

# The efficacy of government strategies to improve informal settlements in Rustenburg local municipality

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## Abstract

Various terminologies have been used to define informal settlements. Although definitions differ, they all have one thing in common, they are illegal and lack access to basic services. Nonetheless, the improvement of informal settlements has been a matter of discussion and critically important in recent years. It has been demonstrated that informal settlements are not a problem, but rather a solution to housing delivery shortages not only in South Africa, but worldwide. South African government has responded with a variety of strategies and policies, including Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and Breaking New Ground Initiative (BNG) to upgrade informal settlements. However, despite the existence of these strategies, informal settlements continue to grow and suffer from deplorable conditions.

Qualitative approach was used in this article and semi-structured in-depth interviews to investigate the efficacy of government strategies to informal settlements in Rustenburg Local Municipality. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with eighteen participants, including two municipal officials in Rustenburg Local Municipality. Findings indicate that the strategies implemented to improve informal settlements are ineffective; this was evident from the responses of participants who indicated that these settlements lack access to basic services. The lack of access to basic services in these settlements is a reflection of ineffective strategies. Hence, it is recommended that a review of the strategies that have been implemented will result in greater transformation.

**Key words:** Informal settlements, Informal settlement strategies, Rustenburg local municipality

## Introduction

Over the last two decades, there has been a growing global focus on the need to address the emergence and growth of informal settlements in the world's cities (Ziblim, 2013). According to Vahapoglu (2019), millions of people live in informal settlements around the world, and this number is expected to double in the coming years. This is due to an increase in the number of immigrants from rural areas to urban areas, as well as refugees fleeing armed conflict and climate change seeking safe havens. Though informal settlements provide some opportunities for residents, they also lack services such as infrastructure to support health and wellness, such as clean water and sanitation (Vahapoglu, 2019).

To localize the improvement of informal settlements, several developing-world countries, including Kenya, India, and Brazil, have launched national slum-upgrading programs (Ziblim, 2013). Along the same lines, the South African government revised its housing policy in 2004 to include an understandable national program dedicated to the upgrading of the country's informal settlements (Ziblim, 2013). In other words, governments in several developing countries have responded to the problems of informal settlements for several decades with a variety of measures and approaches, including denying their existence and reacting with various approaches such as eviction and demolition of settlements in various parts of settlements.

However, despite the existence of these measures and instruments implemented to improve informal settlements, Rustenburg is facing challenges of inadequate houses. As a result, the city experiences rapid growth of informal settlements. People in Rustenburg's informal settlements do not have access to adequate housing, and they continue to live in settlements with a poorer quality of life and standard of living. According to Vahapoglu (2019), eviction and demolition strategies have failed to address the cultural and material realities that drive the creation and growth of informal settlements. Failure to address these realities has resulted in an energizing and growing interest in improving informal settlements and attempting to formalize land tenure for residents of these informal communities (Vahapoglu, 2019).

Given this context and aforementioned problem statement, the purpose of this article is to identify the strategies used by the Rustenburg Local Municipality to improve informal settlements. Its aim is to assess the efficacy of the developed strategies and to highlight the ground realities of the adopted strategies.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical review**

The sustainable livelihood and social development approaches were used to gain a better understanding of the phenomena under investigation. According to Ojo (2018), the sustainable livelihood approach helps the poor understand how to live by implementing self-sufficiency measures. This strategy aims to identify and develop assets, strategies, and poor groups in order to improve the livelihoods of informal settlements dwellers (Farrington, 2001).

In contrast, a social development approach is a theory developed to guide the government through social development strategies implemented through the exchange of ideas or knowledge. It seeks to enhance human well-being in society (Julliet, 2010). According to Patel (2015), this approach was intended to inform programs aimed at redressing historical imbalances, discrimination, and exploitation, one of which was the RDP for housing. In this article, these theories were useful in understanding the research questions and the importance of providing sustainable livelihoods and social development through effective strategy implementation.

