

Exploring the Administrative and Managerial Flaws Associated with Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) Housing Projects: the Case of Alice Golf Course Housing Project, Eastern Cape

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ABSTRACT This study sought to explore the pertinent administrative and managerial flaws associated with Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing projects in South Africa. The study used the mixed methods of both qualitative and quantitative approaches with quantitative aspect taking the form of a mini-survey while the qualitative took the form of a case study. Both the interview guide and a likert-scaled questionnaire were used as data collection instruments. The findings indicated pertinent administrative and managerial challenges such as: RDP participants being engaged in only a few meetings; administrators using the meetings to rubberstamp their agendas and not those of the housing beneficiaries; undemocratic use of only one language in the meetings; disagreements and contestations in the meetings; administrators not respecting the housing beneficiaries; and many cases of malpractices by the housing administrators. The researchers recommended to the government to seriously consider monitoring and evaluation of the administration of the housing project and its relationship with the people. The RDP housing beneficiaries need their democratic space to air their views, concerns and grievances. This is for them to increase their spirit of programme ownership.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of a larger population of a country not accessing adequate, humane and qualitative housing pose a major threat to the future livelihoods of the current and oncoming generations (UN HABITAT 2009). This can be ascertained by the statistics that indicate that 32 percent of the world's 6.5 billion people were residing in slum dwellings in 2005 (UN HABITAT 2003, 2009). In response to this state of homelessness and living in squalor conditions, most governments have embarked on putting up housing projects to hopefully house the needy and the vulnerable population. For South Africa, homelessness has been inherited from the Apartheid Government that displaced the Black South Africans from their own land and deprived them of rights to access adequate and qualitative shelter (Patel 2005). It is to this end that the Post- Apartheid South African government upon achieving power sought to ensure that all the imbalances, inequalities and discriminative policies and programmes are put to a halt. It is then that policies such as Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) were borne (Republic of South Africa 1994). The RDP housing project was established to ensure that it meets

the needs of the poor people such as access to basic social amenities such as electricity, water, safety and security among other things (Republic of South Africa 1994). This programme also espoused to see people taking part in decision making as well as participation in local development to ensure that the projects are developmental. This was to give people democratic space and also to ensure transparency and administration of the public service (Republic of South Africa 1994). Contrastingly, widespread complaints and dissatisfactions on the ground indicate that there are immense administrative and managerial flaws embedding within the RDP housing projects. In Kwa Thema, East Rand in Gauteng, for example, complaints indicated that there is no progress from the meetings with the housing officials because the concerns of the residents are never attended to (Morereane 2012). Challenges have also been acknowledged from the Human Settlements office that concerns and grievances pertaining to the RDP houses are usually given a raw deal (Mtyala 2013). This paper, therefore, aims to document and explore the possible administrative and managerial flaws associated with the RDP houses taking Golf Course Estate as a platform. The paper hopes that the results will attract the attention of the

government officials to work towards addressing the administrative and managerial flaws embedded in the projects.

Problem Statement

One of the most important needs of human beings according to the Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is adequate and qualitative shelter (Kaplan 1996; Maslow 1999). To this effect, the United Nations in cohort with many other countries of the globe recognize housing as a pertinent right (UN Habitat 2009). This contention has influenced the introduction of housing projects and programmes around the world to assist the vulnerable and needy to access housing that meets their needs (Manomano 2013). Surprisingly, the establishment of these projects and programmes has not been run efficiently and effectively. In South Africa, for example, the RDP housing project faces constant dissatisfactions emanating from the lack of basic social amenities such as water supply, fencing, roads, lights, to name just a few. Most of the RDP residents do not have access to RDP housing administrators and social workers, administrators and social workers handle their grievances (Manomano 2013). This paper, therefore, seeks to explore the pertinent administrative and managerial flaws associated with RDP Housing Project. The findings could provoke and stimulate policy review and augmentation towards an efficient administration and management of the housing project to enhance the ability of the project to meet the needs of the RDP beneficiaries.

