



Impacts of Poor Basic Service Delivery on the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements and Improved Livelihoods

Case of Stjwetla, Alexandra

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Abstract

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa acknowledges the importance of basic service delivery in the development and improvement of lives, thus making it the government's mandate. With access to basic services being a legitimate expectation of citizens, the government is responsible for ensuring that it provides continuous service delivery and maintenance to its people. Service delivery enables individuals to meet their own needs by providing the security necessary for a household to function fully, and it is a prerequisite for poverty reduction. Despite the well-known benefits of providing basic services, delivery challenges persist, particularly in informal settlements. Informal settlements fall outside the regulated, legal, planned channels of city development; they therefore



receive little government attention. The lack of government support for informal settlements is a barrier to improving basic services and infrastructure.

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of basic service delivery on sustainable human settlements and improved livelihoods in Stjwetla. To address the research objective, a case study using a phenomenological design was conducted, analysing a particular situation through qualitative (questionnaires, interviews, observation) and quantitative (survey questionnaire) methods of data collection and interpretation. The concepts of sustainable human settlements and improved livelihoods were examined in relation to the settlement in question.

The findings revealed that Stjwetla lacks the necessary basic services (water, sanitation, housing, refuse removal, electricity, drainage, and roads) required to encourage sustainable human settlement. Many people in Stjwetla are unemployed and rely on child support grants, while others depend on low-wage jobs due to illiteracy or having only completed primary school. Being illiterate prevents individuals from obtaining stable, high-paying jobs. Such conditions continue to marginalise people and push them further into poverty, which hinders their ability to achieve improved livelihoods. To promote better human settlements and livelihoods in Stjwetla, in situ upgrading and relocation methods have been recommended.

Keywords: Service delivery, informal settlement, sustainable human settlement, sustainable livelihoods, basic services.

Introduction

The public sector is recognised globally as an entity that is responsible for providing the essential basic services necessary for individuals to meet their daily needs. Service delivery refers to the distribution of public activities to the general public (Fox & Meyer, 1995). This delivery applies to both tangible and intangible assets. Tangible assets include water, sanitation, waste management, transport, and communication facilities.

In contrast, intangible assets encompass healthcare, education, energy, emergency services, public safety, social welfare, and open space management (United Nations Human Settlements Programme [UN-Habitat], 2006). The delivery of basic services not only encourages an improved standard of living but also fosters social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

In South Africa, basic service delivery is used to address the spatial imbalances created by the apartheid regime. Apartheid segregation laws prevented individuals of colour from having the same access to land, housing, and services as white people (Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa, 2018). While white people lived in well-developed residential areas in the city centre, Black-only townships developed on the edges of cities, housing most of South Africa's population (Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa, 2018). The apartheid state's lack of investment in housing, basic services, and infrastructure in these townships resulted in a severe housing shortage and the proliferation of informal settlements (Malpass, 1990; Marutlulle, 2017).

To guarantee the development and reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa, it became imperative for the South African government to provide and maintain basic service delivery for all; to upgrade informal settlements in the marginalised areas of many rural areas, towns, and cities; and to encourage the development of sustainable human settlements (Kroukamp, 1999). To this day, the South African government remains focused on providing basic services and upgrading informal settlements for its people.

For the first time, many individuals can enjoy access to basic services that were previously reserved for white developments. People now have access to housing, water, electricity, sanitation, waste removal, healthcare, education, and economic inclusion. Despite these improvements, challenges in basic service delivery persist. The country still experiences inequitable public service distribution (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1997), with informal settlements continuing to receive the short end of the stick

regarding basic service delivery. Informal settlements continue to suffer from a lack of basic services. For those who do receive such services, the quality is often inadequate and lacking in maintenance. The inability to provide basic services to informal settlements undermines the prospects for economic, social, and environmental development in those areas. However, the provision of basic services through informal settlement upgrading is crucial for encouraging sustainable human settlements and improved livelihoods. Informal settlement upgrading provides people with better housing and the services and infrastructure necessary to enhance their lives and communities (Wekesa et al., 2011). Ensuring equal access to basic service delivery is therefore critical (Pekmezovic et al., 2019). By examining how poor basic service delivery has impacted Stjwetla's sustainable development and people's livelihoods, this paper aims to shed light on the significance of upgrading informal settlements for the provision of basic services, improved livelihoods, and sustainable human settlements.