### **Defining informal settlements**

Various terms have been coined and used to define informal settlement. Many scholars and reports, including The Global Report Revived on Human Settlement (2010), define "informal settlement" as a broad range of low-income settlements and low living standards that characterize the most visible manifestations of poverty and vulnerability. These settlements are illegally constructed on land that has not been designated for residential use. The existence of informal settlements is a result of urbanisation, which has grown faster and wider than the government's ability to provide land infrastructure and housing (Adlard, 2020).

The definitions of informal settlements provided do not take into account the complexity and heterogeneity of informal settlements. They make no recommendations for specific indicators for identifying and measuring them (UN-Habitat, 2015). Thus, the UN-Habitat Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) in Nairobi agreed that informal settlements or slums should be defined as a group of people living under one roof who lack access to water, sanitation, secure tenure, housing durability, and adequate space (UN-Habitat, 2006).

According to the definitions provided, the term "informal settlement" is defined differently from one point to the next; it is defined in terms of attributes such as individuals, legality, structure, conditions, and service delivery. Hence, Informal settlement is defined in this article as the illegal use of land, particularly on the urban outskirts, by those forced by circumstance to occupy vacant lands they find convenient, available, and suitable for residential purposes. Access to basic services and social infrastructure is limited in these settlements. These settlements can be found both in rural and urban areas.

Furthermore, they are becoming more common and are becoming increasingly associated with the world's largest cities, particularly in Africa, America, and Asia (Jones, 2017). The findings obtained on the literature indicate that informal settlements are developed on land that is not designated for building houses in the city's master plan. Jili (2012) attests that informal settlements are built on illegally occupied land through self-help. Self-help housing is a project in which households construct their own homes using only their own hands and skills.

According to Ngetich, Opata, Mwasi, Obiri, and Meli (2015), informal settlements are caused by a variety of factors, including poverty, unemployment, corruption, and poor housing policies. Poverty and underlying global and national macroeconomic factors, particularly wealth distribution and job creation, play a critical role in determining the informal development process (Ngetich *et al*, 2015). Ngetich *et al*. also claim that corruption, as well as the context and nature of government housing policies, have a significant impact on the growth of informal settlements.

### **Improving informal settlements**

The right to adequate housing and a decent standard of living is a fundamental human right enshrined in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Dept. Of HS, 2019). However, the international Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has limited this right (ICESR). Article 11 obligates state parties to the covenant to recognize everyone's right to an adequate standard of living and to continuous improvement of their conditions (SAHRC, 2020/21).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted in 2015 by all United Nations Member States, including the South African government (South Africa), provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet now and in the future. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are at the heart of it, and they are an urgent call for action by all countries, developed and developing, in a global partnership (Arora & Mishra, 2019). They recognize that strategies to improve the lives of slum dwellers by 2030, improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth must coexist with efforts to improve environments, combat climate change and protect our oceans and forest (Arora & Mishra, 2019). On the same line, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation, adopted in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, reaffirmed the global community's commitments to poverty eradication and

environmental protection, and expanded on Agenda 21 and the Millennium Declaration by emphasizing multilateral partnerships (Arora & Mishra, 2019).

This reveals that the concept of informal settlement improvement implies that the government has recognized that informal settlements are not going away; they are here to stay, and the residents have the right to live there. In other words, the improvement of informal settlements has been recognized and accepted as a significant component and a relevant approach to addressing the housing crisis. This is conquered by Ziblim (2013), who conquered that informal settlements should not be viewed as a housing problem, but as an embodiment of a fundamental social change, the solution to which requires a "multi-sectoral partnership, long-term commitment, and political fortitude."

Satterwaite (2012) argues that the South African government endorsed the improvement of informal settlements because the first democratic government believed that improving informal settlements will resolve housing problems by supporting new housing for low-income groups. This is evident by various policies, strategies, and measures such as RDP, BNG and UISP, that were developed by the government to indicate the acceptance and betterment of informal settlements.

