
Sustaining Livelihoods In Southern Africa

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Theme: Shelter and sustainable livelihoods

Contents of this issue:
**SLs and Shelter Examples of sustainable livelihoods
approaches to shelter in South Africa**
The Alliance approach as evidence of SLA in practice
People's Housing Process as evidence of SLA in Policy
Lessons for shelter policy Key SL documents
Useful internet resources SL Activities

Editor's notes

This month's edition draws on work in South Africa on shelter, a focus of much effort of the liberation government. It is written by Irene Nemasetoni and Lauren Royston of Development Works, a development organisation based in Johannesburg, specialising in housing, urban land, planning and HIV and AIDS impacts on development. Please note that Khanya-managing rural change is no more, but has not disappeared. We have converted into a not-for-profit, the African Institute for Community-Driven Development, with contact details at the end of the newsletter. We take on all Khanya's heritage, but hopefully, with the additional benefit that our new status as a not-for-profit our will help us to develop even richer relationships with governments, civil society and other development partners in Africa. We have not yet managed to replace the previous editor, hence the big gap between edition 14 and 15. We have a number of interesting topics coming up over the next few months. If any of you would like to write one of these newsletters on a relevant topic, please contact Ian Goldman.

Introduction

Lack of access to adequate shelter is a symptom of poverty. About 600 million people live their lives in health- and life-threatening homes and neighbourhoods (Homeless International, 2001). The Habitat agenda was developed after the "City Summit" in Istanbul in 1996 where governments pledged their commitment together with their partners to work together towards meeting the challenges of urban poverty. Since Istanbul not much has been achieved in meeting these challenges and over one billion people still lack adequate shelter and live in absolute poverty, particularly in towns and cities (Homeless International, 2001). Clearly, without secure tenure, poor people find it difficult or even impossible to obtain access to basic infrastructure and services.

Sustainable livelihoods and shelter

DFID (2002) emphasises that where there are weak land institutions, the rights of the poor to access land are at risk. This is a particularly critical point in South Africa currently as two major land related NGO

network offices have closed at national level, the National Land Committee, and the Urban Sector Network, at a time when urban evictions and “distressed sales” of homes acquired through post-1994 housing policies are on the increase.

The institutional weakness is further compounded by a lack of governmental and policy focus on urban land. The Department of Land Affairs is focused on rural land reform and the Department of Housing has a largely urban orientation and, until recently, an almost exclusively housing focus. There has been a shift in housing policy since 1994 towards sustainable human settlements. The 1994 Housing White Paper, as the name implies, focused on responding to the **housing** backlog. The South African government’s “comprehensive plan for the development of sustainable human settlements” over the next five years is called “Breaking New Ground” (BNG) and is the most significant policy statement since the advent of democracy. BNG envisages a shift in housing policy towards a **sustainable human settlement** approach, to contribute towards the alleviation of poverty, particularly asset poverty.

Sustainable livelihoods approaches have tended to emphasise land and agrarian reform as opposed to shelter (DFID, 2002). Some attempts have been made to consider urban land in the sustainable livelihoods approach, see for example Quan, 2003. A sustainable livelihoods approach to shelter would have a pro-poor focus, be participatory and responsive, and build on strengths of poor communities. Central to any intervention would be concerns around sustainability, partnerships between the state, communities and the private sector, and the need to link these at micro and macro levels.

The Alliance approach to shelter – Kanana and the Namibia Housing Action Group

The South African Homeless People’s Federation/People’s Dialogue/uTshani Fund Alliance (which we will refer to as “the Alliance”) approach is a people-led approach to self-development which in turn generates **mutual awareness**, trust and reliance. South Africa are not alone in this approach – there are federations elsewhere in Africa and also in Asia. The Alliance model to housing development seeks to create **sustainable** and cost-effective development systems through identifying, developing and harnessing the capacities already present in poor communities. The approach is a people-driven development process that can cultivate social development practices that can be self-replicable and sustain ongoing development. The process encourages **experimental learning**, localised problem-solving and a bottom-up approach to development procedures. The approach to slum-upgrading depends on the **strength and sustainability** of the movement of poor people. The approach encourages the poor to **participate** in the design and development of their own houses. The alliance approach encourages the poor to build their **assets** through savings.

