

Exploring the Institutional and Developmental Gaps Associated with RDP houses in South Africa: The Case of a 2011-2013 Study of Golf Course RDP Housing Estate, Eastern Cape Province

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ABSTRACT The present study sought to unearth the institutional and developmental gaps associated with RDP houses. The study used mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative approaches with the qualitative being the dominant approach while the quantitative was less dominant. The researchers utilized an interview guide and a questionnaire as research instruments. The findings from this study revealed that: the waiting period before one was allocated a house was too long; lack of transparency in issuing houses; developmental complaints were not taken seriously such as lack of water and the unavailability of support structures such as clinics and hospitals to deal health issues; and there were inadequate social workers to address innumerable social vices such as gender based violence. These findings compelled these researchers to recommend to the government to enforce transparency with the housing authorities; as well as collaborations with NGOs to ensure that necessary support structures are provided in the estate. It is hoped that this paper forms a platform to convey the institutional and developmental gaps to the policy makers to work towards addressing them.

INTRODUCTION

Pivotaly, the country of South Africa is working hard to ensure that the poor and the needy without houses are accessed humane and dignified houses (Manomano 2013). To this end, the government needs to be commended as it has made profound steps through instituting the RDP housing programme. Notable achievements have been recorded such as the construction of one million RDP houses by the year 2000. However, the process appears to take a snail's pace and some hopeful beneficiaries have taken long to be in the waiting list queue. Ironically and to face the naked truth, it is now almost two decades since the Post-Apartheid Democratic South Africa was born, and yet many people in various provinces are still in squalor settlements, living in environments devoid of basic necessities of life such as electricity, water, toilets etc. These environments according to Maslow Hierarchy of needs put this group of people in the bottom-most ladder (Maslow 1999). This meant that after two decades, some South Africans are not adequately enjoying the freedom bequeathed by the Post Apartheid Government. Even after the government has put many RDP houses across the country, there are feelings that these houses face institutional and developmental gaps.

The vulnerability and needy conditions of the targeted beneficiaries is jeopardized by the long waiting lists that leave a lot to be desired. The administration of these housing projects needs to be reviewed. Perhaps, that's why many complaints about RDP houses has attracted concern by the Public Protector whose role is to ensure public spending is done in an accountable and rational way. Unfortunately, some housing beneficiaries as well as other commentators have a feeling that there is no transparency in the administration of the RDP houses. Money has not been used properly. This is because the quality of the houses does not meet some satisfactory standards (Masibi 2012; The Times Editorial 2013).

Perhaps a glaring concern in the RDP houses is that they lack adequate support structures. For instance, the walls of these houses have been weak to an extent of allowing easier penetration of wind, cold weather etc. This has had the effect of rendering the beneficiaries vulnerable to diseases such as flu. The situation of the beneficiaries is exacerbated by the fact that some of the RDP houses in Gauteng do not have clinics serving them, or even nearby (Roane and Mbangezi 2012). This has validated the justification for a research study such as this one to possibly unearth the situation on the ground.

This is with the hope that the recommendations will be taken on board to influence the housing administrators and policy makers to correct the situation (Manonmano 2013). Moreover, most of the RDP programmes are either far from health facilities such as public hospitals and clinics to serve them. This makes the country far from achieving the health based Millennium Development Goals such as those addressing maternal health, HIV/AIDS, TB, and Malaria (United Nations 2012).

Study Aims and Objectives

This research is derived from a broad research study whose aim and objective was to explore the perceptions of the Reconstruction and Development (RDP) housing beneficiaries on the extent to which the project meet their housing needs with a case study of the Golf Course Estate in Alice Town in the Eastern Cape Province. However, the aim of this study is to explore the institutional and developmental gaps associated with RDP houses.