Study Aims and Objectives

This present paper has been derived from a broad research study that sought to explore the perceptions of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) Housing beneficiaries in South Africa on the extent to which the project meets their housing needs, with a case study of the Golf Course RDP Housing project, in Alice Town, in the Eastern Cape Province. The aim of this paper is to explore the pertinent administrative and managerial flaws associated with RDP Housing projects.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The purpose of using

mixed methods was to increase the study results reliability and validity. The qualitative method was especially useful to obtain the feelings, thoughts, attitudes and views of the participants in order to make meaning of the perceptions of the participants (Creswell 1994 as cited by Kang'ethe 2010). The quantitative method was very important in order to measure the perceptive levels of the participants (Neuman 2006). Thus, the use of both methods increases result reliability and validity (Kakurkly 2011). The design was explorative, explanatory and descriptive in nature.

Methods of Data Collection

The qualitative data collection involved the use of one-on-one in-depth interviews while the quantitative data collection involved the use of questionnaire interviews administered by the principal researcher himself.

Instruments

This study adopted an interview guide with unstructured questions to handle qualitative interviews; and a likert-designed questionnaire with closed ended questions to collect information on the respondents' perceptive levels and experiences regarding the RDP houses.

Units of Analysis

The study interviewed 22 RDP beneficiaries, one Social Worker and one RDP Housing administrator; while 50 participants were subjected to a questionnaire interview. The involvement of an RDP housing official was especially important because he was knowledgeable about the administration and construction issues of the houses; while Social Workers are the officers who are concerned about the wellbeing of the people. This meant that the Social Worker and the RDP Housing administrator acted as key informants in the research study.

Sample Selection

The study adopted both probability and non-probability sampling methodologies to select its participants. The probability sampling methodology included the stratified and simple random sampling techniques in selecting re-

spondents to be included in the mini survey. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were very useful as they enabled the researcher to reduce the probability error as well as making the study to increase the generalizability of the results (Babbie 2007). Non probability sampling methodology included the purposive sampling technique that was utilized to select participants for in-depth interviews. Purposive sampling technique was very useful and critical as it enabled the researcher to select participants with specific 'research' 'characteristics' in tandem with the study (Johnson and Christensen 2010).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This researcher was assisted by a research assistant from the Department of Social Work, who doubled as a translator as most data was collected in IsiXhosa language. All the data that was collected from the in-depth interviews was audio-taped after the researcher gained informed consent from the research participants and respondents. All the audio taped data was transcribed later on after the interviews. The researcher took notes of the feelings and temperaments as well as gestural expressions of the research participants to complement the audio-taped data from the interviews. This qualitative data from the interviews was categorized, ordered, rearranged into themes according to the emergent perceptions of the research participants using the content thematic analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in tables and graphs for clearer meaning of the perceptions of the study participants and respondents.

Research Domain

The findings from this study were collected from Golf Course Estate in Alice Town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The beneficiaries or residents of RDP houses were interviewed from their RDP houses while the social

worker and the RDP housing administrator were interviewed from their offices respectively. There were 1233 houses in Golf Course Estate during the time of the study (2011-2013). Golf Course was chosen as research domain because of the subjective numerous complaints about the administration and management of the houses by the housing beneficiaries.

FINDINGS

Profile of the Study Participants

Gender and Race

The findings from this study indicated a skewed gender representation in that there were 62 percent females as compared to 38 percent who were males (see Table 1a). The findings also indicated that there were 88 percent Blacks as compared to 12 percent coloreds residing in these houses (see Table 1). This indicates that blacks outnumber the colored in the occupation of these RDP houses. The phenomenon mirrors the national statistics that indicate that blacks outnumber the colored in South Africa (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010). Perhaps the situation calls for the government to consider affirmative action approaches to help the majority Blacks in their pursuit for socio-economic redress.

Marital Status

The findings revealed that 60 percent of the study participants were single; 28 percent of the study participants indicated that they were married; and 6 percent were widowed. These who were widowed, separated and divorced they were 2 percent respectively (see Table 1b). The high percentage of those that were single indicates that there is a great need for the government and other development partners such as the NGOs to affirmatively direct more resources to economically improve their lives. These researchers urge the government to use the policy of affirmative action to get public funding to

Table 1a: Gender and race of the study participants

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

Table 1b: Marital status of the study participants

S. No.	Marital status	Frequency	%
1	Single	30	60
2	Married	14	28
3	Divorced	1	2
4	Widowed	3	6
5	Windowed	1	2
6	Separated	1	2
7	Total	50	100

assist this vulnerable population. This group could be helped to start small scale business enterprises, craftwork, vocational training and education, as well as asset based community development.