Literature Review

Informal settlements can be found in both developing and developed countries around the globe. They exist in urban contexts worldwide, in a variety of forms and typologies, sizes, locations, and names (such as slums, favelas, squatter settlements, barrios bajos, bidonvilles, and shacks) (UN-Habitat, 2015). There is no universal definition of "informal settlement", and each country has its own interpretation. However, informal settlements share similar characteristics, which include insufficient access to clean water, inadequate sanitation systems, low structural quality of housing, environmental deterioration, overpopulation, lack of infrastructure and social investment, unlawful subdivision, and insecure tenure (Justo, 2012). The homes, like those in other informal settlements, lack formal legal tenure, have inadequate services, are of poor quality, and are overcrowded due to overpopulation (Nixon, 2020). The global population of slum dwellers has increased by 213 million since 1990 (UN-Habitat, 2013). More than a billion people now live in slums, with over half of them situated in East,

South-East, Central, and South Asia, and 23% in sub-Saharan Africa (UN-Habitat, 2020). Over 90% of urban expansion occurs in developing countries, and each year, approximately 70 million new citizens are added to large cities in these countries (World Bank, 2008). Informal settlements house more than 50% of Africa's urban population (61.7%), and the continent's urban population is expected to increase from 400 million to 1.2 billion by 2050 (UN-Habitat, 2013). It is estimated that between 1.1 and 1.4 million South African families lived in urban slums in 2011 (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2011). Unfortunately, given the insecure tenure arrangements and rising occupancy in these settlements, this figure is likely to be significantly higher. Despite the global explosion of informal settlements, the issue remains unaddressed. Rapid urbanisation is one of the causes of increasing development of slums in developing and some developed nations (World Bank, 2006). Unplanned urbanisation continues to expand against a backdrop of significantly lower income levels, which are exacerbated by rising unemployment, increased poverty, poor governance systems, under-resourced municipalities, municipal maladministration, corruption, lack of accountability, and the absence of housing policies (World Bank, 2006; Nathan, 2013; Tshishonga, 2015; Marutlulle, 2017; UN-Habitat, 2020). Rapid urban growth under these conditions would create a formula for the spread of informal settlements.

Today, informal settlements continue to thrive because urbanisation has outpaced the government's ability to supply land, housing, and basic service infrastructure. The absence of integrated urban planning is also to blame for the continued proliferation of informal settlements. The design of human settlements, along with the institutions and regulations for managing future development, is the responsibility of urban and regional planning (Fischler, 2012). Urban planning assists in making land available, controlling its use, organising its distribution among users, and ensuring that the resulting spatial order is acceptable to all (Fischler, 2012). In the absence of planning and regulatory measures to direct land distribution, land is invaded and built on illegally, which results in informality (Tsenkova, 2012). Without planning,

informal settlements spread out in an uncontrollable manner, leaving little or no space for the installation of basic services and supporting infrastructure. To pursue the sustainable growth of informal settlements with service delivery, competent and appropriate land use planning is essential. Urban planning is crucial for driving development and creating successful solutions for integrating informal settlements into the city's formal land management and economic processes (Tsenkova, 2012). Integrating informality into a city is important for providing basic services to informal settlements and addressing its unwanted side effects. Providing basic services encourages improved livelihoods and the potential for creating sustainable human settlements (Tsenkova, 2009).