However, despite the existence of these instruments and programs, informal settlements continue to be plagued by deplorable living conditions. Evidently, by the inhumane conditions endured by residents of informal settlements. Letsoko (2020) confirms that various eradication strategies, such as RDP, have failed to prevent the growth of informal settlements and improve those that already exist.

### **Upgrading informal settlements: global interventions**

Satterwaite (2012) contends that informal settlement instruments and initiatives are important for addressing some aspects and elements of deprivation faced by large segments of the low-income population. They become the most important part of ongoing national and local government investment and management programs, with strong partnerships with residents of settlements being or to be upgraded, so that they are more effective on a larger scale. This is also supported by (Tissington, 2011), who maintains that there are several pieces of legislation and initiatives in place both nationally and locally that firmly support the provision of adequate housing and the upgrading of informal settlements. The South African Constitution of 1996, the National Housing Code, and the Breaking New Ground initiative are among them. With the South African Constitution being dubbed the most "progressive" in the world in terms of guaranteeing individuals' socioeconomic rights in relation to adequate housing (Tissington, 2011)

In Indonesia, the Kampung Improvement Programme was the first large-scale upgrade program, beginning in 1969 with the upgrading of unserved, village-like, low-income settlements in Jakarta and Surabaya. Its evolution saw it go through various phases and aspects, as well as being expanded and extended to other metropolises. Initially, the focus of the program was on providing services such as roads, paths, water, sanitation, and drainage. Satterwaite (2012), on the other hand, claims that this program was designed and developed by professionals with little input from local citizens. This implies that there was a lack of citizen participation in the development of this program. Local residents were excluded from the program's development and implementation. As a result, this program was a failure because it was insufficiently effective in protecting all residents of informal settlements from eviction.

According to Bermina (2012) and Ali (2014), the Egyptian local government implemented a redevelopment strategy to deal with informal settlements. In response to the failed attempt of the Maspero Triangle, this strategy aimed at evacuating people and relocating them to decent settlements suitable for human habitation. Similarly, Chirisa and Matamanda (2019) state that the eviction and demolition strategy was used in Zimbabwe as an urban renewal strategy. Millions of people became homeless as a result of this strategy, as the government launched the operation "Murambatsvina," which translates to "remove filth," in 2005. On July 7, 2005, official government figures revealed that 92 460 housing structures were demolished, directly affecting households (Chirisa and Matamanda, 2019).

In addition, an estimated 700,000 households were impacted, and over a million people lost their livelihood as a result of the operation (Amnesty International, 2010). Because of the negative effects on people, these strategies/practices are ineffective; they do not solve problems, but rather create new ones (Khalil, EL-Aaal, Quintero, Aayash, El-Warab, Ibrahim, & Marei, 2016). Chirisa and Matamanda (2019) contends that Zimbabwe's policies forced those affected to live with relatives, while others were left homeless in overcrowded and health-threatening conditions.

Ogu (1996) and Ogu and Ogbuozobe (2001) reveal that the Federal Housing Programme, which involved slum clearance and dweller resettlement and in which the World Bank (WB) assisted with settlement upgrading and site services schemes implemented in Nigeria over the last six decades, was a failure. In Lagos, Nigeria, 300,000 people were forcibly evicted without adequate resettlement arrangements (Agbola and Jinadu, 2002). The study confirms the oppressive "bulldozer" eviction policy that prevailed in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. With the official state's intention only of eradicating informal settlements and relocating people elsewhere, most likely in public housing (Khalifa, 2015). This policy or strategy was centred on land acquisition, land banking, and traditional housing projects.

As a result of the consequences of these programs/strategies implemented in Nigeria, most families became homeless, and as a result, women were forced into prostitution for survival (Anyigor, Giddings, & Matthews, 2017). The emphasis of the programs adopted to deal with informal settlements was on environmental transformation while ignoring the consequences and vulnerability that the programs would bring to the people. They were not in favour of the urban poor; rather, they were concerned with environmental issues rather than social and economic concerns. Furthermore, the adopted programs, approaches, and strategies did not contribute to the improvement of urban living standards.

