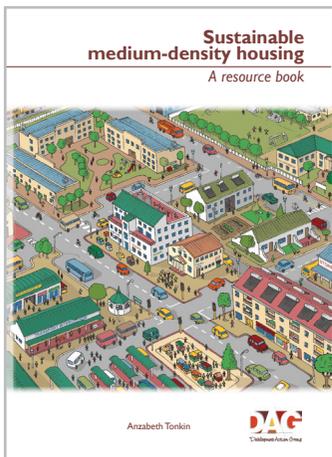


URBAN LAND MATTERS

A DEVELOPMENT ACTION GROUP PUBLICATION

ISSUE 6. VOLUME 1. 2010

MEDIUM DENSITY



In 2008, the Development Action Group (DAG) published ***Sustainable medium-density housing: A resource book*** about sustainable and affordable medium-density housing.

This series, ***Urban Land Matters***, is adapted from the book to bring DAG's research to a wider audience, offering innovative and accessible planning ideas to government officials, practitioners and communities. If you would like more information on the concepts contained in these issues, please refer to the book. It's available on CD or on DAG's website: www.dag.org.za.

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1. Why community participation is critical to medium-density housing
2. Why social capital is necessary to achieve positive development outcomes
3. How social capital builds trust and cooperation amongst the poor
4. How participation encourages cooperation between government, communities, NGOs and other stakeholders
5. Why participation is vital to legitimize any development initiative

OTHER TOPICAL ISSUES

Eight Features of community participation

Four Case Studies of participatory development

Community Stereotypes about medium-density housing

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AfriSam
Build with Confidence

WAIT! THERE'S MORE...



Learn what 'participatory development' means.

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Understand the importance of social capital.

CHECK OUT...page 6



Find out what *iKapa Elihlumayo* says about social capital.

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“The very poor have something left to lose, namely each other. While much of the discourse surrounding poor people and poor economies is one of deficits, a virtue of the social capital perspective is that it allows theorists, policy makers and practitioners recognise the assets of poor communities.”

Gwendolyn Dordick, Harvard University

Did you know?

The aim of development is to support all people to enhance their contribution by identifying and harnessing their potential. In this way, peripheral groups can be legitimated, the invisible can be seen, the voiceless can be heard; those who feel negatively about themselves can begin to see their positive contribution to the welfare of their community and country. This becomes a continuous process: as individuals or groups develop the ability and the confidence to use their own power, the process of development becomes self-generating.

What is participatory development?

Poor people in South Africa play their part in civic structures and forums, but get little in return for their participation in democracy. Despite being occasionally ‘consulted’ about their needs, poor urban residents seldom have influence over policy-makers. All too often, they are merely called upon to voice their acquiescence to existing development plans. Even specifically participatory processes, like the IDP and democratic budgeting, are heavily influenced by powerful actors, who eclipse the poor’s role in the process.

Likewise, empowerment does not happen simply as a result of superficial community involvement in decision-making. There are many examples where communities were consulted, but not allowed to fully participate in development processes. In such examples, community needs tend to be sidelined and community voices, ignored.

What is Participatory Development? True participatory development, then, refers to the process by which the poor can identify their collective needs and enact solutions. Participation is not a once-off workshop or meeting, but an ongoing learning experience and empowerment process, wherein the poor should gain an understanding of and control over social, economic and political forces impeding their standing in society. People who are involved in participatory development should learn how to:

- understand what is meant by leadership and development;
- discuss, analyse and reflect on their needs;
- make informed decisions based on their situation;
- develop critical consciousness to challenge the status quo; and
- follow through with their plans even when obstacles arise.

There are a few very important things to remember about participatory development, mainly that it is not fast, cheap or easy...

It’s going to require time... Meaningful participation results from a time-intensive process, whereby considerable capacity is built through ongoing workshops and training courses. Offering access to information, developing critical consciousness and building leadership skills are critical to facilitating informed participation in development. Government must consider legislating the need for participation in affordable housing projects.

It’s going to require money... No participation process comes without a price tag. It takes substantial funding to reverse the legacy of apartheid that has kept poor people divided, disempowered and dependent. Government must consider offering substantial funding, not just the establishment and facilitation grants, to support true participation in human settlement development.

It’s going to require an NGO... Not all development works towards the benefit of communities or leads to sustainable change. Developers tend to be market-driven and use construction to make a profit. When they consult with communities, they raise expectations way beyond what they intend to deliver. As a result, it is rare that real participation is achieved without the involvement of an NGO. The Stock Road and N2 Gateway projects stand as cautionary examples that poor participation leads to extreme dissatisfaction. Government should consider encouraging more NGO support for leadership development within beneficiary communities.