In providing basic services, governments aim to promote sustainable growth and meet the expectations of equalisation across gender, race, geographic, and socio-economic boundaries that exist between the rich and poor (Van der Wal et al., 2002). Improving access to basic services has been a key component of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which seek to eliminate extreme poverty globally (Durand-Lasserre et al., 2007). Additionally, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 aims "to make cities and human settlements inclusive, secure, resilient and sustainable". SDG 11.1 specifically states: "By 2030, secure access for everyone to sufficient, safe and affordable basic services and housing, and improve slums" (Sachs, 2012). Hernandez (2006) recognises that basic services are critical to alleviating poverty and achieving the SDGs both directly and indirectly, by improving access to health, education, power, information and communication services, and fostering poverty alleviation and women's empowerment through entrepreneurship and job creation opportunities in service enterprises. It is therefore important for planners and the government to work hand in hand to ensure "that governance systems are improved and apply urban planning principles, respect the rights of impoverished communities, and create space, services and opportunities for impoverished people to continue improving their circumstances and participate in the distribution of benefits that the urbanisation process has to

offer” (Department for International Development, 2000). SDG 11 should be prioritised by ensuring equitable access to housing, basic services, and land tenure, as well as the provision of socio-economic opportunities.

Research Setting



Figure 1: Map of Stjwetla, Alexandra Informal Settlement. Source: Authors’ construct (2022)

Stjwetla in Alexandra is the ideal location for a case study in basic service delivery. Stjwetla, denoted in red in Figure 1, is situated in Johannesburg’s Alexandra Township. It is an informal settlement near the graveyard in Alexandra, adjacent to the Jukskei River below Roosevelt Road. According to the 2011 census, the informal settlement had a population of around 5 000 people and covered an area of more than 0.13 km's. The census also revealed that the area had 2 609 households, made up of 100% Black Africans, with a linguistically mixed population. The most prominent first language is Xitsonga (54.52%), followed by Sepedi (20.56%), isiXhosa (6.76%), isiZulu (4.60%), Tshivenda (3.64%), Sesotho (2.73%), Setswana (1.95%), English (1.75%), isiNdebele (1.19%), SiSwati (0.95%), Afrikaans (0.12%), Sign Language (0.10%), and others (1.13%) (Stats SA, 2011). Stjwetla exemplifies an informal settlement

that suffers from a lack of basic service delivery. Residents still use candles and paraffin for lighting, while others have illegal electrical connections. Additionally, there are high levels of informal housing, a lack of clean water, inadequate sanitation, insufficient refuse removal, poor drainage, substandard roads, and a lack of social infrastructure (Stats SA, 2011; Kotze & Mathola, 2012). Development in this area occurs uncontrollably, with houses packed closely together, leaving no space for the installation of basic services and infrastructure (Ferrinho et al., 1991). The social living conditions have become unacceptable to residents, which resulted in an increase in violent and destructive service delivery protests (Lekaba, 2014). At the heart of these protests is a growing dissatisfaction among the marginalised and impoverished due to corruption, lack of service delivery, and inadequate response to community needs by local authorities (UN-Habitat, 2006). The context of this study involved measuring the effects of poor basic service delivery on Stjwetla's livelihoods and long-term physical development.

Approach and Methodology

The research followed a case study in phenomenological design, in which a particular situation was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and interpretation. In this case, the phenomena under investigation were the extent of service delivery and its impact on the population of Stjwetla and the overall development of the informal settlement. Qualitative tools, such as interviews and questionnaires, were used to understand the experiences, perceptions, and opinions of the residents of Stjwetla regarding the factors that influence their everyday lives, as well as their own developmental analysis of the problems and impacts of inadequate basic service delivery on Stjwetla households. A structured interview plan was created for the qualitative part of the analysis and administered to the participants. To elicit information from the people of Stjwetla, open-ended and semi-structured questions were also employed. Open-ended questions allowed the participants to provide answers that showcased their feelings, experiences, and understanding of the

subject. Semi-structured questions enabled the participants to express their views by choosing their preferred answer from a set of predetermined options.

A quantitative method was also utilised in this research to describe the participants' biographical data. To collect quantitative data, structured questionnaires were administered to the participants. Observation was also used to collect data, which included viewing and photographing the basic services and supporting infrastructure available in Stjwetla. Additionally, secondary data were utilised, which included municipal policy documents to provide insight into municipal service delivery operations, as well as census data, news articles, Geographic Information System (GIS) images, websites, and journals.

Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were utilised in this study. For this analysis, a stratified sampling method was used, which consisted of participants from various strata, such as diverse age groups, different genders, income levels, and South African residents of Stjwetla, Alexandra, as well as individuals from interested professional platforms. Those who met these criteria were deemed capable of offering valuable insight into service delivery concerns, partly because they were either personally affected by the service delivery problems or were aware of the issues regarding basic services in this informal settlement.

A purposive sampling approach was also employed to select specific individuals working for the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, which is responsible for ensuring the delivery of basic services in Stjwetla. The final sample of 30 participants was chosen to ensure that representation was distributed rationally based on the variables defined during the sampling process. Additionally, the sample size enabled the researchers to study smaller populations and to produce generalisations that could be extended to the broader population.

Research Analysis and Findings

A total of 30 individuals participated in the study, all located within the informal settlement of Stjwetla. The participant profile ensured a representative sample of respondents in terms of age, gender, income, and activity. The following are the responses regarding basic service delivery in Stjwetla.

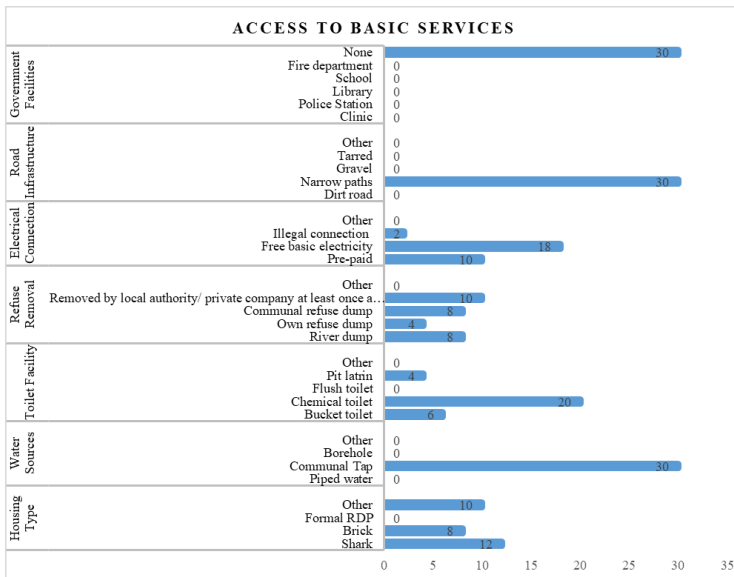


Figure 2: Access to Basic Services in Stjwetla. Source: Authors' construct (2022)

Sustainable Human Livelihoods in Stjwetla, Alexandra

Livelihoods consist of capabilities, activities, and assets that are necessary for a person to live life to the fullest (Chambers & Conway, 1992). Maintaining one's livelihood includes various aspects such as adequate nutrition and diet, access to quality education for children, job opportunities, and income sources. By asking questions, the researcher gained insight into the socio-economic profile of the participants and confirmed that individuals do not have enough to ensure good livelihoods. Of the 30 respondents, 14 reported being unemployed, while

16 were employed, either through self-employment or formal employment.

Regarding the types of income, most residents depend on Child Support Grants and Old Age Grants, with some supplementing their income through street vending, spaza shops, domestic work, nanny services, retail and factory work, gardening, and scavenging. With such limited prospects for adequate and stable salaries, especially during the current economic recession and increased unemployment, many participants stated that providing for basic needs is challenging. Without stable income sources, families struggle to improve their living conditions. The expenses of these households are predominantly managed by individuals, particularly women with a low level of education or no education at all. To cope with such insecure living circumstances and low wages, they are forced into means of subsistence that are often “dangerous, antisocial, and unlawful, including theft, prostitution, drug trafficking, and child labour” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2005). For many, the prospect of achieving a decent standard of living remains nothing more than a fantasy.