### **Informal Settlement Upgrading: policies and strategies in South Africa**

In South Africa, informal settlements received national attention. This was when the Department of Housing placed informal settlements on the national agenda, recognizing and admitting that "informal settlements are the result of failed policies, ineffective governance, and corruption, poor urban management strategies, dysfunctional and inequitable land markets, a discriminatory financial system, and a profound democratic deficit" (Mbandla, 2004 as cited in Nkoane, 2019).

Since the discovery of informal settlements as the result of failed policies, the government has attempted to address the issues surrounding informal settlements by developing legislation, policies, and initiatives, such as the provision of subsidized housing and the upgrading of informal settlements. According to Nkoane (2019), one of the informal settlement interventions in South Africa is the capital subsidy scheme, which began in 1994. The subsidy entailed relocating residents of informal settlements to land

that is suitable and convenient for residential use, where they will receive freehold units (Huchzermeyer, 2003). Furthermore, RDP was used to develop this subsidy scheme.

RDP aimed to alleviate poverty and address massive disparities in social services across the country (Mamba, 2006). The *BORGEN Magazine* adds that RDP establishes a government-funded housing program to house low-income residents. Between 1994 and 2001, the government built over 1.1 million low-cost houses, housing nearly one million of South Africa's estimated 12.5 million homeless people (Mamba, 2006).

However, RDP was later called into question after numerous concerns were raised about it. The trajectory of this program has shifted dramatically in recent years; the government was unable to meet the demand for RDP housing, resulting in the growth of large informal settlements with low living standards and a large population (Masiteng, 2013). Poor housing delivery is a common criticism of RDP; most houses built are of poor quality and are collapsing. Concerns and criticism of RDP resulted in a policy shift in 2004 that gave birth to the Breaking New Ground initiative (BNG).

### **Breaking New Ground**

Van Horen (2000) maintains that the Department of Housing's unveiling of the BNG in 2004 created a direction that includes a program aimed specifically at improving informal settlements. The goal of this policy is to increase the delivery rate of suitable quality housing in well-located areas through a variety of innovative, demand-driven housing programs and projects (Tissington, 2011). Tissington (2011) goes on to say that this policy aims to achieve the following goals:

- Accelerate the implementation of a housing strategy for poverty alleviation.
- Combat crime, promote social cohesion, and improve the poor's quality of life.

This approach, if properly implemented and practiced with political will, has the potential to eliminate the need for formalisation by providing a sufficient supply of quality housing at an affordable cost to the poor. It will reduce the disparity between the lower classes, the poor, the regulations, and their requirements. Moraba (2013) contends that the outcomes of this initiative do not always correspond with the original policy intentions. The standard of living in informal settlements does not correspond to what is proposed in the BNG initiative. According to BNG, all informal settlements should have access to sustainable human settlement conditions, including basic services such as water, electricity, and sanitation (Chikoto, 2009).

### **Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme**

The modification of the National Housing Policy resulted in the BNG initiating a number of new areas of focus for the housing program (Charlton, 2009). As a result, the BNG incorporated a UISP with a dedicated subsidy mechanism (Huchzermeyer, 2006). According to Mbunjana (2017), the UISP is the primary tool used by municipalities in South Africa to guide informal settlement intervention. The primary goal of the ISUP, as stated in the South African Housing Code (2004), is to facilitate the structured upgrading of informal settlements.

UISP is a program that has shifted the way informal settlements are perceived in South Africa. It was implemented in 2004 as a result of a significant shift in housing policy (Nkoane, 2019).

This program allows for on-site upgrading of informal settlements while causing as little disruption to residents' lives as possible (Huchzermeyer, 2009).

Furthermore, ISUP is a program that provides grants to accredited municipalities that undertake sustainable housing development projects aimed at improving slum community conditions. This program supports in-situ upgrading and opposes relocation, except in unchangeable circumstances where in-situ cannot be used for different and legitimate reasons, such as where the land is unsuitable and unstable (Zimblim, 2013). According to Housing Code Part 3 (2009), UISP promotes informal settlement improvement in order to achieve three complex and interconnected policy goals: tenure, security, health and safety, and empowerment of informal inhabitants through a participatory process.

