

## Housing Problems and Programs in South Africa: A Literature Review

Tatenda Manomano<sup>1</sup>, Pius Tangwe Tanga<sup>2</sup> and Perpetua Tanyi<sup>3</sup>

*Department of Social Work and Social Development, University of Fort Hare,  
Box X1314 King Williamstown Road, Alice 5700, South Africa*

*E-mail: <sup>1</sup><tatendamano@gmail.com>, <sup>2</sup><tanga8\_2000@yahoo.co.uk>, <ptangwe@ufh.ac.za>*

*<sup>3</sup>Department of Social Work, University of the Free State, PO Box/Posbus 339,  
Bloemfontein, South Africa*

*E-mail: <sup>3</sup><perpetuaT@ufs.ac.za>*

**KEYWORDS** Maladministration. Reconstruction. Development. Informal Settlements. Poor Quality

**ABSTRACT** Although many in South Africa have access to low cost housing from the government, persistent housing problems continue to take center stage among the poor and needy in the country. This paper examines the housing problems in the housing programs in South Africa through a literature review. Findings show that most of the housing problems are caused by corruption and mismanagement while some are due to small housing structures, whereas others are due to the poor housing material, and others are caused by poor location of housing projects, with others resulting from lack of involvement of stakeholders and beneficiaries in the housing projects. Also, factors such as urbanization, unemployment as well as renting and selling of houses by the housing beneficiaries contribute to the housing problems. Researchers recommend program monitoring and evaluation for restrengthening and reorganizing of the housing programs among other things.

### INTRODUCTION

Housing is a necessity and is recognized as a basic human need and right, which is also overwhelmingly considered to be one of the effective indicators of the extent to which poverty has been eradicated in any country (UN HABITAT 2003, 2009; Martin et al. 2015). For many decades, people globally have been facing severe housing problems, which even to the present day, there are still large proportions of people believed to be living in conditions of severe shelter deprivations (UN HABITAT 2003, 2009; Mutume 2004; Zukin et al. 2015). While both developed and developing countries appear to have benchmarked various commitments to address these problems, a great many of these regions are failing to adequately bolster the problems with world bodies publicly declaring it to be a critical concern. Significant pressure surrounding housing problems has mounted to the birth of numerous housing legislations, policies and programmatic interventions especially in South Africa. This has seen the introduction of programs such as the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), Growth, Employment and Redistribution Program (GEAR), Housing Acts such as the Rental and Mortgage Acts (Mafukidze and Hoosen 2009), and the National Housing Code of 2009 among others. These leg-

islations were all espoused to ensure a progressive realization of the right to have access to adequate and quality housing by all. To add onto the above, other housing related legislations were also put in place such as water related legislations like Water Supply and Sanitation of 1994, National Water Act of 1998, draft National Sanitation Policy of 1996 and the Water Services Act of 108 of 1999 (Monyai 2003). These water related legislations were in pursuance of the need to safeguard the provision of clean water and the access to all households and houses, respectively. Sanitary requirements were expected to meet health guidelines that make the habitation of people as comfortable and healthy as possible. In addition to electricity, an energy white paper was also documented and published advocating for the access of electricity by all houses (Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) 1998). The access to electricity was also erratic due to the evils of apartheid that entrenched the Black majority from free access to this resource while the Whites were enjoying uninterrupted access. It also meant that they were now able to heat and warm as well as light up their communities while it was a different story for the Blacks (Republic of South Africa 1994; Midgely 1995; Patel 2005; Hartman et al. 2013). Based on this, all housing projects that were introduced in the post-apartheid era, envisioned

that access to social amenities is realized. This paper therefore seeks to provide a literary appraisal on the housing programs and problems. It is therefore important to understand the objectives of the two housing programs under consideration, namely the RDP and UISP housing programs. The objective of the RDP housing program was to ensure that the houses meet the needs and expectations of the beneficiaries as well as being located closer to areas of social and economic opportunities. In addition, they were supposed to enhance access to quality and adequate housing with effective social amenities such as clean water and electricity among other things (Kirdar and Silk 1995; Republic of South Africa 1995; Kidd 2011). This also augurs and confirms widely with international instruments that expect housing programs to give due recognition to spacing, social amenities, location and quality of housing materials among other things (UN HABITAT 2009). Furthermore, the program had a generalized aim of ensuring that by the year 2000 approximately 1,000,000 people should have access to houses, which was actually reached by that year (Knight 2001). In 2016, the government is still overseeing the implementation of the RDP houses all over the country, which started as early as 1994. The other program is the Upgrade of Informal Settlements Program (UISP). This program, was introduced to curb and deal with the increase of slums and squatter settlements in the country. It based its primary action on upgrading the structures through improving the quality and adequacy of the houses, and access to social amenities, among other things (National Housing Code 2009).