The Federation’s activities are anchored in local savings schemes as an instrument for mobilisation. Savings are fundamental in mobilising the urban poor through their own resources, experience and capacity to transform relations between their members and state institutions. The mobilisation process is done through rituals. They identify participants through enumeration, mapping, surveying and house modelling. Communities are encouraged to undertake initial site planning and layout.

Kanana

The settlement of Kanana, located to the south of Johannesburg, demonstrates the Alliance’s approach. The leadership in Kanana refer to the local network as the layout planners of the Federation. A group of backyard shack dwellers concerned about land formed a Resident’s Committee in 1991 in Sebokeng, which then identified a vacant piece of land in public hands. Two years later, when negotiations with the local council for the provision of serviced land had not delivered results, the committee decided to develop the land themselves. The leaders measured the size of a regular stand in Sebokeng and used the size as a template to peg the sizes of stands as well as a school, clinic and sports field and spaces for roads. Within weeks, over 1500 families were settled on the land. Facing a threat of eviction by the state, the resident’s committee decided to provide its own water and reticulation system with the assistance of municipal workers who were on strike. The resident’s committee members collected R20 (approx \$3) from all residents to purchase pipes for water and sewerage systems. Although the Kanana community did not immediately start the savings schemes when they joined the Federation, they however were able to draw on the knowledge and experience of other communities in the country and across the world. Mutual relations with other informal settlement dwellers helped reinforce an identity and consciousness that was rooted in the material predicament of the poor and homeless people of Kanana.

Namibia Housing Action Group

Homeless people in Namibia also work together in groups to obtain houses and decided in 1992 to establish a national organisation, the Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG). The groups started to save, raise funds and build houses, mainly with loans from the Government's Build Together Programme, which were given to saving groups. As the groups participating in NHAG activities increased, they decided to work also together on their own saving and loan scheme which would enable them to increase their incomes and solve their housing problems. Twelve of the eighteen active groups started to save and now twenty-two groups are saving. About 450 members, of which the majority are women, have saved N\$ 21,300.00. People started by saving only once a month, but then they learned that it is better to save more regularly. The groups learned to do their own books, and have regional workshops which take place in one of the groups in the region, with five or more members from the other groups. The members share ideas, save and give out loans in these workshops and learn from each other this way.

National (macro) level impacts

The Alliance has also played a role at national level with the first contact between the Alliance and the state in 1994 when the Department of Housing made available R10 million to leverage the Federation housing loan fund. The then National Housing Board made uTshani an approved conduit for housing subsidies to Federation members during that time. The Alliance played a role in the national task team that reviewed the performance of the PHP as well as developing implementation guidelines. Now more focus is on working with municipalities.

People's Housing Process – the Masithembabe project

The South African government's People's Housing Process Programme (PHPP) was introduced in the mid-1990s to foster the participation of people in housing delivery. The People's Housing Process (PHP) is described in terms of the active participation of **homeless people** based on the Letsema/Ilima/Ijima concept which emphasises the survival of the poor. The link between the government and the poor communities is through a support mechanism provided by the **government to enable** the poor to make decisions on how to meet their housing needs.

The Masithembabe project is an example of a PHP project. It was started in 1997 by community members of Section W in Khayelitsha in Cape Town. A committee was formed and 16 representatives were elected of whom 10 were women. The committee approached a local councillor and the SA National Civics Organisation (SANCO) branch and they were referred to a housing NGO, the Development Action Group (DAG), which was then contracted for assistance. Members divided themselves into units of 10 to 20 people of either friends or neighbours who started saving and later helped build each other's houses. DAG assisted the community in securing the subsidy. DAG assessed the needs of the Masithembane community and established that they wanted to build houses on a self-help basis. The community needed knowledge on subsidy application procedures and requirements, architectural and quality support as organisational development and training skills. Different members contributed differently according to their needs, which contributed to the construction or extension of housing for community members.