It is critical to note that certain in situ involvements include the provision of interim services, such as water through communal water taps, and intermission waste collection and sanitation (Misselhorn, 2010; Crous, 2014; Adegun, 2014 as cited in Nkoane, 2019). The HDA, National Planning Commission, Medium-Term Strategic Framework, and Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Act No.16 of 2013 all support the improvement of informal settlements through UISP.

According to the Housing Development Agency (HDA), housing departments in all levels of government (national, provincial, and local) identified the need for a multifaceted approach to addressing the challenges of informal settlements in South Africa after recognizing that providing subsidized housing is not sustainable for a variety of reasons, including relocation. HDA (2014), also contends: that "the shift is toward a more rapid, participatory, and broad-based response, led in most cases by the provision of basic services to informal settlements (in-situ) along with basic, functional tenure."

Providing low-income housing will merely constitute a small fragment of the informal settlement response attributable to the gradual time frames coupled with expensive cost, thus the new upgrading approach is incremental and infrastructure-led. (HDA, 2014) Formalization may be impossible because this is intended to prioritize interim services in the government's service delivery program.

Some of the initiatives developed to improve informal settlements include the GreenShack (Touching the Earth lightly), I-Shack (University of Stellenbosch), Butterfly House (Elemental Housing Solutions), and Empowershack (Khayalam and ETH) (Cirolia, 2017). Simiyu *et al.* (2018) also reveal that several projects, such as the ESIS project in Cape Town, were launched in South Africa to improve informal settlements. The project's goal was to provide basic services such as water, sanitation, and waste collection to all informal settlements.

Furthermore, the Emergency Housing Programme (EHP) is a significant government initiative addressing issues related to informal settlements. The EHP aims to enable local governments to provide emergency relief to people in urban and rural areas by providing land, engineering services, relocation assistance, and housing. This program has designated evictions and the threat of eviction as emergencies (Tissington, 2012). The Social Housing Foundation (2010), on the other hand, claims that local and provincial governments misused this program. Despite its potential utility in addressing the temporary housing needs of those evicted in both rural and urban areas.

As previously stated, improving informal settlements is not a novel concept; several countries have used this approach to address issues related to informal settlements (Khalifa, 2015). According to Marais and Ntema (2011), the failure of a policy in South Africa in the mid-1980s that focused on informal settlements, prioritizing eradication with limited upgrading, resulted in a large number of people from low-income groups invading open land across the country in the 1990s. This movement resulted in the establishment of the Independent Development Agency (IDA). In the 1990s, IDA was the first large-scale informal settlement in South Africa (Marais and Ntemba, 2011).

Furthermore, Marais and Ntema (2011) state that: "The IDT used a capital subsidy of R7500 per household to provide water, sanitation, electricity, and formal ownership. Approximately 100000 households in informal settlements were provided with housing opportunities as a result of the process, which included site-and-services and settlement upgrading."

According to the context provided, upgrading informal settlements is not a radical concept, even in South Africa. The upgrading of informal settlements did not begin with the end of apartheid; even before that, policies and interventions such as IDT were developed to address informal settlements.

## **Methodology**

### **Rustenburg and Informal Settlements**

Rustenburg was founded in 1851 as an administrative centre for the Afrikaner farming area (Unknown Online, 2019). RLM is a Category B municipality and one of five municipalities in Bojanala Platinum District. It is one of the largest municipalities in South Africa with a rapidly growing population due to mine industries within it, making it the most populated municipality in North West.

Rustenburg has a strong local economy due to various establishments such as restaurants, and it is home to the world's largest platinum mines, which have a greater value than gold (Motaung, 2016). In terms of education, the system is a three level system: primary, secondary, and tertiary.