Socio-economic Status

The findings indicated that 52 percent were unemployed; while 32 percent of the study participants were employed; 6 percent were casual laborers; and 2 percent of the study participants were self employed; where as 8 percent were students (see Table 2). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments of beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"To be honest with you, life is very difficult here with no jobs; we really need the government to help us with jobs".

These findings reveal that most of the people owning these houses are unemployed, underemployed, or with meager resources at their disposal. This is a topical subject that the government must deeply look into by coming up with feasible and plausible strategies towards providing employment opportunities. To this end, the government needs to effectively partner with the private sector and other bodies such as the NGOs to stimulate development and therefore create jobs. Recommendably, the government in cohort with the private sector or NGOs should consider sponsoring seminars and community mobilization sessions to motivate and educate the people on the importance of changing their mind on white collar job to informal or self employment. It is then recommendable that kitty funds are set to award those who would like to venture into businesses. People need to embrace the spirit of entrepreneurship (Mafela 2009).

Table 2: Socio- economic status 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

Frequency of Meetings between the RDP Administrators/Managers and the Beneficiaries

The findings from the study indicated that 64 percent of the participants revealed that meeting between housing administrators occurred only a few times; 18 percent indicated that there had been no meetings; 14 percent indicated meetings are regularly held; while 4 percent of the study participants did not know anything at all (see Table 3). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from participants who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"We need the services of the RDP housing administrator here because we feel abandoned. These houses have so many problems that need to be addressed"

"We have never seen a social worker where as many people are dying of AIDS".

"There are just a few meetings. They cannot solve our problems with fewer meetings because there is need to track progress on everything"

"These housing administrators are not committed to handling our grievances. They are tricksters and yet the problems need serious attention".

These research findings indicate that most of the participants were not happy with the low frequency of the meetings between them and the RDP housing officials and the social worker. This indicates that the beneficiaries' involvement in the programme is lower than it should be. This does counter some of the goals of the RDP programme that envisaged the community members being strong stakeholders in the running of the RDP programmes. Perhaps having the offices of both the housing administrator and that of a social worker located in the RDP estate could probably solve the issue of low frequency of the meetings. Such meetings with

the social workers could play a pivotal role in information dissemination about HIV/AIDS that was plaguing the estate and posed a national challenge as well.

Table 3: Meetings with RDP administrator/social worker

S. No.	Number of meetings	Frequency	Percentage
1	Frequently	7	14.0
2	Fewer times	32	64.0
3	None at all	9	18.0
4	I don't know anything	2	4.0
5	Total	50	100.0

Level of Satisfaction Associated with RDP Dwellers vis-a-vis RDP Administrator/ Social Worker

The findings from this study revealed that 50 percent of the study participants revealed that they were not satisfied with the meetings; 20 percent indicated that they could not comment; 26 percent revealed that they were satisfied; while 4 percent indicated that they were very satisfied with the meetings (see Table 4). These perceptions were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from participants who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

“The issue that worries us is that these meetings discuss the agenda that the officials want and not what we want; there is no democracy, It is as if we are in prison.”

The findings from this research study reveal that most beneficiaries were not satisfied with the content and quality of the meetings. It is this researchers' contention that these meetings are supposed to embrace democratic dispensation by letting people's views, opinions, and thinking about housing development be the focus of the agenda. This is because RDP mirrors or is founded within the premises of social and community development which should view the grassroots population as important ingredients of decision making organs of development. The grassroots population, for example, needs to understand through such meeting the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS and how to mitigate its effect. Therefore, these researchers advocate for more involvement of social workers with the RDP house beneficiaries; as well as lure community development oriented NGOs that will educate

the people on issues of social vices such as HIV/AIDS, gender based violence, drug and drug abuse etc. The RDP housing beneficiaries need to access these social services timeously.

Table 4: Satisfaction of the meetings with RDP Administrator and social worker

S. No.	Satisfaction with meeting	Frequency	%
1	Very satisfied	2	4.0
2	Satisfied	13	26.0
3	Not satisfied	25	50.0
4	Could not comment	10	20
5	Total	50	100.0

Undemocratic Way of Conducting Meetings

The findings from this study indicates that there were managerial and administrative challenges associated with organizing and running the RDP meetings. For example, although most RDP dwellers were people who spoke different languages, the administrators would use only one vernacular language without making any arrangements to have it interpreted. These findings were supported with the following verbatim sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

“It's useless to attend those meetings with the housing officials because we do not even understand what they say. They use only in IsiXhosa whilst we are not Xhosa- speaking people; we feel it's discriminative.”