DAG TRAINING COURSE
Cape Town

Communities take ownership of their own development



RAINBOW HOUSING CO-OP
Cape Town

Communities voice their own needs, aspirations and wishes



DAG TRAINING COURSE
Cape Town

Communities achieve freedom of thinking, decision-making and action



HANGBERG IN SITU UPGRADE
Cape Town

Communities realise that their knowledge is important



Communities exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens

AB AHLALI BASEMJONDOLO
Durban



Communities realise the power of collective action

NETREG HOUSING PROJECT
Cape Town



Communities identify with others experiencing similar problems

FREEDOM PARK
Cape Town



Communities act, utilising their power to improve their living conditions

KUYASA FUND
Cape Town

FOUR CASE STUDIES

ON PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT

These case studies demonstrate the fundamental impact that citizenship, resident participation and leadership have on the sustainability of a community or housing project. Community participation contributes to the overall sense of ownership of the housing environment and should be considered an essential element of any sustainable development project. The case studies demonstrate that beneficiaries are far more satisfied with the outcome of their housing development when they are able to participate in the process. For more information, see section 5 in the Resource Book.



1. CARR GARDENS

Project type: New-build social rental project
Location: Western edge of Johannesburg CBD
Developer: Johannesburg Housing Company (JHC)
Size: 217 flats and 14 rooms
Funding: Subsidies, JHC finance

Social Housing Institution: The Johannesburg Housing Company strives to run a socially, financially and environmentally sustainable business committed to building quality 'assets.' They invest in housing production *and* capacity building.

Focus Groups: Though there was not much opportunity for participation in the design and construction of rental units, the JHC ran focus groups for future residents to consider various design elements of new apartments. The result has been larger internal spaces, more robust materials, higher-quality flooring and balconies.

Makhulong a Matala: Once tenants took possession of their flats, community participation has been mediated by Makhulong a Matala, a non-profit subsidiary of JHC. Designated facilitators in each building aim to understand and address tenants' particular needs and concerns. A range of community activities have emerged from this interaction, including: homework centres, crèches, sports leagues, cultural events and HIV/AIDS education. In addition, Makhulong a Matala is responsible for new tenant induction training, financial management classes and a hardship assistance programme. Such interventions contribute to the sustainability of Carr Gardens.

Community representatives and housing supervisors: The election of community representatives and the employment of a housing supervisor has ensured strong communication between tenants and the JHC. The housing supervisor is trained to identify and remedy maintenance problems on site. His job is to guarantee that all flats are well-maintained, so there is no valid reason for residents to default on rent.



2. NEWTOWN VILLAGE

Project type: Cooperative housing
Location: Western edge of Johannesburg CBD
Developer: Cope Housing Association (COPE)
Size: 351 units in three-storey blocks
Funding: Subsidies, members' equity, NHFC loan

About cooperative Housing: COPE members pay an annual fee and receive information about upcoming developments. When a project is completed, members apply for units, making deposits and equity payments. This allows members to 'own' their units (or, more accurately, to own equity within the cooperative) on the condition that they pay monthly fees. Should members leave the cooperative, they are entitled to an exit payment, consisting of the equity and the escalated value of the unit.

Governance: Though beneficiaries were not involved in the physical design process, they were required to participate in governance and decision-making through the cooperative board structure. COPE ran ongoing workshops to educate members about the cooperative model and encourage input. Still, 50% of residents reported they did not understand cooperatives or the value of their investment.

Board of directors and residents committee: A board of directors and a committee form part of the structure of the cooperative. The first board was democratically elected by the majority of residents at the inception of the project, but stepped down due to conflict and irregularities. With the election of the second board, members were strongly divided, with 50% abstaining from the vote. This led to the formation of separate factions within the community and a breakdown in participation.

Participation: Overall, participation has been low in Newtown, with 66% of respondents feeling dissatisfied. More effective communication and sustained information on the functioning of a cooperative would have allowed for greater participation.



3. SAKHASONKE VILLAGE

Project type: Individual ownership
Location: Walmer, Nelson Mandela Metro
Developer: GM Foundation (Delta)
Size: 337 duplex and triplex semi-detached units
Funding: Housing subsidy, GM Foundation finance

Design and construction: Sakhasonke Village was originally run by a trust, which was formed to act as the development agent, but did not include resident representatives. It was this trust that decided on the design of the units, and eventually, shared the plans with future residents at a general meeting. Though excluded from the design process, residents were encouraged to participate in all other aspects of the project. Many skilled community members were employed as sub-contractors and builders during development.

Site Allocation: Residents had the opportunity to choose their sites, using a layout plan to negotiate where they preferred to live. Beneficiaries were encouraged to share blocks with family or friends to ensure good neighbourly relations and offer improved security.