It is important to note that this article focuses on three informal settlements: Freedom Park-Phase One, Freedom Park-Number Nine and Fourteen. Freedom Park was founded in 1986 by a group of women who set up shacks to sell liquor to mineworkers (Unknown Online, 2013). While, others were drawn by the prospect of employment in nearby mines. These settlements have little or no public infrastructure, people lack access to adequate housing, water and sanitation and electricity.

In this article, a qualitative approach with semi-structured in-depth interviews was used to collect and analyse data. According to Royse (2004), Creswell (2014), and Maree (2016), qualitative researchers use in-depth interviewing and observations to understand phenomena and allow participants to talk about their experiences, concerns, and worldview. This method is more concerned with deciphering the meaning of the phenomenon and focusing on the connections between a large number of qualities across relative cases (Sarantakos, 2013). This means that it was possible to obtain the opinions, behaviour and experiences of people about the phenomena (directly from them) when they were the subject of research through this method.



The nature of this article demanded a qualitative research design, thus, a phenomenology research design was used. The nature of the data to be collected and the problem statement addressed necessitated the selection of this research design (Helao, 2015). Rich, detailed data was produced and obtained directly from the participants using the phenomenology research design, while their perceptions remained unchanged. The adoption of semi-structured in-depth interviews resulted from the solicitation of phenomenology research design. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of 18 participants (who are given pseudo names for confidentiality purposes) from various informal settlements (Freedom Park-Phase One, Freedom Park-Number-Nine, and Fourteen), as well as municipal officials from the Department of Housing within the Rustenburg Local Municipality. Field notes were taken during interviews, and recording was used where permission was granted. Some participants prohibited the use of recordings, while others stipulated that recordings be deleted after data unpacking/analysis.

Questions were interpreted or translated into the participants' native languages, Setswana and IsiXhosa. Prior to the interviews with the officials, the interview questions were distributed to the municipal officials, who enthusiastically participated. The findings in the section below are analysed qualitatively through the use of a thematic analysis.

## Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that the municipality is implementing strategies to improve the conditions of informal settlements. These strategies, according to municipal officials, include the UISP. According to the opinions expressed by participants, the municipality employs five strategies, all of which are related to UISP. The UISP, according to the findings, is implemented using an in-situ approach. Participants A and B confirmed that the municipality is providing interim services to informal communities, such as gravel roads, communal water taps, and Jojo tanks in some parts of the settlements, particularly in F.Park-Phase One and F.Park-Number Nine.

Both participants A and B stated that: “**Strategy 1:** is the interim services. This strategy entails providing clean water and solid waste removal. The municipality is making use of this strategy because some settlements, such as Freedom Park, are built on privately owned land. Moreover, it is perilous and expensive for a municipality to invest in land privately owned land because the owner may come and claim the land back. Hence, this strategy is used to ensure that dwellers of informal settlements have access to basic services”

Other strategies divulged by the participants A and B are as follows:

- **Strategy 2:** involve conducting community engagement with the affected community and the plan on how the process will unfold. Participants were not fluent in how the municipality is engaging with the settlements.
- **Strategy 3:** is the security of tenure.
- **Strategy 5:** is the placing of infrastructure services. Participants A and B shared similar perceptions that the municipality created gravel roads in some parts of settlements. These findings are similar to the sentiments of participants FNN05 and FP06 who mentioned that some parts of Freedom Park-Number 9 and Freedom Park-Phase 1 have gravel and paved roads.
- **Strategy 4:** involves the building of homes for all qualifying beneficiaries. According to the participants the municipality was using this strategy for a long time; for instance, some of the dwellers (qualifying beneficiaries) from Freedom Park-Number 9 were relocated to Freedom Park-Phase 1.