Most of the interviewed participants had received some form of education, including primary (four), secondary (six), and Grade 12 (10), but none had completed higher education. The other 10 had no form of schooling at all. Most of the participants were illiterate or had only elementary schooling. Being illiterate restricts access to better salaries and stable jobs that could sustain their livelihoods. The lack of access to services has also deprived many residents in this area of their right to education. Women, in particular, are compelled daily to deal with financial pressures on their own, such as collecting water, harvesting wood, managing household duties, and providing protection to the household; among other livelihood concerns. As a result, they often do not have enough time to focus on improving their lives. Children are also vulnerable to not completing their schooling. Disruptive factors, such as living in overcrowded households and lacking space for homework, have been identified as significant causes that discourage many children from receiving an education. Children tend to share

beds, which leads to conflicts when it is time to go to bed. The need for children to share bedrooms and go to sleep at various hours contributes to sleeplessness, which in turn leads to poor concentration in school and unsatisfactory classroom performance. Furthermore, growing tension between siblings can lead to behavioural management issues in schools. Children who live with working parents are required to perform domestic duties at home, such as washing, heating, collecting water, and a host of other chores. These responsibilities interfere with their education. The slum conditions in Alexandra impede children's growth into qualified professionals. These barriers are also perceived as restricting factors for securing schooling and higher-paying jobs. What is evident here is the persistent expression of generational poverty.

Apart from income and education, access to basic services such as housing, water, sanitation, waste collection, electricity, and other civic amenities contributes to sustainable livelihoods. The lack of access to these basic services has dire impacts on individual livelihoods, as it prevents the attainment of better capabilities. The results from the interviews and observations confirm that Stjwetla is another case of an informal settlement with limited basic service delivery. The settlement has restricted access to housing, piped water, sanitation, waste collection, and other civic amenities. Having little or no access to basic services amounts to poverty. Poverty is characterised not only by a lack of wages but also by a lack of basic facilities and social services (Sheuya, 2004). In fact, basic infrastructure is the most critical need for human livelihoods. Housing with the necessary services and infrastructure is important for encouraging economic growth, enhancing people's quality of life, reducing poverty, and promoting social sustainability and sustainable human settlements.

Housing serves a variety of purposes, including family life, security, safety, leisure, and cognitive self-fulfilment, which captures the essence of human dignity and facilitates sustainable livelihoods. It also provides tolerance to climate and a refuge from the troubles of the outside world (Tsenkova, 2009; Smit & Musango, 2015). Housing equipped with essential basic

services such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity increases the physical well-being of vulnerable individuals, allows for privacy, enhances social ties, and improves social standing within the local community (Pynoos, 1973). Housing not only serves as shelter for human life but also as the foundation for economic growth, without which households would struggle to survive. For many individuals, homes are places of work that provide spaces that can be used to start small businesses (De Wet, 1994); for others, they serve as sources of employment. Individuals use their houses to generate income, by engaging in income-generating activities such as informal trading enterprises, including shops, workshops, and even nursery schools. The housing crisis, caused by a severe scarcity of homes, lies at the heart of the problems faced by Stjwetla's informal settlements. The components of a decent home, as listed above, are what the residents of Stjwetla are missing.



Figure 3: Living Conditions in Stjwetla. Source: Authors' construct (2020)

The majority of housing in Stjwetla is constructed from pieces of polystyrene foam, sheets of corrugated iron, cardboard, wooden planks, and plastic sheeting salvaged after fires. These housing structures are associated with various indoor environmental problems, including limited space for sleeping, bathing, sitting, and storing food and clothing, as well as a lack of windows for ventilation and no cooling or heating systems. In addition to these internal issues, there are external challenges such as flooding, fires, and narrow, polluted alleyways. Floods and fires