According to a PHPP case study review the PHP programme has enabled the poor to play a role in improving their living conditions in an affordable and **sustainable** manner. Furthermore, the process has enabled the poor to influence and control their development. It found that the poor had the freedom to make decisions about the way they house themselves and that this was **empowering**. Beneficiaries/stakeholders were not passive recipients but equal partners. A wide range of partners were able to plan, implement and manage the process successfully. **Partnerships** between the government, private sector, educational institutions and professionals worked together for the benefit of communities without compromising the decision-making role played by community members. The government's PHP approach requires that housing professionals must elicit from the people what they want, what they can do, **what resources they have** and how much they need to accomplish their task.

Despite these positive intentions, the government's PHP programme has been widely criticised for not being a genuine people's process and for being co-opted by municipalities to avoid the up-front savings contribution under a thinly disguised "managed PHP". In particular, the PHPP is heavily contested by the Alliance. "Breaking New Ground" identifies the need to redefine the nature, focus and content of PHP in order to build greater consensus and understanding between all stakeholders of the focus and intention of PHP and to address the emerging programmatic contradictions. It introduces the need for a new funding mechanism for PHP, adopting an area-wide or community, as opposed to individualised subsidy approach. It recognises that the existing framework for the development of institutional support for the PHP is insufficient and indicates that consideration will be given for establishing accreditation and institutional support mechanisms whilst expanding and enhancing the existing facilitation grant in support of PHP.

Addressing vulnerability – the aftermath of the Tsunami in Sri Lanka

A sustainable livelihoods approach needs to recognise and reinforce the ability of the poor to cope and recover from stresses and shocks. The Federation in Sri Lanka demonstrates this in the aftermath of the tsunami of December 2004. Within days, members of the Federation started searching for Federation members who were scattered in different relief camps. Where members of the Federation were identified, they were provided with monetary assistance from the Federation fund. The Federation managed to campaign in the nine districts they work in and among its members to donate food and clothing for those affected and the food parcels were then donated to both Federation member and non-federation residents. Furthermore, it was agreed that the primary branches of the savings groups should make money available for house repairs. These were grants, not loans, and it was agreed at the time that decisions would be made later about reimbursements. Federation members also began to work actively in some relief work and members from other districts contributed in helping, through volunteer work to clean their homes, roads and drainage systems. In addition, the Federation members drew up a plan of action of things they needed to do to rehabilitate their communities.

The alliance approach and the SLA

A sustainable livelihoods approach sees **assets or capital** as a way in which the poor can identify and utilise resources that they share to make a living. In the experiences shown above there is evidence of savings, skills and exchanges/mutual learnings as assets or capital. Applied to shelter, a SLA recognises that land and housing assets in urban areas can improve livelihoods by providing the poor with access to services and the urban economy. In addition it recognises that secure land tenure itself provides a basis for income-generating opportunities such as renting out rooms and backyard shacks and a secure base from which to engage in informal economic activities. A sustainable livelihoods approach to shelter also recognises that lack of access to (adequate) shelter provides a challenge for the homeless as it exacerbates already existing socio-economic **vulnerabilities** and increases vulnerability in the context of "shocks" such as floods, fires and outbreaks of disease. Examples are the case of Alexandra on the banks of the Jukskei River in Johannesburg and the recent fire in Joe Slovo settlement in the Western Cape, and the Sri Lanka example. A sustainable livelihoods approach needs to recognise and reinforce the ability of the poor to cope and recover from stresses and shocks. The Alliance approach demonstrates many of these features.

Table 1 compares the SL principles with the Alliance approach.