Sustainability: The developers emphasised the importance of capacity-building in ensuring the sustainability of Sakhasonke Village. Capacity development took place at general meetings where a range of issues such as rates, basic maintenance, new home ownership and other topics were work-shopped. The training programme included topics related to food gardening, HIV/AIDS, home-based care, energy conservation, computer education, home improvements, electricity and rates.

Community committee: Originally, a community committee was democratically elected, although some of its current members were later appointed. This came as a result of previous members resigning from the committee or performing poorly. The committee forms the umbrella body for all small CBOs in the project, including a home-based care service, gardening club and crèche.

Gardening club: A gardening competition is held annually and prizes are awarded to the top 10 to 15 gardens, with a cash incentive and certificate. This encourages households to improve their gardens for the following year and motivates those not interested in the competition to keep their yards tidy. A group of residents who are responsible for cutting grass and providing gardening services has been registered as a cooperative and are seeking funding from the Department of Trade and Industry.



4. N2 GATEWAY

Project type: Social rental
Location: Langa, Cape Town
Developer: Cyberia, all three spheres of government
Size: 705 three-storey flats
Funding: Subsidies, local government funding

Social Housing: There has been almost no community participation in the N2 Gateway project, and so families that had previously lived in Joe Slovo have been unable to benefit. The project was developed under the social housing policy and was aimed at beneficiaries earning R3,500–R7,500 per month.

Beneficiary selection: At the project's inception, the City of Cape Town and their consultants compiled a list of beneficiaries from the housing database, and later, BKS Engineers and Thubelisha Homes took over. The consultants determined that 70% of beneficiaries should come from Joe Slovo and 30% from the 'backyarders' in Langa. Pamphlets were distributed in these areas and public meetings were held. Those whose names did not appear on the list were advised to register at the nearest municipal office. In the meantime, many residents were moved to Delft temporarily as the project was being developed.

Site allocation: Eventually, the actual allocation of units did not provide for the majority of people living in Joe Slovo (or those that had moved to Delft), but was based on income and affordability. Three workshops were held prior to the signing of lease agreements, at which beneficiaries were informed that the monthly rentals had almost doubled because of over-expenditure and maintenance. This created deep-seated anger and unhappiness amongst beneficiaries, who felt that they had been misinformed, but agreed to pay the higher rents out of necessity.

Resident Profile: Since there was almost no community participation, developers failed to understand beneficiaries' socioeconomic status. Undertaking a livelihoods assessment would have shed light on household assets, capabilities and economic activities. Surveys indicated that 61% of families were earning below R1,500 per month and so the remaining houses would only address a sixth of the real demand.

Dissatisfaction: Most N2 Gateway beneficiaries have been dissatisfied with the quality and maintenance of their units and many have ceased payment. This shows that every project must have proper buy-in from all parties, especially residents, in order to reduce delays, limit costs and meet expectations.

It is notable that in most cases the capacity building of beneficiaries and facilitation of the participation process is not implemented by the State, but by outside agencies.

Defining social capital

The concept of social capital is a popular way of referring to community participation, capacity building and empowerment. It is a term used to mean a variety of different things by a variety of different people. After reviewing several definitions, South African scholar, Carolin Gomulia, came up with the following:

When should communities be included?

PLANNING



Including beneficiaries in planning helps create a cohesive community and ensures acceptability from the start.

BUILDING



Including beneficiaries in building offers opportunities for skills training and employment.

ONGOING



Including beneficiaries in the ongoing administration ensures that housing developments continue to be well maintained.

EVERY STEP OF THE WAY!

“Social capital is the capacity of networks to mobilise resources to obtain beneficial outcomes for individuals. These networks are built between individuals and they are able to mobilise resources if individuals have developed the following common features in relating to one another. Firstly, the most important feature is trust, secondly, individuals must have common norms (reciprocity, solidarity, honesty, mutual support) and thirdly, they need to communicate frequently with each other. Depending on the level of trust and the norms that mobilise networks, the relationship between the network actors and the desired beneficial outcomes vary. Networks are the key term in defining social capital because social capital can only become tangible through these networks.”

Other important terms associated with social capital are bonding, bridging, linking and scaling. Here are some important definitions:

The presence of strong social ties in a community enables members to manage risk and vulnerability. Clubs, community organisations and associations as well as strong relations among neighbours and families, are all indicators of social capital. A large number of groups and organisations in a community increase collective social welfare. The concentration of these types of networks within a community is referred to as **bonding**. However, bonding can also have negative effects, such as restricting individual freedom, demanding group conformity, and excluding outsiders. (The negative effects of bonding was seen most strongly in the Xenophobic riots of 2008).

The horizontal networks that develop within and between communities are referred to as **bridging**. High levels of bonding and bridging achieve a favourable combination of strong ties within the community and strong links outside the community, which result in social opportunity. Importantly, the ability of a group or community to act collectively depends on opportunities created by the existing institutional framework.