are particularly traumatising for residents, causing not only physical harm but also mental health issues due to displacement, loss of property, despair, increased risk of infectious diseases such as cholera, and loss of livelihoods. Although people have access to water from communal taps, there are still coverage issues. The available communal taps are insufficient to serve the entire informal settlement, and the system design cannot meet supply capacity due to the increased demand for water. Stjwetla, like most informal settlements, is characterised by solid waste scattered throughout the area. Limited waste collection services in Stjwetla result in waste accumulation in and around the informal settlement, which causes pollution and the spread of disease vectors such as pests, infected vermin, and rodents, which deteriorate the hygiene of the slum. Although there is no formal sewerage system in the settlement, the municipality has provided a number of plastic buckets and communal toilets that are emptied weekly. Buckets and chemical toilets have numerous issues, including uncleanliness, poor maintenance, and being disease spreaders, as well as being difficult to access, particularly at night. In the informal settlement, faulty electrical connections increase the risk of fire and the loss of property and lives. In terms of well-being, the neighbourhood suffers from alcohol abuse, rape, drug abuse, criminality, and extreme poverty. The participants reported experiencing crime in their everyday lives, which includes house robbery, theft of all sorts, purse snatching, pickpocketing, as well as domestic assault and rape. All the aforementioned issues hinder the long-term development of the informal settlement and prevent sustainable livelihoods for all individuals living in Stjwetla. It is thus important to ensure that no compromises are made when delivering basic services.

Sustainable Development in Stjwetla, Alexandra

Sustainable development is defined as “development that meets the needs of the current population without compromising future generations’ ability to meet their own needs” (World Commission for Environment and Development, 1987). It encompasses economic, social, and environmental development.

This analysis focuses on the concept of sustainable human settlement, specifically regarding the informal settlement of Stjwetla in Alexandra.

Upon examining the notion of sustainable livelihoods, it became evident that the informal settlement suffers from poor economic development. Many individuals are unemployed, and those who are employed struggle to afford healthy livelihoods. Having established the economic challenges of sustainable development, this section focuses on the social and environmental aspects.

Observations reveal the extent of environmental issues in the informal settlement, particularly along the peripheral area by the riverside in Stjwetla. The continued expansion of the informal settlement has led to deforestation and erosion along the entire settlement and riverbanks. Deforestation and soil erosion are inextricably linked. When trees are destroyed to create space for human settlement, tree cover is compromised, the soil loosens, and land becomes barren and erodes. When the top, nutrient-rich soil is eroded and only the hardened surface remains, the land becomes unproductive and unsuitable for cultivation. Additionally, deforestation and soil erosion have devastating consequences, such as biodiversity loss. Unsafe human practices, such as inadequate sanitation, poor drainage, and insufficient waste disposal, pollute the soil, rivers, and air in informal settlements. The lack of waste collection, defecating in waterways, greywater discharge, illegal dumping, and sewage spills have resulted in the pollution of the Jukskei River. Evidence of this includes the changing colour of the river, algal blooms, and a foul smell. The continued combustion of fossil fuels such as wood, paraffin, and coal, along with the unpleasant odour of uncollected waste, has led to air pollution in informal settlements. The lack of green spaces and constraints on addressing pollution and improving air quality exacerbate the problem of air pollution (Givoni, 1991). Contaminants from illegally disposed trash, as well as inadequate sanitation and inefficient sewage and waste disposal systems, pollute the air, degrade soil quality, and contaminate the water in informal settlements. These issues not only contribute to

the vulnerability of the natural environment (environmental degradation) but also affect the state of the environment that humans inhabit.

The goal of social development is to improve the well-being of all individuals in society so that they can reach their full potential (Rogers et al., 2012). Living without access to basic services, coupled with increasing environmental degradation, subjects individuals to mental health problems. The lack of access to a stable income subjects the individuals of Stjwetla to poverty and prevents the attainment of capabilities. Capabilities are described as a person's and a community's ability to cope with or recover from adversities and function during tough times (Sen, 1993). The research participants who were not working attested to experiencing everyday stress and worrying about how they would provide for their family members. Others expressed understanding towards those who commit crimes to survive. The living conditions in Stjwetla, combined with the absence of income, can force individuals to commit crimes. Access to housing is crucial for achieving social development. Housing serves a variety of purposes, including family life, security, safety, leisure, cognitive self-fulfilment, which captures the essence of human dignity, facilitation of sustainable livelihoods, tolerance to climate, and a sanctuary from the troubles of the outside world (Tsenkova, 2009; Smit & Musango, 2015). Housing with necessary service provisions increases the physical well-being of vulnerable individuals, allows for privacy, enhances social ties, and improves social standing within the local community (Pynoos, 1973). Access to housing has been shown to improve people's living conditions by providing individuals with a "sense of place and hope for marginalised groups, offering a vision and promise for the future", thereby reviving communities (Tsenkova, 2009). The components of a decent home listed above are what the residents of Stjwetla are lacking.