“We do not even know anything about the meetings; if they were organized properly we would have known about them.”

The findings from this study indicate that there are immense challenges regarding the organization and planning of meetings between the RDP housing officials and the housing beneficiaries. Some of the participants indicated that they did not know anything about the meetings while others indicated that they felt discriminated because of the use of Isi Xhosa language without interpretation. These flaws indicate that the government needs to seriously consider instilling values of people centered development in its ministries that will respect people and treat them humanely and equally. Although IsiXhosa is one of the 11 national languages, the administrators know very well that the RDP house project is a national one attracting the South Africans

from every corner of the country. The administrators need to understand the labour unrests that are unrelentingly sweeping the country due to the public dissatisfactions with service delivery. They should change their attitudes and give the RDP dwellers adequate democratic space to air their grievances and concerns.

Administrative and Managerial Flaws

The findings from this study indicate that most study participants revealed that there were challenges maladministrative nature surrounding the RDP housing project. Such maladministration allowed corruption, nepotism and bribery in the allocation of the houses. These findings were supported by the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to one-on-one interviews:

"We want to meet the Minister himself, because we have realized that the housing officials are misusing the money. Their records and what we see on the ground are two different things."

"Its is obvious that that are malpractices surrounding these houses. Things need to be uncovered. These things need to be known by the public protector."

The findings from this study reveal that the housing officials were failing to be transparent and honesty in reporting their progress in housing matters. This kind of managerial flaw show that the government is failing to take the poor and the needy seriously. If the issue of housing is to redress the poor from housing problems, then these anomalies displayed by the housing administrators should not be entertained. This also paints a bad picture on the level of effectiveness towards awarding of big national contracts such as for building RDP houses. One may not rule out possibilities of corruption.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study indicated a state of gender discrepancy and skewedness as there were more females than males heading these houses. It also goes to show that these findings agree with national statistics that indicate that females are more than males in South Africa (Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010). This therefore supports the reason why there are more females than men who have been accessed the RDP hous-

es. This also implies a state of feminization of poverty as well as in RDP housing occupancy (Kang'ethe 2013a). This state of feminization of RDP houses as well as the feminization of poverty needs to be challenged because it affects the contribution of women to national development as well as the quality of women's life (Mulinge and Mufune 2003). Since the lives of women and children are inextricable linked, it also means that the quality of life of children of these women is also at stake. Feminization of poverty needs some serious structural changes in the economy as well as in the governance. As long as women are poor, the countries' road to achieving many Millennium Development Goals will always remain a bumpy one. It is recommendable that the governance structures consider applying affirmative action to increase resources that will empower women and children (United Nations 2012)

The findings from the study also revealed that there were more black people than colored South Africans residing in those houses (Statistic South Africa (SSA) 2010). This also validates the fact that South Africa has been documented as a rainbow nation where people of different races, colour, ethnic groupings co-exist together and share the resources amicably. This is why coloured people as well as other groupings that are not known to hail from Alice Town are also the RDP beneficiaries. It also shows the democratic dispensation embraced by the RDP policy (Patel 2005). There were also more single people as compared to the married, divorced, widowed, and separated. These findings agree with perceptions that indicate that the percentage of married people is going down instead of increasing (Thornton 2008). This is also worrying because it is the single people especially the youth who are more prone to social vices such as crime, poverty and HIV/AIDS (Barnett and Whiteside 2006; Treatment Action Campaign 2007; South African national AIDS Council (SANAC) 20007). The government needs to come up with plausible and strategic approaches to economically handle young people. Having a very big population of young people being idle in a country is like that country being on a time bomb. Perhaps using economic affirmative action to set off a youth kitty fund to conduct massive vocationally based training of various types could open doors to employment or self employment. The

route of entrepreneurship could be the best alternative to poverty reduction (Mafela 2009).

The findings from this study revealed that most of the beneficiaries were unemployed. These findings also agree with other statistics and other researchers that indicate that the rate of unemployment is very high in South Africa just like in many countries of Africa (Kang'ethe 2014). Moreover, this high unemployment confirms a report on Africa that indicates that unemployment is high among the poor people linking poverty to unemployment (Economic Commission for Africa 2005; Hofmeyr 2008). As a solution to reduce unemployment, these researchers would ask the government of South Africa to borrow a leaf from countries such as Britain that have policies of training low skilled individuals free of charge so that they can be equipped for better sustainable employment opportunities (Great Britain 2004).

