

# Barriers and Opportunities of Community Participation in Informal Settlement Upgrading Projects: A Case Study of Slovo Park, South Africa

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## 1 ABSTRACT

The Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme (UISP) has been identified as an approach to improve the lives of informal settlement dwellers with minimal interruption to their livelihoods and social networks. In addition, it has been recognised as a progressive approach in human settlements that moves away from the traditional approach of providing housing in the periphery of the city. This approach requires community participation to be at the centre of the development taking place within the settlement. Recent studies reveal that commonly, the state lacks institutional capacity to conduct effective community participation. The paper presents the results of an assessment of community participation in the upgrading process of informal settlements, as implemented at the Slovo Park. The study was conducted using a qualitative approach by means of in-depth interviews with the residents of Slovo Park to gather information on the possible impact of ineffective community participation during the UISP process. The paper reveals that community participation was ineffectively facilitated and this is reflective in the residents' lack of information pertaining the design layout of the future projects to be implemented in the settlement. Moreover, the paper highlights that ineffective community participation hinders residents of informal settlements from accessing self-provided adequate housing and results in provided basic services such as electricity, inaccessible to the beneficiaries due to their known socio-economic status. Results in this paper can be used to emphasise the importance of meaningful community participation for a successful UISP process.

Keywords: Community empowerment, community participation, informal settlement, in situ upgrading

## 2 INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUALISATION

Globally, the urban population is predicted to reach 6.5 billion by 2050 (Feleki et al., 2018). UN-Habitat (2010/2011) indicated that in sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 14 million people migrate to urban areas annually. According to Ragheb et al. (2016), of this number, about 61.7% live in informal settlements. It is acknowledged that in most developing countries, the existence of informal settlements is a representation of poverty trap. Residents of informal settlements often exist in conditions that expose them to health risks, lack of prosperity, unsafe and undignified way of life and over the years, this has been justified by their illegal occupation status (Talukdar, 2018). Despite over 3.6 million new houses built since 1994 through housing strategies such as Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) or Breaking New Ground (BNG), development and expansion of informal settlements have been a recurring problem in South Africa (Brown-Luthango et al., 2017). The growing demand for housing and urban infrastructure has been exacerbated by the sudden influx of people into urban areas especially in large metropolitans such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Ekurhuleni (Møller, 2007). It is undeniable that the various strategies to eradicate informal settlements including demolitions and evictions have failed to cease the development of informal settlements.

According to Huchzermeyer (2014), BNG projects under the National Housing Subsidy Scheme also came along as informal settlement eradication strategy in which households qualifying for the once-off capital subsidy were often removed from the informal settlement and relocated to an identified suitable land where completed units were allocated. Although this programme provided many poor communities with low-cost housing, residents were disadvantaged due to the relocations to the peripherals of the city, where economic opportunities are scarce. It was recognised that this housing subsidy strategy was only dedicated for developments on vacant land, which presented a policy gap in terms of the availability of subsidy system designed to facilitate in situ upgrading of informal settlements (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014). Although Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) was initially launched in 2004, together with the BNG, implementation has been insufficient because it lacked political support. However, it was considered the most progressive housing policy to achieve integrated sustainable human settlements with minimal interruption to people's livelihoods. Implementation of UISP become apparent five years later, after the

programme was introduced as Chapter 13 of the National Housing Code and National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) was incorporated to promote and support the implementation of UISP (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014).

Not only was this an attempt to close the policy gap, it was also an acknowledgement that informal settlements are a part of the urban topography and have the potential to address the increasing housing backlog (Wekesa et al., 2011). In situ upgrading of informal settlements has been regarded as an approach with minimal disruption to the livelihoods and social networks of informal settlement residents while improving their living conditions. Any upgrading intervention including UISP should consider the socio-economic status of the informal settlement to enable provision of basic services that can be accessible to the beneficiaries. UISP requires that there be a proactive community involvement in addressing their own developmental needs (Del Mistro & Hensher, 2009). The role of community participation in the UISP process is to ensure better planning and increase efficiency during the project, ensure that communities' real needs and issues are reflected upon, resulting in better cost recovery after the completion of projects. Furthermore, it enables skills transfer, ensure effective use of resources and ensure affordability (Marais & Krige, 1997; Marais & Ntema, 2013 and Wekesa et al., 2011).

