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The National Upgrading Support Programme is a programme of the National Department of Human Settlements

PART THREE: Communities and Social Change: What happens when an informal settlement is upgraded?

This is the third in a three-part series of articles exploring the dynamics in JOE SLOVO – one of the N2 Gateway projects in Cape Town – and how lessons learnt there are being applied elsewhere.

JOE SLOVO

A massive fire at Joe Slovo informal settlement during 2005 triggered a new approach to relocating and housing shack-dwellers. But, as is the case with many developmental initiatives, the new solution has brought with it new challenges. Due to the fact that the fire left dozens of families homeless, and the process of building new formal housing for them could take years, temporary residential areas (TRAs) were developed as an emergency solution.

Over time, however, the TRAs have had to be used to provide long-term shelter for the displaced – and so the emphasis has been placed on upgrading the TRAs to ensure better quality units and improved living conditions. This was reinforced by a Constitutional Court judgement in 2009 which stipulated minimum requirements for those living in TRAs.

Better-quality TRAs, based on requirements laid down by the Constitutional Court, are now being provided in TRA5 in Delft for temporary relocations of beneficiaries of the N2 Gateway project as well as non-qualifiers, who must also be catered for in the process.

The new TRAs have been built with improved aesthetics, durability and functionality, but must also be well-managed to avoid vandalism and disintegration of the areas into slums, as well as preventing abuse of the system.

When people move into TRAs from shacks, they are issued with a temporary relocation-certificate which shows the validity of their residence. The same certificate is also used when they eventually move into permanent units.

The relocation process presents a number of challenges to housing development managers. It is simple in theory, but fraught with practical problems.

The biggest problem, however, relates to the practice of original tenants renting out their TRA units to others. Apart from being illegal, this can cause problems as the original TRA occupant could lose out when a permanent home is allocated because he/she is not occupying the TRA unit when relocation takes place.





Joe Slovo informal settlement

Almost inevitable in managing an informal settlement upgrade programme are the challenges arising from the allocation of homes and the process of defining who qualifies and who does not. Such challenges have been very much in evidence for those involved in the relocation of families in Joe Slovo.

Joe Slovo has four types of residents: qualifiers, non-qualifiers, those who refuse to sign up for the process, and those whose status was still pending at the time their house was ready for occupation. Some statuses were pending, because applicants just didn't supply the right documents.

This poses major difficulties when it comes to moving beneficiaries into their new homes. Those with pending statuses were urging everyone to do nothing until their statuses were known. The situation became violent and this has, in some cases, delayed the moves.

In addition, residents have decided that the allocation process has to be verified through community engagement. This is not a clear-cut process and is open to manipulation by the community and community leaders, particularly given that Joe Slovo residents have three groups which profess to represent their interests: Intersite, a Residents' Committee, and a Task Team. These are groups within the community and were named by the residents themselves.

A social compact or agreement has been signed with the three groups, clearly outlining the relationship between government and the community. But there are numerous cases of the community representatives renegeing on the agreement and shifting the goalposts.

Some community members say "it's my project and my subsidy – you can't do what you want, you must do what I want". They

want to determine who gets jobs on the project – that is number one – and influence who gets a house and when. They are also jostling among themselves to be community leaders, so leadership structures are often in flux. Regrettably, many community members who vie for positions of leadership do not intend to represent their people but rather wish to influence the process so that they themselves are first to be allocated houses.

Joe Slovo remains plagued by relocation challenges, with some households refusing to move voluntarily. Earlier in 2013, for example, the provincial government was forced to obtain a court order to get six Joe Slovo families to move, because they were blocking the building of new homes.

A typical example of what goes on with community consultation is the following: A number of families who initially refused to relocate eventually agreed to move, if they were provided with the same services when they took up residence in the new units. This is agreed to and all parties seem to be in agreement. Other households say they will move, when they know their subsidy status – yet even when their status becomes known, they still refuse to move. In these situations, their shacks will be dismantled and the residents will be forcibly moved.

While communities have a good sense of their social rights, many do not fully understand that they do not have the right to impede development or jeopardise the rights of others to have houses. That being said, nobody can be forcefully removed without following due process of the law.

COMING UP

The next edition of the NUSP newsletter will conclude this series on the N2 Gateway informal settlement upgrading project by providing insights on the challenges, successes and lessons learnt.



human settlements

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