The findings from this study indicated that there were serious managerial and administrative flaws surrounding the running and conduction of meetings between the housing officials and the beneficiaries. The messages of the meetings were not adequately executed when meetings were called, and the frequency of the meetings was low. Elsewhere in Westlake village, organizational challenges of the meetings were reported. This was displayed by the poor representation of the residents as 6 of the 41 people of the community committee meeting were residents of Westlake and the rest were not. This poor representation of these beneficiaries limited their meaningful participation given that they were only a few. In some instances, even the involvement of these beneficiaries was not taken seriously by RDP administrators. Literature indicates that the RDP administrators and the social workers' attitudes towards the housing dwellers was bad. They were looking down upon them. They never considered them as important stakeholders in the RDP implementation process (Lemanski 2008). Furthermore, in Diepkloof, Soweto, residents were dissatisfied with the meetings because their needs were not taken into consideration. This is because the housing officials were calling for the meetings just to endorse their plan and seal it with these meetings (Mafukidze 2009). This also agrees with some other authors who indicate that the interests championed by community development projects are usually not the interests of the ben-

eficiaries (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Therefore, this scenario and attitudes displayed by the government officials towards the RDP housing project calls for an assessment into its implementations structures to find out exactly where the obligation of fully involving the beneficiaries fall under. This is because if the interests of the beneficiaries are served in the management and administration of the project, this will socially empower the dwellers and raise their spirit of ownership of these houses (Gounden and Merrifield 1994; Lemanski 2008). To show the magnitude of the administration and managerial flaws surrounding RDP houses, so far in the year 2013 alone about 2000 reports have been received by the office of the Public Protector concerning maladministration of the RDP Housing project, with complaints ranging from inaccuracy of information on the waiting list as well as lengthy time in removing illegal residents (Corruption watch 2013). More over, in Grahamstown, reports of emotional and racist fights have been recorded especially when residents reveal that they need more clarity and transparency on housing issues (Abahlali Base Mujondolo 2013).

CONCLUSION

These researchers applaud the RDP housing programme as a programme built upon good intentions. However, the dissatisfactions and complaints surrounding administrative and managerial flaws indicate that more work needs to be done to strengthen the level of governance among housing officials. This is because the key to addressing these challenges lies with re-inventing the managerial and administrative approach and mechanisms of those housing programmes towards efficiency and effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is based on the pertinent managerial and administrative flaws associated with RDP Houses that the following recommendations are suggested:

These researchers admit that the administrative and managerial processes of running the RDP houses are inefficient and therefore suggest that the government as the entrusted arm of public interest should carry out an assessment of the magnitude of the representation of the people in the meetings by RDP authorities

to address the RDP dwellers concerns. This will likely steer a shift towards addressing the real challenges that these beneficiaries are going through. In support of this approach, the social developmental approach argues that these projects should be rights- based, meaning that manipulation of the rights of the people, their voice and concerns is a violation and refusal of their inherent and inalienable rights. This is because the government's existence is linked to the people and these people would have committed their precious trust banking on the belief that their wishes will be prioritised in developmental projects.

It would also be important for the principles of Ubuntu in service provision to be seriously considered in these housing projects. This means that issues such as respect, transparency, courtesy will become a norm. This will also eliminate tendencies of socially excluding other people who do not speak the language of those housing officials in any part of South Africa. Furthermore, the issues such as fights between the beneficiaries and the housing officials will also be eliminated.

There is also a need to strengthen the goodwill towards planning and raising awareness about the meetings between the housing officials and the beneficiaries. The involvement of other stakeholders such as officers from the Public Protector's office could also strengthen the commitment of the housing officials. More over, the implementation of the intergovernmental approach in service delivery needs to be taken seriously to ensure that social workers are also involved in these housing projects among other departments. This will also strengthen the government's commitment toward the fight to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The problems of unemployment will definitely require the government to set up a national inquiry that will probably come up with alternative approaches to face the stalemate. Other alternatives include creating an enabling environment for the private stakeholder to partner with the state in securing employment to the RDP housing beneficiaries.

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