Community participation in the planning process of in situ upgrading goes beyond just allowing community members to make decisions on the suitable product (Meredith & MacDonald, 2017), it can also be a key tool to enhance the community's self-reliance which could encourage innovative self-built or upgrade of their housing structure (Georgiadou & Loggia, 2016). However, Ziblim et al., (2013) observed that in practice, community participation is an administrative façade comprising of arranged meetings, with experts already designed and finalised plans, thus allowing little room for community participation and influence. Public officials often avoid real participatory processes in project planning, because they assume that these are not only "time-consuming," but also, can be "unpredictable" and "messy" (Ziblim et al., 2013).

Recent literature (Mathekga & Buccus, 2006; Ntema et al., 2018; Wekesa et al., 2011; Ziblim et al., 2013) only focuses on the lack of institutional capacity to facilitate real community participation which results in unsuccessful in situ upgrading of informal settlements. However, there has not been enough attention on the impact of ineffective community participation on the beneficiaries of upgrading processes. Given the gap in literature, the study assessed the barriers and opportunities of community participation and possible impact of ineffective community participation, with specific focus to the upgrading process of Slovo Park informal settlement. Subsequent sections of this paper highlight the review of related literature, the methodology adopted, the results, and based on the findings conclusions are drawn.

### 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 The history of South African housing and informal settlement upgrading

The South African post-apartheid government inherited a housing backlog from the apartheid regime. However, since 1994, the housing backlog has worsened and continue to grow especially in the major cities (Moola et al., 2011). A democratic South Africa resulted in the sudden influx of people into urban areas especially in large metropolitans such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, eThekweni and Ekurhuleni. With growing population, the demand for housing and urban infrastructure accelerated beyond the metro's capacity to keep up with the pace (Møller, 2007). The first approach to curb the housing backlog under the new democratic South Africa was through the RDP which focused on ownership and delivering starter home on a plot of land for the poor, with the target to deliver 1.6 million units by 2004 (Ojo-Aromokudu, 2013). According Esteri (2018), the first 1 million housing units were targeted to be delivered in the first 5 years since 1994. This appeared to be too much concern on the quantity of housing delivery while quality was compromised. The launching of BNG in 2004 was a shift from quantity to quality, presenting a comprehensive plan to developing sustainable human settlements. The key objective of BNG was to eradicate informal settlements, yet in 2018, 14 percent of the urban population was recorded to be living in informal dwellings (Esteri, 2018). Despite over 3.6 million new low-cost housing built since 1994 through the traditional subsidy-linked housing programme, development and expansion of informal settlements have been a recurring problem in South Africa (Brown- Luthango et al., 2017). In 2014, South Africa had a housing backlog of 2.3 million, this backlog was further estimated at 2.3 million in 2018, increasing with around 178 000 units yearly (Esteri, 2018).

It is argued that RDP and BNG have had unintended housing policy outcomes as it is evident that they are not successfully curbing the housing backlog, there is slowdown in delivery; inadequate housing has been delivered and continued growth of informal settlements in the major metropolitan cities (Ojo-Aromokudu, 2013). Both policies have been largely criticised for their lack of inclusion of community participation and common practice of relocation of residents of informal settlements. These housing policies have undermined the livelihoods and existing fragile social networks of the poor and have perpetuated the apartheid urban planning strategies which have marginalised the poor (Cirolia, 2017). It became clear that the conventional model and largest subsidised housing programmes were not cost effective, inflexible and environmentally unsustainable and this presented a policy gap in terms of the availability of subsidy system (Huchzermeyer et al., 2014).

Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme was regarded the first progressive housing policy which promote in situ upgrading of informal settlements in suitably located land with minimal disruptions to livelihoods, social networks and minimal relocation while enhancing community participation (Huchzermeyer, 2014). Although UISP was introduced in 2004 through the BNG, there was insufficient political will and consensus to operationalise the incremental upgrading approach. Yet, through UISP, incremental provision of essential services for informal settlements can achieve immediate relieve residents of informal settlements are in desperate need of and it is cost effective (Misselhorn, 2017). However, since the incorporation of UISP into the Chapter 13 of the National Housing Code and NUSP in 2008, the country has witnessed pilot projects of in situ upgrading aiming at achieving National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) Outcome 8 'Human Settlements' – upgrading of 400 000 households in informal settlements by 2014 (Huchzermeyer, 2014). NUSP's main task is to promote and support the implementation of the UISP in terms of co-ordination with sectors and partners involved as means to ensure that government's capacity and professional practitioners is strengthened to implement community-based incremental upgrading, mainly in the metropolitan cities (NUSP, 2015). When implemented, UISP can benefit many amongst the 2700 informal settlements that have been developed over 2 decades ago as temporary transit camps or reception areas and have since been awaiting formalisation and incremental provision of basic services (Huchzermeyer, 2014). Nonetheless, it is evident that the target to upgrade 400 000 informal settlements in well located land by 2014 could not be achieved and it is argued that ineffective community participation and partnership have been a major impediment to effective in situ upgrading (Misselhorn, 2017).