Table 1 SLA principles and the Alliance approach compared

SLA principles	Alliance approach
Pro-poor focused	Led by poor people for self-development and builds on the assets and vulnerabilities of the poor. As we saw in the Kanana example, the resident's committee led the Sebokeng backyard shack dwellers in developing their own solutions to land access and layout planning. In Sri Lanka we saw how the poor took rehabilitation and relief into their own hands.
Participatory and responsive	Encourages residents to participate in their own development. Encourages experimental learning , localised problem-solving and the bottom up development of development procedures. The Federation's rituals are practical examples. In Kanana the Federation approach was to do the layout planning themselves, modelling on layouts they observed in other areas and adapted to site conditions and people's needs.
Builds on strengths	Slum-upgrading depends on the strength and sustainability of the movement of poor people. The approach emphasises the ability to Mobilise resources and other stakeholders, to Negotiate with other role players, to save , the capacity to build their own houses, Skills development and knowledge enhancement. In Kanana, Federation members from other settlements in the country participated in the land development process and people built their own houses.
Linking micro-meso-macro level work	The Alliance has played a role at national level but recently emphasis has been less on macro-level linkage and more on partnerships with local government, for example, the City of eThekweni (Durban). Most recently, the relationship with the centre has strengthened again (www.sdinet.org) The Alliance also networks with international organisations such as the Slum Dwellers International, Indian and Filipino Federations as well as other African Federations, such as the Federation in Zimbabwe.
Partnership between the state, communities and the private sector	The Alliance's partnership approach was noted above, especially its partnerships with municipalities. eThekweni and the Alliance have entered into a memorandum of understanding which includes upgrading 5 settlements and the Federation enumerating various settlements in the city.
Sustainability of livelihoods	The people-controlled approach to development is seen to cultivate social development practices that can be self-replicable to sustain on-going development. Saving is a fundamental component of the Federations, including the Kanana, Namibian and Sri-Lankan cases cited above.

SLA, PHPP and the Alliance's approach: what lessons for shelter policy?

The lessons below are informed by a documentation project that Development Works undertook in support of the Alliance and highlights some key lessons against some of the SL principles (Development Works, 2003). In this newsletter those lessons are applied more generally.

Partnership

Capacity is a key challenge in sustaining a people/state partnership. One way in which the Federations respond is to resource their partnerships through the tried and tested method of exchange – members from other groups (in the country and from other countries) can make their capacity available to undertake a city-wide slum profile, for example. Another challenge is striking a good balance between the push for visible delivery in answer to the political imperatives faced by officials, and the reality of groups of poor people taking control of their own development, a process which is often necessarily time consuming and subject to delays. Organisations of the poor need to make sure that they can put the capacity in place to sustain a partnership, as well as maintain the work on the ground, which is generally the priority. This is also a challenge for the state side of the partnership, which should define what it can do to support the community's capacity for engagement.

Participation

Labour provision may be one characteristic of participation in housing delivery by the poor. However,

“contribution” is much broader than sweat equity for house construction, and can incorporate what are conventionally perceived as the “professional” activities of surveying, mapping and house modelling. Project preparation is another example of “contribution” by organisations of the poor. In South Africa, this occurs under the guidance of the uTshani Fund. However the notion of a “contribution” is inimical to a people’s process, which requires an equal partnership, joint decision making and terms that are set by the partners in agreement with one another. The state should define the notion of participation much more broadly than a labour contribution. Every component of the development process should be up for participation, not just construction.

Building on strengths

If a people-led process is to build on existing strengths, then the desired outcomes should not be pre-determined in national policy. The implication is that a people’s housing process should not be one size fits all, which requires a flexible approach which can be defined by demand.

Holistic approach

An holistic approach is a particular challenge in the shelter sector. Urban development is frequently led by housing but coordinated, multi-sectoral development interventions have been hard to achieve. The indication in BNG of a new PHP instrument that will support an area-wide intervention offers hope. A people’s housing process should not be limited to a narrowly defined housing sector intervention.