Problem Statement

Although the government of South Africa stands to be commended as it has made profound steps through instituting the RDP housing programme to ensure that the poor and the needy without houses get humane and decent accommodation, the whole fray of these houses appears to face various institutional and developmental gaps. Apparently, even after people start occupying these houses, they feel that these houses were not adequately conceptualized in that they have many conspicuous mistakes. It also appears that the machinery to handle, monitor and evaluate the houses is not adequately satisfying the housing beneficiaries. However, there is no transparency in the way the waiting list is handled, with some people taking too long in the queue while some come from nowhere and are accessed houses. There are accusations of possible corruption, favoritism and nepotisms surrounding the access to the houses; and generally those who have houses have expressed immense dissatisfactions with the houses. It is therefore important to discuss and debate these institutional and developmental gaps associated with these houses with the hope of coming with recommendations of how

to contain or address them altogether. This study, therefore, documented and debated such gaps from the empirical findings of the 2011-2013 Golf Course Housing Estate Research Study.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study used mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative approaches, with the qualitative approach being the dominant one while the quantitative one was less dominant. The use of different data collection methods was especially important because they increased result reliability and validity (De Vos 2005), corroborates the findings as well as confirm and affirm one another. The quantitative approach was especially important to get the magnitude of the perceptions of the beneficiaries while the qualitative was important to solicit the feelings, perceptions, attitudes and views (Nueman 2006; Blessing and Chakrabarti 2009; Strauss and Corbin 1998: 11 as cited by Fottler et al. 2008) of the beneficiaries on the institutional and developmental gaps associated with RDP houses. The design was exploratory, explanatory and descriptive in nature.

Instruments

The study adopted an interview guide with unstructured questions to obtain information from 22 RDP housing beneficiaries, one social worker, one RDP housing beneficiary; and a questionnaire that was administered to 50 RDP housing residents respectively.

Method of Data Collection

The collection of qualitative data was achieved through conducting one-on-one in-depth interview; while the collection of quantitative data was done through conducting a mini survey.

Units of Analysis

22 RDP housing beneficiaries, one social worker and one RDP housing beneficiaries were subjected to a qualitative enquiry while 50 RDP housing beneficiaries were subjected to a quantitative enquiry. The social worker and the RDP housing beneficiary acted as key informants for the study as the social worker is a professional

who is concerned with the wellbeing of the people while the RDP housing administrator is knowledgeable about the RDP housing program.

Sample Selection

The study utilized both probability and non-probability sampling methodologies in selecting its participants. The probability methodology took the form of both stratified and simple random sampling techniques. These two sampling techniques were especially important because stratified sampling decreases the probability error and increases generalizability of results (Black 2011; Babbie 2007) while the simple random increases the chance of each sample having the chance of being selected (Peck et al. 2008). The non-probability sampling methodology took the form of a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique was especially chosen because of its ability to select participants that carry the desired research attributes (Nueman 2006; Babbie 2007; Moule and Goodman 2009).

Data Collection and Analysis

A research assistant from the Department of Social Work and Social Development assisted the principle investigator in collecting data. This is because most data collected from the interviews was in Isi Xhosa language. The researchers used an audio tape recorder to capture data that was later on transcribed. Notes were also taken to supplement the tape recorded data. The qualitative data was analyzed using the content thematic analysis whereby the raw data was ordered, categorized and rearranged into themes according to the emergent views of the participants. On the other hand, quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the data was presented in tables, graphs and charts for clearer meaning.

RESEARCH DOMAIN

The data was collected in Golf Course Estate in Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. The

Table 1: Gender of the study participants

S. No.	Race	Frequency	%	S. No.	Gender	Frequency	%
1	Black	44	88.0	1	Male	19	38.0
2	Coloured	6	12.0	2	Female	31	62.0
3	Total	50	100.0	3	Total	50	100.0

data was collected in November 2012, and analyzed in December 2012 and January 2013. The Golf Course Estate had 1233 RDP houses. The RDP housing administrator and the social worker were interviewed from their offices in Fort Beaufort and Alice respectively while the RDP housing beneficiaries were interviewed from their houses.

FINDINGS

Profile

The findings from this study revealed that there were 88% Blacks as compared to 12% coloured people (see Table 1). On gender, there were 62% females as compared to 38% males. These findings indicated that there was skewed gender discrepancy in that females were more than males. This mirrors national statistics that portray female to be more than males (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010). The findings also indicated that there were more Blacks than the Colored people. This is also conspicuously reflected by the national statistics. Perhaps the reason why there was Black dominance in the Golf Course Estate is because this part of the Province is hugely occupied by the Xhosa people who are usually Black.