### **3.2 Community participation in in situ upgrading process**

#### **3.2.1 Developing countries context**

Developing countries such as to mention but a few, Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya have undertaken an initiative to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Goal 7 Target 10, to expressively enhance the lives of more than 100 million informal settlement dwellers by the year 2020 (Ziblim et al., 2013). Egypt's approach to informal settlement was the incorporation of Participatory Development Programme in Urban Areas (PDP) on the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF) in 2008. The PDP promotes the implementation of participatory practices in urban upgrading between local government and civil society organisations (including residents of the informal settlement) to ensure adequate service provision (Khalifa, 2015). However, ISDF review conducted by El Maabady (2015) indicated that there was no real community participation in the ISDF process. According to El Maabady (2015), although this upgrading programme was only focused on providing funding for the construction of housing units for the residents, this was done without taking into consideration the needs and socio-economic circumstance of the beneficiaries. As such, living in the provided units was a high-priced option for the poor and the non-provision of power supply resulted in many reinstating illegal electricity connection in the newly provided housing units (El Maabady, 2015).

Ineffective community participation in the Nigerian Re-development project has been a contributory factor for poor response to informal settlements. Although the re-development policy was focused on improving the quality of life of the residents of informal settlements, beneficiaries were largely dissatisfied with the standard of housing provided. As such, the government's purpose was defeated by the selling and renting out of the provided housing units. It was argued that the re-development project was a top-down initiation, thus a size one fit all strategy not precisely suitable for the informal settlement upgrade of Port Harcourt.

Furthermore, the upgrading project was planned and implemented without involving the residents as an important part of the project (Obinna, et al., 2010).

Kenya's Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) of 2003 also suffered from the barriers and missed opportunities of community participation which consequently reflected disregard for the existing socio-economic circumstance of the beneficiaries. Although the initial project was to upgrade the Kibera-Soweto village, the housing units that were prearranged were accommodative to the middle-class standard and posed affordability challenges to the intended beneficiaries. The provided housing units consisted of a two-bedroom and a multi-story single unit unsubsidised mortgage that was intended to be rented out for beneficiaries to afford mortgage repayments. Many recipients leased their units and found alternative and affordable accommodation elsewhere, in poor living conditions. It is argued that the redevelopment "upgrading" strategy undermined aspects of affordability and tenure security, therefore, it is perceived as a suspension to addressing informal settlements and not a solution (Huchzermeyer, 2008).

### 3.2.2 Defining community participation and its significance

It is important to note that the shift to informal settlement upgrading is stimulated by mainly the growing demand for adequate housing and expansion of informal settlement. The urban poor have nowhere else to go and have found an alternative affordable accommodation commonly closer to their workplace. Over the years, they have managed to turn informal settlements into a functional space, often through illegal connection to water and electricity supply. When providing incremental upgrading of basic services, the municipality is building on what has already been built by the community in order to integrate the settlement into the town or city. For this to be achievable and sustainable, residents are to be made partners in the upgrading process and stakeholders in the town or city. Thus, community participation is a pre-requisite (Misselhorn, 2017). Community participation can be defined as a process where the concerned individuals are consulted, empowered, and influence the change that is meant to better their life (El Menshawy et al., 2011).

Although community participation is a process politician find to be forced on them and unfruitful because in many occasions, it becomes a platform for complaints and protests against non-delivery of services, but if conducted effectively, it can benefit politician too (Misselhorn, 2017). Meaningful community participation is crucial for the sustainability of the in situ upgrading post-implementation (El Menshawy et al., 2011). It also has the potential to achieve an everlasting collaboration between communities and government (Simone et al., 2005). Thus, community participation is a key principle of UISP, as such, funding is made available to municipalities and are encouraged to apply for additional funding for external capacity to support participation processes (NUSP, 2015). According to El Menshawy et al. (2011), capacity building, both on leadership skills and technical knowledge is imperative for an effective community participation.

