This will only be realized when the people (beneficiaries) participate in the planning and implementation of housing delivery for them.

Conclusion

Housing provision in South Africa has focused attention on realizing the constitutional right to adequate shelter. Since 1994, the trend has always been for government to construct and allocate completed units guided by the notion of 'one-size-fits-all'. This top-down approach and delivery of

housing units to beneficiaries which is authoritarian manner is what has informed the housing development process. As such, delivery has remained state and developer driven, characterised by the absence or minimal participation of the affected or potential beneficiaries. It is evident from the results of the study that low-cost housing delivery is unlikely to result in improved living standards, unless the needs of the beneficiaries and other factors such as livelihood generation, creation of opportunities for entry into the labour market, access to basic facilities and poverty reduction are taken into consideration. The most important lesson learnt from the state-led delivery process is that, provision of fully completed units does not guarantee satisfaction or meeting the needs and expectations of beneficiaries who are treated as passive recipients.

Therefore, housing provision has to be treated more robustly as a collective effort of all stakeholders. The delivery of houses to the people and the current practice where the beneficiaries exchange their newly acquired structures for cash raises concern on the habitability, acceptability and affordability of structures provided, including the sustainability of the whole housing development process. This paper thus tries to underscore the need for a holistic policy on low-cost housing provision which is inclusive of beneficiaries from start to finish. This increases the chance of its success and ipso facto its overall effectiveness as a mechanism for reducing poverty and social inequality in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa.

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