Marital Status

The findings from this study revealed that 60% of the study participants were single people while 28% were married and 6% were the widowed while those that were either divorced, widowed or separated constituted 2% respectively (see Table 2). These findings indicated

Table 2: Marital status

S. No.	Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Single	30	60.0
2	Married	14	28.0
3	Divorced	1	2.0
4	Widowed	3	6.0
5	Windowed	1	2.0
6	Separated	1	2.0
7	Total	50	100.0

that most of the beneficiaries were single people. Since the country appears to experience higher rates of divorce, it is pertinent that the Ministry concerned with gender and families in tandem with the faith based organizations consider running national wide sensitizations sessions on the importance of marriage and how family stability contributes to national cohesion. Such cohesion may form a formidable force to reduce cases of social vices such as alcohol and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS prevalence etc. The fact that it is single people in the country who suffer most poverty could be an opportunity for the government to consider applying affirmative action to pave way for alternative ways to strengthen their economic base.

Socio- economic Status

The findings from this study revealed that 52% of the beneficiaries were unemployed; 32% were employed; 6% were casual laborers; 8% were students while those that were self-employed constituted 2% (see Table 3). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"It is very painful to stay without a job; our cry is for the government to help us to get jobs so that we can look after ourselves".

The findings from this study revealed that most of the beneficiaries were unemployed and sentiments indicated that they were suffering because they needed to look after themselves because unemployment imposes a state of dependency, hopelessness and may enforce them to cross the verge of giving up if the government does not intervene. These researchers think that if the RDP houses have improved infrastructure such as government offices, business centres, vocational schools, etc, these can create opportunities for people to engage in some kind of businesses. The area could possibly attract them to engage in other important activities besides engagement in taking excessive alcohol and other social vices.

Table 3: Occupation of study participants

S. No.	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Employed	16	32.0
2	Unemployed	26	52.0
3	Casual	3	6.0
4	Self	1	2.0
5	Student	4	8.0
6	Total	50	100.0

Waiting Lists for RDP Houses is Too Long

The findings revealed serious administrative hurdles pertaining to the way the RDP houses are accessed. Most beneficiaries complained that the administration of the program was not transparent making the process of waiting for the houses an unfair one. This mal-administration made the waiting list very long before the turn to get a houses comes. These findings were supported with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"The waiting time to get these RDP houses is too long and we do not know why it is like that and sometimes we feel that the government is letting us down so much because it is a painful thing to wait for these RDP houses like me I waited for 10 years to get the houses."

These findings indicated that most of the beneficiaries were not happy with the longer waiting period the hopeful beneficiaries needed to take. It was a painstaking process, depressing and made life very sorrowful. The pertinent message is that people felt that the government should take seriously to speed up the construction process of the RDP houses and the allocation thereof.

Lack of Transparency in Issuing the Houses

The findings from this study revealed that there was serious mal-administration surrounding the allocation of the RDP houses. Most of the beneficiaries were not happy with the lack of transparency in issuing RDP houses. They quoted that the process was riddled with acts of corruption, favouritism and nepotism. These findings were supported with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview with the social worker:

"There is something wrong with that waiting list because some people get these houses and yet they were behind some other people in the list"

"Definitely there is a lot of corruption, nepotism, favoritism in allocation of these houses. The government needs to intervene. Some people have been staying in shanties and in squallor environments for far too long. They need houses"

The findings revealed that most of the beneficiaries indicated that there was a serious discrepancy in the waiting list because some would corruptly get houses before those who were ahead in the waiting list. This means that the programme suffered serious administrative gaps that need to be filled if the process of house access is to be satisfactory from a cross section of different people. These researchers think that the government needs to carry out a serious scrutiny of the housing administrators so that they can be transparent and, therefore, administer the housing access competently and following the principle of social justice. This is to strengthen the accountability and responsibility, as well as transparency of government officials.

Developmental Complaints Taken for Granted

The findings from this study revealed that most beneficiaries were not happy with lack of seriousness from the housing officials to handle their developmental complaints such as lack of water around their RDP houses. These findings were supported by the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

“Our complaints are taken for granted. For instance we are tired of staying without water in our houses but we were told we must go to Amatole in East London. Where will someone like me get the money given that we depend on these grants? It’s so frustrating yet they are supposed to help us.”