### 3.2.3 Stakeholders in in situ upgrading initiatives

According to NUSP (2015), participation must be undertaken through ward committees, and or Community Development Workers (CDWs), ordinary members of the community and other relevant key stakeholders (e.g. NGO's and or experts in the field). It is from such a structure that community participation process can lead to municipalities making well informed decisions that are based on the real needs of the community they serve. Simone (2005) highlights that in situations where varied interests are to be delivered, community consultation presents an opportunity for involved stakeholders to openly bargain or negotiate and renegotiate functional compromises allowing greater flexibility, creativity and efficiency in the planning process. There will be better understanding of government's intentions and resource limitations it works under and gain community's buy in into the project through inclusive decision-making. Although not everyone within the community may have interest in participating, but for the purpose of meaningful participation, it is necessary that everyone be afforded an opportunity to do so (Burns & Heywood, 2004). The involvement of the vulnerable groups in the key stages of the upgrading can promote community empowerment and capacity building, develop sense of ownership in the project rather than being passive beneficiaries (NUSP, 2015).

### 3.2.4 Good practice and stages of participation process

Whenever a development strategy is considered, including for informal settlements, government must consider the following participation practices that have emerged from court cases in South Africa; respect

and partnership, meaningful engagement, individual engagement, mutual consensus, adequate consultation and active participation. Although all the other practices must be considered, meaningful engagement is at the core of UISP as it encourages that all parties involved (community and municipality) have an open discussion to reach favourable decisions. As such, it is no longer considered meaningful if decisions were taken before the discussion took place because community members would not have been treated as partners in the process (NUSP, 2015).

Participation is an ongoing activity that may vary based on different stages but must be included in the entire UISP process. However, it is most crucial during discussions about development plans of the community. There are 4 phases in the UISP process that require participation. Phase 1: Application – an opportunity for grassroots development where gathering information to assess and categorise of the community can be provided by the community members to form part of the pre-feasibility report. Thus, shared control or collaboration between municipality and community is required. Phase 2: Initiation – submission of the business plan will require cooperation from both the municipality and the community to ensure that the real needs of the end users are reflected. This can also be achieved at minimal consultation unless the community is of the opinion that unneeded project or business plan is drafted. Both application and initiation phase require all parties involved to participate because they involve much negotiation and decision-making, this is an important stage of participation. Phase 3: Implementation – due to the technical complexity, active community participation is rarely expected unless in a case where community involvement is optimal. Thus, the municipality takes full control of this stage. Phase 4: Consolidation – depending on the consolidation undertaken, participation will differ. If housing is provided through the subsidy, informed participation will apply but if there will be People’s Housing Process, the community will take full control (NUSP, 2015).

### 3.2.5 Participatory methods and techniques

Participation methods are not a size one fits all. The best method to choose depends on the purpose, the desired level of participation and the guiding principles. With respect to upgrading, community-based planning method is commonly recommended, but action planning method has proven to work successfully. Action planning has elements of community-based planning, therefore, goes beyond community-based planning. The aim of action planning method is to empower communities to design their project layout, undertake implementation process and manage their own upgrading projects (NUSP, 2015). This method is highly recommended on a re-blocking process, which is another approach to upgrading. Re-blocking has been a common practice under UISP as an initial indicator for interim intervention for informal settlements. Re-blocking aims at addressing issues of safety and unhealthy living spaces especially in very dense informal settlements (Tshabalala & Mxobo, 2014). Re-blocking process is a community-driven exercise which results in the reconfiguring or rearranging of shacks according to the community-drafted spatial framework. The community members are in full control of the process of negotiating floor sizes, tearing down shacks and creating a community-based plan, subsequently building a stronger social cohesion and solidarity (Moreschi et al., 2012). During this process, officials and other involved stakeholders have the privilege to gain wisdom and better understanding of the community’s perceptions by listening to stories, which form a significant part of a meaningful community engagement (Pinfold, 2015).