Conclusion

One of the main lessons that arises from an application of SL principles to shelter is that housing is a process and a means to a development end, rather than merely being about the delivery of a product - a house - and an end in itself. Sustainability means many things to many people (Homeless International, 2001). Truly sustainable development requires the involvement of communities and their municipalities. In addition to a process emphasis, an SL approach to shelter also provides direction to the content of land policy which should recognise that land is a critical livelihood asset and that for the poor land functions more as a livelihood asset than as an economic asset for wealth accumulation. The resources that are allocated to promote shelter can have large impacts in improving people’s skills, confidence as well as creating an attractive living environment. These can have major knock-on effects on livelihoods more broadly.

Key documents relating to shelter and livelihoods

1. **Homeless International Dialogue: the Habitat Agenda progress since 1996, (June 2001)** www.homeless-international.org. The paper evaluates the progress made since the “City Summit” in Istanbul in 1996 and identifies the way in which the poor themselves could meet these challenges by actually building their own houses by forming networks and partnerships with each other and others.
2. **DFID (2001): Meeting the challenges of the poverty in urban areas: Strategies for achieving the international development target, DFID, April 2001. (www.dfid.gov.uk)**. The paper sees urban areas as places where the poor are best able to access resources and meet international development targets because cities are centres of complex service provision, politics, culture, enterprise development and innovation.
3. **Development Works (2003): Cities Alliance Project on a pro-poor slum upgrading framework for South Africa: slum upgrading framework report** . The document outlines the instruments used by the Alliance in South Africa to improve the living conditions of slum or informal settlement dwellers.
4. **Development Works (2003): Cities Alliance Project on a pro-poor slum upgrading framework for South Africa: Reforms Report**. This report documents the legal, policy and regulatory framework for housing in South Africa. It focuses on the People’s Housing Process (PHP) programme and proposes a set of reforms.
5. **Julian Quan, 2003: Reflections on the Development Policy-Environment for Land and Property Rights, 1997-2003, background paper for International workshop on Fundamental Rights in the Balance: New Ideas on the Rights to Land, Housing & Property, Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, October 2003**. The paper highlights a shift in DFID policy to support access to secure land tenure and enabling a fair distribution of land. The paper provides an overview of shifts in the policy environment.

Useful internet resources

Homeless International (www.homeless-international.org)
 The South Africa National Department of Housing (www.housing.gov.za)
 The South African Homeless People's Federation (www.dialogue.org.za)
 The Slum Dwellers International (SDI) (www.sdinet.org)
 UN Habitat (www.unhabitat.org)

Upcoming SL-related activities/programmes

1. The Center for Asia Pacific Women in Politics is running a training on "**Making Governance Gender Responsive (MGGR)**", will be held on October 23-29, 2005 at Manila, Philippines. The course is designed for middle and senior level government executives, women and men in local governments, political parties, research and training institutes and civil society organizations who are leading or participating in governance reform initiatives in their respective countries. Contact Sylvia Ordenez at onlinewomeninpolitics@capwip.org
2. **Literacy & Livelihoods**, Aug 29-Sep 9 2005, University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom. This is a training course to provide an introduction to integrating adult literacy with poverty reduction. Contact odg.train@uea.ac.uk for more information
3. **Policy and the Public: Involving Civil Society in Policy-making**, 24 October-28 October 2005, London. The objective is to consider the role of civil society organisations and other sources of external advice in informing policy makers within government, and to examine relationships between ministries, government advisory bodies and civil society organisations and procedures for consultation with the public. Contact Public Administration International at pai@public-admin.co.uk.
4. **Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in Practice**, 4-6 October 2005, London, organised by Registered Engineers for Disaster Relief - International Health Exchange. The objective is to understand the causes, risk factors, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS across all sectors and in the light of participants' own institutions. Contact: Tim Hayward at training@redr.org

Future topics

Future topics will include decentralisation and livelihoods, community-driven development and livelihoods, FAO's people centred development approach, environmental sustainability.

Past editions

These are available at www.aicdd.org.

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| 2. | July 2001 | Community-based-planning |
| 3. | Sept 2001 | Corporate Citizenship |
| 4. | Dec 2001 | Rights-based approach to development |
| 5. | March 2002 | Social capital and sustainable livelihoods |
| 6. | June 2002 | HIV/AIDS and sustainable livelihoods |
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