All the aforementioned components are hindering the sustainable development of human settlements. In particular, the illegal nature of these settlements poses the greatest impediment to service delivery. The informal settlement

is illegal, and therefore the physical characteristics of the land do not support development (Huchzermeyer, 2004). Furthermore, even if the inhabitants have the financial means to improve their houses, they are often unwilling to invest due to the increasing threat of eviction from local authorities and other regulatory bodies. This threat of eviction prevents the development and maintenance of structures and infrastructure in the informal settlement. As a result of living in constant fear of displacement, residents' lives remain stagnant, as they cannot pursue improvements in their informal settlements.

Challenges and Solutions to Service Delivery (Community Perspective)

Municipal maladministration, mismanagement of funds, corruption, and poor communication between municipal departments and residents were the most frequently mentioned challenges to basic service delivery by the participants. The participants also felt that the government does not seem to care and continues to make empty promises in exchange for votes. They have emphasised the importance of basic service delivery in improving their lives and plan to continue pressuring the government to provide these services.

In response to possible interventions for the service delivery issue, 20 participants were adamant about the importance of the government providing Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing and supporting basic services to enhance their lives. Ten participants expressed a willingness to move to other areas if given the opportunity, while the rest were concerned about where they would be relocated and how the move would benefit them. Those willing to relocate were attracted by the prospect of accessing a larger plot of land, a house connected to basic services, better roads, public spaces, and a cleaner, safer, flood-free environment. Conversely, those reluctant to accept the relocation solution stated that they did not want to move because they were close to work opportunities, transport, and had established strong social ties and networks. They believed that moving would not guarantee an improvement in their lives. Those opposed to

relocation suggested an alternative: re-blocking the settlement to accommodate better housing and services. Re-blocking involves changing the current layout of the informal settlement to include basic infrastructure such as roads, drains, sewers, water taps, electrical connections, and walkways, among others, in order to create a sustainable division of the plots (García-Villalba, 2014). In addition to enhancing the physical conditions and standard of living in these deprived communities, physical improvements will serve as a basis for other forms of growth, such as generating income, welfare, and community-based enterprises. In addressing the problem of high unemployment in the area, the participants suggested solutions that include improving infrastructure to attract businesses. Additionally, they proposed supporting informal sector enterprises to encourage people to develop and grow their businesses. Others emphasised the importance of providing training skills for the unemployed to make it easier for them to access jobs in the formal sector.

Challenges and Solutions to Service Delivery (Local Government Perspective)

The vulnerability of the land on which Stjwetla is located is a key factor that prevents the provision of basic services to the informal settlement. Ms Ayanda Ngcobo, a Senior Specialist Planner in the City of Johannesburg, identified several factors that hinder basic service delivery in Stjwetla. The settlement is situated on wetland and above electrical mainlines. The compact, clustered nature of the informal settlement further complicates the provision of basic services, as there is insufficient space to allocate services and infrastructure. Ngcobo (personal communication, October 25, 2020) stated: “The general unsafe conditions that people are living in this area make it difficult to justify investing in infrastructure in a place like Stjwetla; the area cannot even be upgraded to accommodate people formally.” Additionally, the increasing number of foreign nationals settling in Stjwetla has made it challenging for the government to assist everyone. Ngcobo (personal communication, October 25, 2020) noted that while