### 3.2.6 Challenges in the South African context

The South African challenges of community participation are not on the policy guidelines, but implementation. The principles of participation for informal settlement upgrading are clearly stipulated. Build common ground and knowledge between institutions and communities. This includes internal knowledge (life experience and skills) from the communities and external knowledge (technical and specialised knowledge) by municipalities and or specialists. Build mutual trust, make and deliver realistic promises. Stimulate engagement and communication that goes beyond the specific project deliverables, especially because post-implementation there is a continuous operating, maintenance, and urban management issues to address. Establish transparency during the entire process where the municipalities share information with the communities about problems, obstacles and challenges encountered including delays with funding or development approvals and do so as they arise. Perhaps some of these challenges can be dealt with collaboratively. Ensure that there is a community-based partner to effectively represent the community as this plays a key success factor (Misselhorn, 2017).

However, in practice these principles are not implemented, and this has a negative effect on beneficiaries. According to Mathekga & Buccus (2006), lack of community participation has characterised the post-apartheid South Africa over the years. Common reasons for the recurring culture have been the issue of lack of technical skills and lack of adequately trained personnel at local government level. However, this has been largely viewed as an indication that government undermines the importance and effect of active citizenship as crucial elements in a democratic setting, in which citizens should be recognised beyond just customers of social services. The numerous protests within communities are an indicator of dysfunctional relationships between citizens and government. Citizens are not well informed, particularly regarding participatory governance and public officials are yet to be educated on how to facilitate the process (Mathekga & Buccus, 2006). Thus, communities are not empowered with the knowledge and understanding necessary to make informed decisions. As such, instead of a meaningful community participation, in practice, communities play an advisory role. Top-down decision-making and planning of service delivery approach remains unchanged as participation by ordinary people is perceived as interfering with effective delivery of basic services (Thwala, 2009). In practice, community participation is an administrative façade comprising of arranged meetings, with experts already designed and finalised plans, thus allowing little room for community participation and influence. Public officials often avoid real participatory processes in project planning, because they assume that these are not only “time-consuming,” but also, can be “unpredictable” and “messy” (Ziblim et al., 2013). An example would be the implemented in situ upgrading in the community of Makhaza (Khayalitsa) and New Rest (Gugulethu) Cape Town. The City of Cape Town only focused on the quantity of houses needed to be built and leaving little opportunities of open spaces for cooking stokvel, shop spaza, sewing groups, cultural activities, burial societies and socials which women in this community used as survival strategies, social interaction, communication and reciprocity. This was evidence of lack of participation and consultation with the community during the planning process and the City of Cape Town also admitted that designs commonly do not put additional consideration of women and their social networks (Massey, 2013). Informal settlement upgrading projects that were supported by NGOs such as Shack Development International (SDI) have been more bottom-up, grassroot approach of participation and have better responded to the needs of residents (Cirolia, 2017).



Fig. 1: Location of Slovo Park, Gauteng, Johannesburg.

## 4 UNPACKING THE CASE STUDY

Slovo Park informal settlement is in Johannesburg, Region G, next to the Nancefield Industrial area between Nancefield, Eldorado Park and Bushkoppies. The settlement was established in the early 1990s by mainly individuals seeking accommodation closer to their workplace and it has since been expanding (Tissington, 2012). In 2011, Slovo Park consisted of a population of more than 5000, about 1600 households amongst the 1 050 stands. There are no recent statistics of the total number of the population currently living in Slovo Park. Figure 1 below, displays the location of Slovo Park informal settlement within the Gauteng Province, Johannesburg.

Justification for this study area is that it is one of the oldest informal settlements in Johannesburg and recently received a favourable court ruling to have the settlement upgraded through the UISP. City of Johannesburg (CoJ) has submitted a business plan in application for UISP funding from Provincial Housing MEC. Nonetheless, Slovo Park is at Phase 3 of the UISP because incremental provision of basic services such as water supply, pit toilets, electricity and weekly refuse removal have been implemented. Therefore, “moving towards bulk engineering service provision which includes sewerage and storm water drainage, housing provision and roads” Respondent 1. As discussed in the previous section, phase 1 and 2 of UISP process are the most important stages requiring community participation and by the time in which the study was conducted, these phases have been concluded in the study area. This research focused on exploring the barriers and opportunities of community participation that took place during these phases as well as phase 3 and implications of ineffective community participation on the beneficiaries of the upgrading.