The findings from this study revealed that most of the beneficiaries were not happy with the state of developments surrounding the RDP houses, with lack of water in the houses being the most aggravating challenge. There was no proper channel for relaying the dissatisfactions and the housing administrators were not giving any satisfactory answer to the impending problem of water unavailability. This presented a disappointing scenario given the vulnerability of these people in terms of poverty making them not to have opportunity to meet other higher ranking officials who can possibly and probably hear their complaints and concerns. The fact that they were disenchanted and disillusioned by the housing officials for not being cooperative to taking their complaints to those who can

solve their water problems for instance is worrying noting the labour and public unrests that continue to characterize and rock many parts of the country. Perhaps the government needs to make the housing administrators comply to its policies of serving the public. The *Batho Pele* and principles of Ubuntu in service provision should be applied.

Inadequate Health Infrastructure/Institutions

The findings from this study revealed that 24% of the study participants indicated that Public Hospitals were very far; 46% indicated that they were far while 30% revealed that they were not far (see Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

“We do not have access to clinics and hospitals and we have to walk long distances to get to them whereas if you are in an emergency we do not know what will happen.”

“It is important for people to know their status and this can be encouraged if the hospitals are closer and they can easily campaign for us to know something.”

“We really need social workers given that one woman was raped in her RDP house and the drug abuse and sexual abuse issues tell you that we need their services; I have discovered that some of the people who come indicating they are HIV positive are from Golf Course RDP houses.”

Table 4: Access to public hospitals

S. No.	Public hospitals	Frequency	%
1	Not far	15	30.0
2	Far	23	46.0
3	Very far	12	24.0
4	Total	50	100.0

The findings from this study revealed that there were challenges regarding inaccessibility of the public hospitals by most beneficiaries of the RDP houses. This has dire consequences on the health of the people. These made them live a miserable life because in the event there were emergencies, havoc was likely to wreak and possibly take toll on the life/lives of the client/clients. In this era of HIV/AIDS, people were worried that lack of these institutions nearby was detrimental to the success of information

dissemination and response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Perhaps, the great worry of the housing beneficiaries is the knowledge that the people from the Golf Course were increasingly getting infected and therefore becoming more vulnerable. The situation poses challenge and bad experience given that the country is alleged to be fighting HIV/AIDS, TB and other sexually related infections. The feeling was that public hospitals could be instrumental in helping people know their HIV/AIDS status and therefore possibly increase their response to HIV/AIDS through processes such as counseling and access to ARVS as well as providing people with free contraceptives to strengthen prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. It is, therefore, a topical issue that the services of the social worker be positioned in these houses given the fact that incidences of sexual abuse and other social vices are rampant in Golf Course.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study revealed that there was a skewed gender discrepancy in that males were outnumbered by females. This agrees with national statistics that indicate that females outnumber males in South Africa (Statistics South Africa SSA 2010). Since women in many countries have been proved to be poorer than their male counterparts, a state called feminization of poverty, it is important that the government affirmatively come up with women empowerment interventions to improve the lives of women especially the single ones (Musekiwa 2013). The situation of single women is also worrying noting that they are more prone to not only the state of poverty, but also other social vices such as prevalence of HIV/AIDS (Barnett and Whiteside 2006). The ministry concerned with families needs to come up with interventions that will attract the strengthening of families. Thus, it is believed that it could have a positive effect in strengthening national cohesion and also mitigate the effects of social vices such as crime and prevalence of HIV/AIDS that are increasing phenomenally in the country (Ramphela 2008). Further, Blacks were also more than the Colored and this is also similar to the national racial characteristic of the South African population that is less dominated by the Colored (Adhikari 2009). However, some perspectives

and statistics also indicate that Blacks are also more affected by poverty than the other races in South Africa (SSA 2012). This also called for more black directed affirmative approaches to improve their livelihood.

Study's findings also indicated that most of the beneficiaries were unemployed and their survival in these RDP houses was very hard and burdensome. It is also a nationwide spell felt all over South Africa because perceptions indicated that the rate of unemployment is very high (Swanepoel 2008) and this is more grave among poor households (May 1998). It could be timeous for the government to consider reinforcing its social security programmes through strengthening or capacitating the people with asset development (Hunt 2009), so that these developmental programs could become sustainable at the end of the day. Perhaps the government needs to come up with newer approaches to economic development. For instance there should be national sensitizations for people to accept adopting indigenization as a possible avenue to driving the economy (Mupedziswa 2001, 2005; Osei Hwedie 1996; Osei Hwedie and Rankopo 2008). This is because it is notable that most South Africans especially around the Golf Course Housing estate do not even want to engage in backyard gardening to get daily vegetables, but would rather continue to buy them in the supermarkets. Such sensitizations should challenge the South Africans to undergo a paradigm shift and accept the indigenous ways of augmenting their income. Engagement in backyard gardening can even provide some employment to some people especially in areas with ample rainfall.