### **Objectives of the Paper**

This paper, through a literature review, seeks to explore the extent of the housing problems within two housing programs, namely the RDP and UISP housing program with a goal to elicit debate that leads to recommendations and alternatives that can possibly mitigate housing problems in the country.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper as a literature appraisal has consulted four theoretical approaches that have been of the essence of the subject of housing

and have given the paper's objective, the room to be explored adequately. These theories include the rights based approach, basic needs approach, social developmental approach and the bottom-up approach respectively, with the bottom-up approach being dominant. As housing, access features as a basic need that secures protection, safety and security of the inhabitants (Galtung 1978). The government acknowledges this in the formulation and implementation of the housing programs, which makes it applicable to use the theory in studying the subject matter (Galtung 1978). The approach argues that poverty exists as a result of the failure of the government to secure the needs of the people and if these needs are provided, the poverty question might be settled. However, this is argued to be untrue as there are other underlying factors that the theory does not consider such as management and administration as well as the capabilities of the beneficiaries among other things (Nicholas et al. 2010). This therefore points out that housing provision needs a theoretical underpinning that is holistic and sensitive enough to address these gaps.

In taking the matter further, the rights based approach highlights that there is a reciprocal relationship between the people as citizens and the government in a relationship of duty bearer and the right holder. This relationship places the government in a seat of responsibility of ensuring for this case that the basic human right to housing is enjoyed and fulfilled for everyone's benefit progressively (UNDP 2006). The government to this effect has documented legislations such as the national constitution, as a platform where it listed the access to housing as a basic human right, while other policies have been authored, debated and passed into law to pursue the fulfilment of this human right. Other researchers took a step further to establish the measurement and weight of this right. Adequate and quality housing was spelled out to mean one that promotes self-reliance, protection, security, whilst one that is poor possesses unhealthy and also limits people to effectively participate (Fredricksson and Patarie 2006), while the UN espouses also that it must have more than four walls among other things (UN HABITAT 2009). Based on the expressions by the UN and other researchers, these researchers think that housing, access espoused in the human rights is one that is of quality and adequacy

with access to social amenities and social services. Within this evaluation by the researchers of this paper, it can be finalized that adequacy and quality is then a measure of the extent to which the right is fulfilled and enjoyed. However, due to the pronouncement of the housing problems it may not be sufficient to use the theory in isolation, but it will definitely serve its purpose to support the theoretical assumptions as interrogations of the subject matter of housing programs and housing problems.

Further, the paper employed the use of the social developmental approach. In its essence, as the post-apartheid government it embraced the social developmental approach, which replaced the residual model of welfare used by the apartheid government that sought to exploit, discriminate and subjugate the Black majority. The new housing programs, among others, were thus strongly influenced by this approach. Its principles pointed out that the government must involve other stakeholders in the programs to make them more able to reach their goals (Nicholas et al. 2010). It also advocated that all projects and programs should be rights based and also encourage participation by the people in a way of empowering the beneficiaries. Further, it maintained that economic growth needed to be harmonized with social development to ensure that the vulnerable and needy of the society benefit. Moreover, it specified that it was very necessary to ensure that the people are key drivers in the decision-making of these programs not in isolation, but as a collective to ensure that the people are empowered by these processes (Nicholas et al. 2010).

Finally, the researchers also consulted the bottom-up approach. The advent of democracy in South Africa also meant that more focus was being removed from the bureaucratic type of management for people driven processes. This was also a new entry of a bottom-up approach in informing the programs and policies in this southern African country. Whereas the top-down approach emphasized more focus on the government dictating and imposing the ways and strategies they envisioned for development of communities, the bottom-up approach encouraged dialogue that involved the people sufficiently from the beginning and straight to the end of the project. Many redundant gaps could be avoided once this was followed (Larrison 1999). Therefore, issues such as needs assess-

ment, planning and participatory evaluation, among other things were critical. Also, it specified the importance of even respecting the ideas of the communities and local people or beneficiaries of the projects among other things (Europa 2014). Based on the above theoretical approaches, these researchers adopted them in this paper.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper used a literature review methodology where UN documents, journals and articles in line with housing programs and housing problems were consulted as well as the researchers' own knowledge of the domain. The paper identified the objectives of the housing programs and the problems that stand militant to the implementation of housing programs. The literature was used to debate and discuss these housing programs against the housing problems faced in South Africa.