## 5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research objective is set out to assess the barriers and opportunities of community participation and the implications of lack of real community participation in the UISP process, studying Slovo Park informal settlement upgrading. This study is qualitative, thus, explores the objective of the study under investigation in the natural setting in terms of behaviours, varied perspectives, and life experience. In this study, in-depth interviews and field observation were conducted. Snowball sampling was utilised to identify ten interviewees that participated in the study, targeting specifically individuals older than 20 years, preferably the elder in the family, until sample saturation was reached. The researcher had purposefully selected ten interviewees consisting of ordinary community members, a community leader who is a local church pastor and member of the community development forum, and an additional two municipal officials. The collected data was analysed through latent content analysis, through which theme development from the interviews was applied. Interview questions were written in English but the interviewees were interviewed in the participants preferred language, which was mostly Southern Sesotho and IsiZulu. Translation from English written questions to these indigenous languages was simplified by the researcher’s understanding of the language, cultural norms of the participants and elaborations were necessary. This is because the researcher avoided compromising the quality of the response, thus, this approach helped in preserving high quality in the answers provided by participants. Within 24 hours of the interview sessions, the recorded interviews were translated into English by the researcher and a transcription of each interview was created. Through the transcribed interviews, the researcher established several themes that emerged consistently. Including the following:

- Officials' incapacity to facilitate community dialogue
- Uncertainty about tenure security
- Unaffordability of the provided services

## 6 STUDY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper provides details of views emerging from interviews and the literature, with an emphasis on the barriers and opportunities of community participation and the impact of ineffective community participation in the UISP process.

### 6.1 Officials' incapacity to facilitate community dialogue

In the study conducted in Slovo Park informal settlement, ordinary community members did not seem to be actively involved in the participation process because they formed a community development forum named

Slovo Park Community Development Forum (SPCDF) to represent them. As such, the committee members consisting of a small proportion of the entire community generally consult and compile a list of the community's needs to present them at core meetings with other stakeholders. From interviews conducted with the CoJ municipal officials, it was discovered that the meaning of community dialogue as an important part of UISP process was not fully understood. The officials were not fully capacitated to handle challenges that arise when engaging a community that commonly have different opinions. This was indicated by Respondent 1 when he said "groups of political infighting whenever department conduct meaningful consultations with entire community blocks. Frivolous interruptions with planning processes especially during engagements with each and every stakeholder. Stakeholders availabilities during critical decision-making points in order to move forward with project plan. For instance, layout plan was objected against at a very late stages process after agreeing about it earlier. Earlier agreements on contents of draft layout shaped the following activities, any amendment changes entire complexion of previous agreements".

This was also admitted during an interview with Respondent 2 who is also a municipal official from CoJ. When the participant was asked to identify challenges in planning and implementing in situ upgrading, he expressed his views and indicated that "...lack of understanding of the programme by government... lack of skills and interest by government".

From what had been said, it is clear that understanding of the UISP process, particularly the aspect of community dialogue where planning process is consent was lacking. Thus, presenting a barrier for effective community participation. There were no capacitated agents from the municipality to facilitate community dialogue that will result in mutual agreements. NUSP (2015) indicated that phase 1 of UISP process thrive on meaningful community participation as these are the key stages were negotiations and decision-making occur concerning the development plans of the community. This presents a missed opportunity to understand the real needs of the end-users and open discussion to allow better understanding of government's resource limitations. This is also evident to Mathekga & Buccus (2006) argument that public officials are yet to be educated on how to facilitate community participation process. Marais & Krige (1997) argued that community participation to an effective and successful project is complicated, as such cannot be accomplished without conflicts, however, it is essential to lead to effective resource utilisation. According to Wekesa et al. (2011), it remains the officials' responsibility to educate and build capacity to enhance their participation, liaising between the community, local authority, and landowners to decide the most appropriate intervention strategy. Ziblim et al. (2013) urged that in practice, community participation is an administrative façade. Officials tend to create false expectations and subsequent disappointments in the minds of community members, who thought their views, could significantly shape decision-making in the upgrading of their settlement. This is because earlier to arranged meetings, experts would have already designed and finalised plans, thus allowing little room for community participation and influence. Ziblim et al. (2013) further indicated that public officials often avoid real participatory processes in project implementation, because they think that these are not only "time-consuming," but also, can be "unpredictable" and "messy". Unfortunately stakeholder's unwillingness to create space for bargaining or negotiation within broad base interaction is not an attitude only seen in South Africa but in many African cities. Local authorities tend to avoid the degree of technical frameworks that comes with community consultation (Simone et al., 2005). Thus, the likelihood to implement top-down decision-making where planning and design is concerned and treating people's participation as an advisory role as indicated by Thwala (2009). However, effective community engagement and participation where ordinary community members are actively involved is necessary and can be beneficial to both the community and the municipality. Besides it being a good practice, scholars (Burns & Heywood, 2004; Misselhorn, 2017; Moreschi et al., 2012; Pinfold, 2015 and Simone et al., 2005) observed that it has the potential to build a stronger social cohesion and solidarity, presents a privilege for stakeholders involved to gain wisdom and better understanding of the community's perspective, and develop sense of ownership amongst the beneficiaries. Most importantly, it has the prospects to achieve an everlasting collaboration between communities and government beyond the project.