Ziblim (2013) confirms the preceding findings. According to Zimblim, UISP is an informal settlement intervention that promotes in-situ upgrading and opposes relocation, except in unchangeable circumstances where in-situ cannot be used for different and legitimate reasons, such as where the land is unsuitable and unstable. The Housing Code Part 3 (2009) also triumphs, confirming that the UISP promotes informal settlement improvement in order to achieve three complex and interconnected policy goals: tenure, security, health and safety, and empowerment of informal inhabitants through participatory processes. On the other hand, fifty percent of participants believe that no visible strategies are being developed to improve informal settlements. According to one of the participants in FP-Number 9, "there are no strategies that are used, the filthy environment characterised by rats eating children, is enough evidence that there are basically no programs set to ensure the improvement of these areas".

The gist of this assertion is that if there had been action plans to improve these settlements, there would have been visible changes in these settlements. Adding to the sentiments, some participants acknowledged that great strategies have been developed within local government; however, poor implementation of these strategies and corruption have undermined their effectiveness. Heydenrych (2016) testifies extensively on the poor implementation of strategies, emphasizing the importance of producing good policies in any democracy. They must be produced because they are necessary for a democracy to function.

It is also critical to consider that well-written policies without proper implementation serve no purpose. Heydenrych's reports support the findings that the government has beautiful strategies; the problem is corruption, poor communication, and execution. Corroborating the views of participants, A and B, 40% of the participants stated that the municipality used infrastructure placement as a strategy to improve informal settlements. Moreover, it appears that the municipality has provided gravel roads in some parts of the settlements, particularly in Freedom Park-Number 9 and Phase 1. Some parts of Freedom Park-Phase One have pavement roads, according to participant FP04 in FP-Phase One.

Others raised that the government employs a poverty-to-poverty strategy. . Participants reinforced their assumptions by observing that instead of improving, residents are becoming poorer and government officials are becoming wealthier. Relocation is another strategy that emerged from participant responses, such as Participant FP04. According to the findings, the municipality relocated people to better houses in recent years; for example, some of the residents (qualifying beneficiaries) of Freedom Park-Number 9 were relocated to RDP houses in Freedom Park-Phase 1. Participant FP04 in FP-Phase One confirmed that she was one of the beneficiaries relocated from F-Number 9 in F-Phase 1.

38 years ago, Martin (1983) discovered that relocation is socially disruptive and often less favourable, resulting in higher transportation costs and less access to economic opportunities. However, the findings discovered that some people enjoy and prefer relocation. Participants' observations bolstered the findings by indicating that relocation can sometimes mean relocating to better opportunities, a better life, and a social and healthy environment.

### **Efficacy of interventions and strategies adopted to improve informal settlements**

One of the objectives of this article is to determine the effectiveness of adopted strategies and/or interventions for improving informal settlements. These strategies are ineffective, according to the findings, as confirmed by participants (A & B). Participants A and B stated that "these strategies are not assisting much in curbing the growth of informal settlements within the RLM." Instead, the laborious

processes that are followed during formalisation result in the formation of new settlements”. Participants clarified that the augmentation and contraction of informal settlements is used to measure and monitor the efficacy of these strategies. In Rustenburg, there is an increase in informal settlements. This indicates that the strategies are not slowing the growth or development of informal settlements. Others have observed that these strategies are ineffective in addressing the needs of the settlements. The findings also indicate that poor implementation and execution are the main factors impeding the efficacy of these initiatives. Participants came to the conclusion that these strategies are improperly communicated and executed.

According to the participants, the inaccessibility of services in these settlements is an indication of ineffective strategies. These findings confirm the social development. Social development approach seeks to improve human well-being in society (Julliet, 2010). This implies that the government should make investments in people's health, education, and employment opportunities. To improve these strategies, some positive comments from the participants suggested the improvement of communication and consultations mediums by the municipality.

Participants expressed how the poor relationship and lack of communication influenced the strategic outcomes. Participant A believes that the relationship between the municipality and the settlements is both good and bad. The Municipal Systems Act remarks that for municipalities to improve their accountability, strengthen their relationships, and provide effective outcomes for their programs. Citizens, including informal dwellers, must be involved in the planning, implementation, and strategic decisions. A developing society necessitates inclusivity; developing informal settlements is one of the key elements for the country's faster economic growth and poverty reduction. The social development approach emphasizes the importance of social development by implementing appropriate strategies to improve communities.