### Ethical Considerations

According to the authors of this paper, there was no likelihood of any ethical lapse. Most of the information discussed in this paper is based on other authors' and viewpoints of the authors of this paper. All the information was therefore properly acknowledged in cases where other authors' information was used and properly referenced.

## OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

### Overview of Housing Problems

#### *Most of the Housing Problems are Caused by Corruption and Mismanagement*

Although, the problem of corruption is witnessed globally, its prevalence in South Africa's housing projects poses and adds more to the housing problems already being encountered in the country. One thousand, nine hundred and ten (1910) government officials were arrested in 2010 over benefiting from the subsidies meant for the housing beneficiaries. Furthermore, 20 housing projects were identified to be jeopardized by dodgy contracts between the contractors and the government officials and calculated to be R 2 billion for the country (Ratsatsi

2010) and corruption seems to be eminent in other housing projects as well (Yap 2014 as cited by Herrle et al. 2015). It is the contention of these authors that if corruption is not adequately buttressed it may also cost taxpayers a lot of money and worsen the housing problems more and more each day.

### ***Houses are Too Small for Occupation***

The sizing and spacing of houses should enable privacy and confidentiality for a family living with their children or relatives. It also plays a critical part in the growth and development of children. Disappointingly, most of the housing projects are one-roomed and very small for privacy and confidentiality as well as for hygiene (Baumann 2003; ETU n.d.; Manomano 2015). While other researchers significantly note that this is an old problem (Ntema and Marais 2013), it also gives them a convincing platform to raise awareness about the need to build houses that are convenient to provide adequately for the occupation while ensuring that they are affordable as well.

### ***Poor Housing Material***

Literature pertaining to quality of housing material points out that most of the housing material used is of poor quality and this has resulted in more problems pertaining to these houses. Reports show that these roofs, walls, doors, floors and windows are mostly of poor standard as most are reported to be crumbling, pulling off, breaking without any external influence, but due to the poor material in making them (Baumann 2003; Zack and Charlton 2003; Moolala et al. 2011; Chakuwamba 2010; Bradlow et al. 2011). While the gesture of awarding these houses to those without one is widely acknowledged and respected, sheer concerns arise from the problems caused by the poor housing material. Some attribute poor housing material to have been causing sicknesses such as tuberculosis and other lung infections to the housing beneficiaries (Majiet 2013).

### ***Poor Location of Housing Projects***

Location of housing projects is also a very serious matter considering that it can pave the way for growth and socioeconomic empower-

ment of the beneficiaries or it can jeopardize them too (Republic of South Africa 1994). Inadvertently, although there are programs such as the Integrated and Development Plan (IDP) that purport to ensure there is an integration of human settlements, the situation on the ground reveals a picture that questions the integrity of these policies and plans. This is because many of the housing projects are poorly located (Huchzermeyer 2001; Burgoyne 2008; Manomano 2013; Jo Burg 2014) with most indicating that it has also resulted in many problems such as unemployment, crime and prostitution (Manomano 2013; Ramphele 2008). It is the contention of these researchers that these problems should not be dismissed without being given due attention and immediate response to curtail this location problem.

### ***Lack of Involvement of Stakeholders and Beneficiaries in the Housing Projects***

All the theoretical approaches used in this paper contend for involvement of the people with especially the social development and bottom-up approach being more vocal on the subject while the housing programs also agree with this issue (Republic of South Africa 1994; National Housing Code 2009). Although, in few cases, beneficiaries are involved seldom at later stages but in most cases their involvement is minimal and with limited room to sanction their expectations (Manomano 2013; Chakuwamba 2010). With little research available on this matter, and suggesting that the involvement of the beneficiaries and other stakeholders is still problematic and not being considered in the implementation of these projects. Most of it occurs as a passive involvement, which on its own shows a top-down approach in the running of these projects. This has resulted in endemic violence, especially in areas such as Gauteng, as beneficiaries were frustrated over the failure of the government to guarantee what the beneficiaries wanted (Mail and Guardian 2014), while in other studies the lack of involvement of other stakeholders has been bemoaned to be a precursor to social problems (Manomano 2013).