## 6.2 Uncertainty about tenure security

Despite the confidence that eviction is no longer a threat for stand owners, it was also discovered during interviews that some residents needed more than just stand numbers and electrification to have their tenure



security guaranteed. Participants indicated that despite the formalisation of the settlement and acquired land tenure security, they are unable to improve their housing structure. Respondent 3 expressed the following views “if we were to be aligned properly in a sense of sharing the plan with us where the installation of sewerage pipe will be, this would enable us to start investing in our properties in a form of building formal structures. Until then, we are compelled to stay in shacks because we don’t want to risk our limited financial resources in building where we will be forced to demolish...”. Another participant in the study who indicated that the settlement has been regularised and have access to basic services they previously did not have indicated that other community members have started improving their housing structure, if resources were available, she would do the same. These were expressions made by Respondent 4, who said “I have a stand number that reassures me that I will not be relocated. Even if they change these numbers every 10 years, no one can claim my stand. In the yard, I have electricity cable connected only to my house, as such, rentals are not a threat because it is clear to them too that the stand belong to me. If I had financial resources, I would build a formal structure just like some of the community members who have already started”.

These are clear effects of missed opportunity for community participation during the planning phase of UISP process. Although the settlement has been formalised and land tenure security is attained, the community is unable to improve their housing structure in order to improve their overall quality of life. This is presnets a clear indication that the community was not actively involved in the layout design of this settlement. Usavaovitwong (2012) indicated that in cases where the community receiving an informal settlement upgrading programme is involved in the planning of the project, such important information is readily available. According to Arimah & Branch (2011), land tenure security should encourage beneficiaries living in informal settlements to improve their housing structure given their organisational skills and resourcefulness. However, this is not the case due to lack of crucial information pertaining the sewerage pipes sites and housing layouts. Residents anticipating housing demolition become discouraged from beginning processes of housing improvements including accumulation of financial resources because only people with good tenure security want to hold better control of their property (Nakamura, 2016). Furthermore, the omitted crucial information underpins the lack of support for Enhanced People Housing Process (PHP). Enhanced PHP policy is an important instrument for informal settlement upgrading to harness community driven initiatives to improve their top structure using own funding or social capital, but it is generally under-utilised (Misselhorn, 2017).

### 6.3 Affordability of the provided services

During the interviews, it was revealed that although residents have access to electricity, using it comes at a higher cost. It was indicated that most of the community members are unemployed, they do not afford to constantly top-up electricity units. As such, they often have no choice but to go back to using unsafe options for lights and cooking. Respondent 5 and Respondent 6 who were participants in this study had this to say “access to electricity improved our lives because when we could afford to buy the electricity units we are able to charge our phones but because most of us are unemployed, electricity is expensive. As such, if one could not top-up the electricity units we go back to square one, use candles and cook with paraffin stove. Therefore, access is still a problem because of our socio-economic status” Respondent 5. Respondent 6 also highlighted that government provided free electricity in the ealier stage of installation. However, when a charge was implemented it was oberved that the units cost more compared to the rural areas. These views were expressed as follow “electricity is costly and I have come to realise that the units we get are not equivalent to the units people from rural areas get for the same amount of money. We do not get government subsidy towards electricity, yet initially we had free electricity for about 3-4 months”.