According to Norman, Byambaa, De, Butchart, Scott, and Vos (2012), a lack of community projects has left people in informal settlements vulnerable to poverty and with few options in their communities. Furthermore, while projects in communities, particularly in rural areas and informal settlements, are established as a strategy to create jobs and reduce poverty, some fail and others are not economically sustainable (Norman *et al.* 2012).

In recent years, community participation has become an essential component of democratic practice. Consultation is one of the Batho Pele principles; this principle requires all government objects to consult the communities whenever changes or plans affecting the communities are implemented. According to Myeni (2014), this principle is the foundation of the community participation process. Conversely, effective community participation ensures long-term human development. These findings support Ziblim's (2019) findings, confirming that community participation is an effective way to empower slum communities to transform their livelihoods. Lack of effective community participation can stymie timely and successful project implementation. The findings confirm the importance of community participation in the completion of IDPs and budget allocation.

Matsie (2019) expresses that: "participatory processes ensure that service provision and infrastructure development are context-specific, responsive to various vulnerabilities (social, economic, and environmental), and representative of diverse needs and aspirations. Residents' localized knowledge of

the settlement and lived experience in the community are used in the processes”.

The essence of Matsie's expressions highlights the importance of participatory, communication, feedback, and settlement inclusion in local affairs.

### **Ground realities**

The findings of this article show that the efficacy of these strategies is governed and determined by ground realities. Participants emphasized social, economic, and environmental challenges as the ground realities of these strategies. Participants agreed that the ineffectiveness of the strategies in place is reflected in these challenges. According to the findings, poor access to water, sanitation, and poorly managed waste collection is a challenge that contributes to informal settlements serving as infection hotspots. Poor waste collection maintenance harms both the health of poor households and the environment. These settlements according to the sentiments of participants lack secure dumping areas; as a result, people dispose of their garbage anywhere. Water and sanitation facilities are inadequate and poorly managed, failing to meet the needs of the people and the conditions of the settlements. Msimang (2017) affirms that living in informal settlements exposes people and the land they occupy to environmental risks. In informal settlements, there is a lack of basic services such as water and sanitation, as well as pollution, overcrowding, and ineffective waste management. These characteristics have a negative impact on the environment and increase the risk of health problems associated with informal settlement (Msimang, 2017).

This implies that people in informal settlements are exposing their health by drinking contaminated water, using pit latrine toilets, and defecating in forests and other open spaces. Participants also stated that these settlements are overcrowded and impoverished, and that they require all forms of government assistance. These findings are similar to and consistent with those of Matsie (2019), who agrees that informal settlements are frequently overcrowded and impoverished areas.

Concerning housing, dwellings were of mediocre quality in terms of construction. Some RDP houses in Phase 1 were reported to be tracking, which was identified as a challenge. People built self-contained houses out of poor and old materials, which resulted in leakage and water flooding inside the shelter when it rained. Inadequate quality housing in informal settlements is also a challenge and a common phenomenon in several countries, including Tanzania, Nigeria, Mozambique, Ghana, and South Africa (Simiyu *et al*, 2018; Daniel, 2015; Govender, 2015).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Improving informal settlements is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (no poverty). This article looked at the effectiveness of government strategies for improving informal settlements. Following the results, the findings reveal that there are strategies being developed to upgrade informal settlements in Rustenburg. Based on these findings, it is possible to conclude that the strategies used are ineffective. They are not responding to the needs of the settlements, nor are they environmentally upgrading these settlements. To improve these strategies and/or the municipality's performance, the municipality should use a variety of methods to address the shortcomings of the existing strategies. A review of the strategies that have been implemented will result in greater transformation. Some initiatives, projects, and programs fail due to a lack of skills among government officials in charge of implementation. To combat strategy failure, specific implementation programs, specifically for policy implementers, must be implemented and made mandatory for them to attend.

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