the municipality continues to relocate people and demolish illegal structures, others are moving into the area at a rapid pace in hopes of being provided with RDP housing. This behaviour complicates efforts to remove the informal settlement entirely. The structures that were recently erected are made of bricks and mortar, which makes the demolition process difficult. The final challenge to providing service delivery is said to be the people themselves. People continue to clash with the government, accusing it of corruption and failing to provide basic services. In her response, Ngcobo (personal communication, October 25, 2020) stated that “people are unaware that there is a court interdict preventing the city from planning or implementing anything in Old Alex before land restitution problems are resolved”. Ngcobo (personal communication, October 25, 2020) further noted that poor communication on their part has impacted the community’s trust in them. It is therefore crucial to ensure that proper communication exists between the people and the government in the future. “Speaking with one voice will really assist in building trust and implementing projects timeously” (A. Ngcobo, personal communication, October 25, 2020). Instead of providing basic services, the only feasible and effective solution for improving Stjwetla is through relocation, followed by the rehabilitation of the stressed wetland (A. Ngcobo, personal communication, October 25, 2020). To achieve this, the government is said to be developing a comprehensive plan, which outlines a broad strategy for resolving various issues in Alexandra. In Stjwetla, the government is reportedly considering government-owned land in surrounding areas to accommodate its needs. Collaborating with different levels of government will facilitate the swift development of Alexandra. There are also plans to redevelop old Alexandra into an urban area featuring four- to five-storey buildings to accommodate more residents. Densifying Alexandra is one of the primary strategies aimed at addressing the housing crisis, along with upgrading the infrastructure. However, all this can occur only after restitution issues are prioritised and resolved, before redevelopment can commence.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrated how poor service provision affects overall settlement growth and individual livelihoods. Stjwetla was used as a case study to highlight the importance of basic service delivery in improving lives and fostering development. Access to service delivery, whether through in situ upgrades or relocations, may be the best measure for enhancing people's quality of life, reducing poverty, and promoting the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of development, thereby achieving sustainable human settlement in the Stjwetla informal settlement. The results also showed the need for improved communication and intergovernmental intervention among all stakeholders.

Recommendations

In order to improve the Stjwetla informal settlement, relocations are recommended. Relocation on its own has its drawbacks, such as the high cost of development and unsuitable relocation destinations. However, if executed correctly, relocation could provide individuals with better housing, basic services, and supporting infrastructure. Government-led relocations should adopt an integrated approach that considers physical, social, recreational, environmental, economic, and institutional aspects. For relocations to benefit everyone, it is important to find land that is near employment opportunities, basic amenities, social infrastructure, and public transport. The factors mentioned above are often overlooked by the government when relocating people to new developments. As a result, once relocations are completed, people tend to return to squatting in the city and selling their land.

Instead of being reactive to the development of informal settlements, proactive planning is important. Proactive planning includes planning for city expansion as a means of preventing the emergence of informal settlements. Not only do planned extensions prevent informality, but they also promote a variety of positive outcomes, including “an appropriately planned future supply of land with cost-effective development solutions;

a lower risk of spontaneous informal settlements; minimisation of the effects of urban growth and land speculation; optimization of land use and allowing the population to live closer to employment opportunities; lower energy consumption and a lower carbon footprint; and maximization of the usable land” (Clos, 2014). Territorial planning is also a motivating force for long-term and inclusive economic growth by creating an enabling environment for new economic opportunities, regulating land and housing markets, and ensuring the timely delivery of adequate basic services and infrastructure (UN-Habitat, 2016). The government should be encouraged to develop resettlement policies, recommendations, and schedules. Implementing city-wide plans and recommendations to address relocation concerns will aid in preparing and executing site-specific measures where appropriate. This will also facilitate the prediction and scheduling of services required over time. Additionally, it is important to establish boundaries and physical security for abandoned land and farmlands, where people are more likely to move illegally. Lastly, while many initiatives can be proposed, unless we address the issues of poor governance, municipal maladministration, corruption, lack of skilled professionals, and a deficiency in transparency and accountability that are undermining our government, nothing we do as a country will ever succeed.

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