Without social inclusion, tenure security cannot be achieved through in situ upgrading if the UISP process does not incorporate the enhancement of socio-economies of beneficiaries by means of community empowerment and skills transfers. Based on the statements made by the above respondents, it is evident that the implementation phase of this project missed an opportunity to empower the beneficiaries so that they can be less dependent on state subsidy. According to Huchzermeyer (2006), informal settlement interventions that are not accessible to beneficiaries will result in their displacement to housing options that offer affordability and, in many cases, these are new or existing informal settlements, irrespective of the inclusiveness of the initial allocation procedure. Huchzermeyer (2008) highlighted that displacement due to unaffordability was the reason for ineffectiveness of the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme and key

contributory factor was lack of meaningful community participation. According to El Menshawry et al. (2011) and NUSP (2015), meaningful community participation is crucial for the sustainability of the in situ upgrading post-implementation. Thwala (2009) observed that commonly communities are not empowered with the knowledge and understanding necessary to make informed decisions while Mathekga & Buccus (2006) also made the same observation that citizens are not well informed about participatory governance. On the other hand, local government perceives citizens as mere recipients of service delivery. This presents a barrier of meaningful community participation and empowerment in which socio-economic status of beneficiaries could be matched to the delivered services to ensure sustainability of such services.

## 7 CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper was to highlight the impact of ineffective community participation in the UISP process. A qualitative study was conducted using Slovo Park informal settlement as a case study. In-depth interviews were conducted with the residents of Slovo Park in order to gather views on the phenomenon. The following were the findings of the study. This paper has highlighted the lack of real community participation in the planning process of in situ upgrading implemented in Slovo Park informal settlement. This was indicated by the various community members interviewed in the study. Conflicts are unavoidable in an effective community participation because they form a crucial platform for negotiations and community buy-in into the project. However, public officials lacked capacity to handle disagreements which arised during engagements with the relevant community representatives. This implies that the final layout design of the project was not concluded with the involvement of community members. Therefore, a top-down decision was made in this regard and this was reflected on views participants in this study had regarding lack of information about where sewerage pipe sites will be. The importance of active citizenships and good participation practice was not upheld in this upgrading process, as such, it is concluded that meaningful community engagement was not achieved.

The paper reveals that some of the residents have the financial resources to build a formal top structure but due to lack of information of the plans for engineering services such as sewerage pipe, are unable to invest in their property and build adequate housing for themselves. Some households have taken the risk for potential demolition when they built formal structures subsequent to acquiring land tenure. Adequate housing influences the environmental domain of the quality of life, as such it is no surprise that some residents of Slovo Park are eager to improve their housing structure. This is also an indication that availability of information pertaining sewerage pipe sites might encourage many others. Even if the consolidation plan for Slovo Park is not PHP, given the current housing backlog, discouraging PHP approach is a missed opportunity to curb an already burdened housing backlog.

The paper also reveals that ineffective community participation has resulted in the provision of services that are inaccessible to the beneficiaries. Community dialogue could have highlighted the socio-economic status of the residents of Slovo Park and ensured that the provided services matches the needs of the community. Since most community members of Slovo Park are unemployed, UISP process should have identified that electricity is an expensive commodity that required service providers to consider community empowerment by means of skills development. Community empowerment during the implementation process is essential, especially where the socio-economies of the poor have a direct impact on the sustainability of the upgrading post-implementation. The impact of unaffordability of services will ultimately result in the displacement of beneficiaries to new or existing informal settlements where affordability is guaranteed. Moreover, the fact that at phase 3 of UISP (implementation), minimal community involvement is expected, limits the community empowerment to cheap labour, rather than skill transfers and large-scale action planning approach where the community can undertake implementation process and manage their own upgrading projects.

## 8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Most of the residents of Slovo Park informal settlement do not understand the English Language fluently. As such, the researcher had to translate interview questions from English to either IsiZulu or Southern Sesotho during the interview in order to accommodate the interviewee. This limitation contributed to time consuming task of translation of all transcripts to English. Fixing of appointments with the relevant municipal officials proved to be another limitation to the study. The researcher had to postpone the interview because municipal

officials were unavailable on dates or times previously arranged. Additionally, the research had limitation by methodology, as such further study can be conducted using quantitative approach with a larger sample and in other informal settlements to get a broader view of the topic.

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