In addition, social capital can also form vertical relationships. This **linking** or **scaling** relates to networks formed between communities, government, the private sector and other social role players. Linking communities with formal structures and institutions promotes participation in governance, policy-making and other democratic processes. An intermediary such as an NGO is often needed to facilitate the building of networks between heterogeneous structures to promote and protect the interests of communities. *See pages 98-100 in the Resource Book.*

Development as freedom

The importance of developing social capital lies at the core of the shift from provision of housing alone to the development of sustainable human settlements, as was clearly demonstrated by the success of Carr Gardens and Sakhasonke Village. The Social Capital Formation Strategy is one of the eight pillars of *iKapa Elihlumayo*, the Growth and Development Strategy of the Western Cape Provincial Government, which envisions ‘a home for all.’ Their definition states that: “*Social capital is referred to as the institutions, relationships, norms and networks that shape the quality and quantity of society’s social interactions and enables collective action.*”

It further states that participation must include: “*Government working together with different actors within civil society to deliver services and ensure the population’s well-being. Accepting this approach will mean that government departments cannot continue doing ‘business as usual’. Government needs to see civil society as people who can help them achieve their mission, rather than an obstacle or interferers... Government also needs to abandon any idea that it ‘knows best’ and instead work with and build on the strengths and knowledge of communities.*”

The Social Capital Formation Strategy foresees implementing programmes that support the formation of social capital by the Department of Provincial and Local Government. These will include five initiatives that:

- 1. Build social capital through developing integrated human settlements where the focus shifts from quantity to quality.** This includes considering how geographic location and social interaction contribute to the creation of dignified human settlements. Quality concerns include: building accessible services (such as toilet facilities for women), promoting safety in housing design and offering opportunities for economic and residential multi-functionality (running a spaza shop, crèche, salon).
- 2. Promote mixed-use neighbourhoods to ensure that areas are people friendly and safe at night.** The Department of Provincial and Local Government will encourage neighbourhoods, where many people from different races, classes and regions (including new rural migrants and long-time city-dwellers) will live in close proximity.
- 3. Give security of tenure and rights to inheritance of the housing unit/dwelling, and a range of options such as affordable rental housing.** Tenure security for women and children is threatened under customary law if a spouse dies. The Department of Provincial and Local Government is committed to distributing templates for wills and title deeds to protect parties.
- 4. Recognise the impact of the creation of housing on end-user communities.** The Department of Provincial and Local Government will continue partnering with communities through the People’s Housing Process. With government-community partnerships, delivery is often slower, but there is higher buy-in from beneficiaries as well as a substantial opportunity for skills development. The creation of more unique, higher-quality neighbourhoods, beyond what contractors are currently building, will be catalyzed.
- 5. Promote higher-density settlements closer to opportunities and services, which will undermine racial segregation.** The poor location of housing projects is conducive to urban sprawl, and prevents the poor from accessing economic opportunities and social amenities.

“The country’s Constitution establishes the participatory nature of our democracy. This participation needs to extend beyond periodic voting for representatives.”

Western Cape Social Capital Strategy

Did you know?

There are positive links between social capital formation and developmental outcomes: projects that best meet the needs of residents display higher levels of participation and higher levels of leadership. Therefore, the importance of social capital caused the shift from the provision of housing alone to the development of sustainable human settlements. The quality and extent of leadership, citizenship and resident participation has a profound impact on the ongoing sustainability of a community.

Stereotypes about medium-density housing

“There’s no privacy!
My neighbours are
very loud.”

“When I get old, I
won’t be able to climb
my stairs.”

“Flats are never well
maintained. No one
takes responsibility.”



“Flats have no
space for cultural
ceremonies”

“Apartment
blocks are ghettos
with drugs, and
alcohol, gangs”

“WHERE WILL I
HANG LAUNDRY?”

Stereotypes addressed



Many medium-density complexes, like **Samora Machel**, have **lots of common space that can be used for ceremonies**, parking or play areas. Communities who participate in design workshops request open space.



The **Newtown Housing Cooperative** has designated areas to hang laundry. Medium-density complexes can have **private or semi-private yards for washing-lines**, depending on what communities require.



The **N2 Gateway** is a medium-density project with three-storey walk-ups. **Elderly or disabled family members can comfortably live on the ground floor** of these units. The key here is to allow people to choose.



Many medium-density housing complexes are very well built and maintained when the proper structures are in place, like **Springfield Terrace**. Projects with a **high degree of community participation, will not become ghettos**.



Though many row houses are built with noise insulation, like these in **Donkin street**, privacy may always be an issue. That is why **it is vital to give residents a choice**: medium-density housing on infill land or low-density on the outskirts.

COMING UP NEXT: Next month’s issue will be about Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable People.