The findings also revealed that the waiting period to access the RDP houses was too long and stressful. This waiting has had detrimental psychological effect for instance prompting residents in Sebokeng, Gauteng to invade RDP houses claiming that they have been waiting for a very long time to access these RDP houses (Mashego 2013). This, if not intervened could cause social action against the government. With the experience of much social action resulting in xenophobic looting of the foreign based shops and business, it is then critical that the issue of the hopeful beneficiaries taking too long to access houses is addressed (Kang'ethe and Duma 2013).

The findings also indicated that beneficiaries were complaining about the lack of transparency in issuing of RDP houses. In Zosa

Street, Port Elizabeth, conflicts also erupted because there were some residents that have been waiting for the RDP houses for too long while some are alleged to be corruptly jumping the queue (Gibbon 2011). This is an indicator of corrupt practices in the issue of houses. To validate the issue of corruption, five former eThekweni councilors faced accusations of fraudulently selling RDP houses. However, the matter was ignored by the political establishments of the ruling party until the opposition political party; the Democratic Alliance (DA) had to raise it to further levels. This indicates that unless the government takes stern measures to tackle the state of corruption, it is indeed a validated cancer that is disenchanting and disillusioning the minds of the RDP housing hopefuls and the general South African populace with the effect of immense blame being pointed to the government for the mayhem (Ngubane 2013).

Findings also decried poor development record surrounding the RDP houses. For instance houses were not connected to water sources, or they did not have water. To this end, most beneficiaries complained about the lack of seriousness by the administration officials to engage the government to ensure that these houses are connected to sources of piped water. To support this scenario from other RDP houses, reports from Khayelisha (Leiter 2011) and all Fort Beaufort RDP houses indicated they have had no water connection (Zuzile 2013). This was a clear indication of inadequate government commitment to the developments surrounding RDP houses.

The findings also revealed that there was lack of health infrastructures to bolster the residents' state of health. This was viewed as serious especially to tackle the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other debilitating sicknesses such as TB. This is serious noting that South Africa leads the whole globe in being the refuge for the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS (Ramphele 2008; Barnett and Whiteside 2006). It is important that health structures even if it is mobile clinic structures are availed to sensitize people about HIV/AIDS and how to strengthen prevention endeavours. It would also be important that the services of the social workers are made frequently to educate and sensitize people on some of the important social problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, rape and gender based violence, and how to prevent and mitigate the

effects of HIV/AIDS. This is because of increase in these vices in the Golf Course Estate (Boitumelo 2012). Elsewhere, in Diepsloot, there are serious challenges with regards to clinics and hospitals as some of the beneficiaries have to walk to a hospital that is 20 kilometers. Despite the area only having two heavily congested clinics in the area, there are no ambulance and emergency services except a fire department (<http://www.s4brown.edu> undated).

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the institutional and developmental gaps associated with RDP houses. It is apparent that lack of seriousness; long waiting period for accessing these RDP houses, a lack of transparency surrounding the waiting lists as well as lack of support structures to bolster prevention of social vices such as HIV/AIDS are serious gaps confronting RDP houses. It is, therefore, pertinent that the government of South Africa considers exploring and assessing these gaps to properly and competently address them. Partnership with other bodies such as the NGOs and the private sector should be sought.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above findings of the study, the researchers have documented the following recommendations:

- ♦ There is a strong need to re-knock a sense of governance and political will to the administration of RDP houses to ensure that construction and finishing of the houses are done on time to make way for a fast allocation to the deserving beneficiaries.
- ♦ The issue of transparency has been on the media for far too long and it is long overdue for the government to consider making the whip and wrath of the law to be tougher to reduce inappropriate handling of the waiting list. It is also good if the government can consider practicing the ideals and principles of service provision such as those decorated on the Batho Pele Principles and the principles of Ubuntu. This can raise the levels of transparency to win the hearts of the people as most are currently disappointed by the house allocation system.
- ♦ The pervasiveness of HIV/AIDS/ TB/Malaria needs to be approached in a holistic

and broader way in these RDP houses. The availability of support structures to encourage and increase prevention response is critical and long overdue.

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