### ***Urbanization and Unemployment***

Urbanization and its impact has been one of the forces that has caused severe housing prob-

lems with its interrelated link and relation to unemployment (UN HABITAT 2009). Statistical information points out that ninety percent of the world's population resides in slums (Ogunfiditimi 2008) while sixty percent of the population in cities like Nairobi dwells in slums and Nigeria's city populations are also residing in those squatter shelters with many being pushed by the search for employment opportunities to reside in those slums (Olayiwola et al. 2005). This therefore has been a contributing factor to the governments with South Africa included, as they are expected to deal with housing shortages emanating from other factors. Concomitantly, it shows that housing programs need to adopt a bottom-up approach towards accessing houses to those without housing so that they can effectively curb all the facets of housing problems.

#### ***Misuse of Houses by the Housing Beneficiaries***

Disappointingly, other factors to the housing problems show that there is a prevalence of misuse of houses by the housing beneficiaries. Many reports show that those targeted and who benefit from the housing programs end up either renting them out or evening selling them at their own will. Some do so for various reasons such as dissatisfaction with the houses or for income, but the bottom line of it means the housing problems continue to worsen and grow (Baumann et al. 2004; Manomano 2013). These researchers think it could be reasonable if an amicable solution can be reached to guarantee that these houses will not be sold and should be used by the sole beneficiaries.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The widespread housing problems as documented by this paper in the face of the present housing programs are to a greater extent caused by the implementation of the housing programs while to a lesser extent resulting from other factors such as urbanization, unemployment and the misuse of the houses by the beneficiaries. It is very critical that proactive action be taken towards redirecting the programs to achieve their objectives. Corruption and maldminstration are serious misfits that negatively impact implementation of programs meant for the poor and needy and especially the housing programs in

the country. Probably fitting the right people for the job as well as publicly announcing financial and resource utilization of these programs will also go a long way as check mechanisms against corruption. Poor quality housing result in health challenges, as well as the short-term lifespan of the housing projects, which will also cost the government a lot of money among other things. Also, inadequacy of housing is a shame on its own as it deprives residents of confidentiality and it also disallows normal social relations and upbringing of young and adolescent children among other things.

Urbanization and unemployment are not only challenges in South Africa, but do pose a serious threat given the levels at which they are rocking the country. Actually, the government cannot shoulder all the problems on its own, but needs to capitalize on investors, private sector and other stakeholders as partners in dealing with these problems. This can also be strengthened by consistent policy positions on both political and economic programs that help build confidence of investors and other stakeholders. Misuse of houses through selling or renting them out brings problems as the government cannot ascertain the extent of progress in terms of providing housing. It also puts some people at risk, especially those who are vulnerable and waiting for houses as they may end up buying those houses or renting illegally out of desperation. Finally, poor location causes segregation and marginalization and loss of economic and social opportunities.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Although this paper is a literature review, it is necessary to make the following recommendations.

1. In order to restore hope and confidence and ensure proper implementation, there is a need to ensure offices of the Public Protector and the Commission against corruption are allowed to investigate and make recommendations that are binding.
2. It is recommended that quality checks acceptable by the United Nations Habitat institutions as well as by the people themselves be done as an assessment of the proposed project before implementation begins to avoid the construction of poor quality houses.

3. Adequacy should be considered a priority given the implications it has on families and parenting and sexual relations as well.
4. Providing adequate housing needs to be benchmarked by both the beneficiaries as part of the bottom-up approach principle.
5. It is imperative for the private sector to be awarded incentives among other things in any of their endeavors towards developing rural areas as well as providing employment.
6. It is important that legislation that is binding is put in place to rid the problem of selling or renting houses meant for those without houses.
7. Income generating projects within these housing projects for the owners of those houses as well as vocational training can also assist in equipping them with chances of being employers and being employed, and also being a small entrepreneur with a goal of growing to a large one.
8. A plan towards reintegrating these housing projects is critical and should be carried out as soon as possible, whereas future housing projects should be constructed within ease of access to social and economic opportunities, and all these issues should involve targeted beneficiaries and other stakeholders working with and towards the wellbeing of the needy and vulnerable.

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**Paper received for publication on March 2015**  
**Paper accepted for publication on March 2016**