

Sanitary and Hygiene Related Challenges Associated With RDP Houses: The Case of RDP Golf Course 2011-2013 Study, Eastern Cape Province

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ABSTRACT This paper sought to explore the sanitary and hygiene related challenges associated with RDP houses in South Africa through a 2011-2013 case study of RDP houses at Golf Course, Eastern Cape Province. The study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches and therefore took adopted the case study and mini-survey designs. The findings from this study revealed that there were challenges associated with sanitary and hygiene in these RDP houses due to factors such as inadequate spacing and the size of the houses, lack of access to clean water in almost all the houses, poor quality of toilet materials, bad positioning and malfunctioning of the toilets, and poor cracking walls that allowed the wind and cold air to easily permeate. These challenges compelled the researchers to recommend for serious renovation of the houses, work to reposition the toilets, and work on speedy provision of clean water to all the houses among other things.

INTRODUCTION

Sanitation and hygiene form some of the debilitating challenges surrounding housing especially in the developing parts of the world. In the pursuit of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), many poor countries have set objectives of improving access to water and ensuring people live in hygiene and sanitized conditions, it is worrying for many countries as the clock ticks to 2015 (Muller 2008). Focusing on South Africa, the country needs to be credited for putting in place many houses, the so called the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) houses to meet the housing needs of the poor people. Policy wise and through legislations such as, the White Paper of Water Supply and Sanitation of 1994, the National Water Act of 1998, the draft National Sanitation Policy of 1996, as well as the Water Services Act 108 of 1997 among others (Monyai 2003), the government has shown commitment to ensure that housing access takes care of sanitary and hygiene issues. These responses were done in response to the chaotic and dehumanizing circumstances that the apartheid regime had pushed especially the African-American majority into. These legislations were also in line with the RDP housing project that also sought to ensure that the RDP houses were qualitative and adequate for habitation with water and sanitation

conditions in place (Republic of South Africa 1994). It is however disappointing to discover that most of the government sponsored RDP houses lack sufficient access to water and sanitation, and the toilet conditions are deplorable, first due to their physical positioning, and also due to lack of water to flush them out. These houses are also very small to accommodate a family. This is because most of them are one-roomed without proper ventilation (Zuzile 2013; Baumann et al. 2002; Hunter and Posel 2012). These researchers have therefore written this paper to explore the sanitary and hygiene conditions associated with the RDP houses in the Golf Course, Eastern Cape Province. These researchers hope that results from this investigation could assist the government, NGOs, as well as other housing friendly stakeholders to consider addressing the conditions of sanitation and hygiene of the RDP houses in South Africa generally.

Problem Statement

The access to housing in many settings of the developing part of the world has unfortunately been challenged by poor sanitary and hygiene conditions globally (Margai 2012; Muller 2008). It is to this end that the UN as a world body has declared that access to housing should also consider and address hygienic and

sanitary conditions to make the houses suitable for dwelling. This is hoped to satisfy and make people happy or happier (UN Habitat 2009). This is, however, not the case for most housing programs in Africa such as those put up by the South African government through the so-called South African RDP program. In South Africa, most complaints indicate dissatisfactions towards sanitary and hygiene conditions. For example, most of the houses are found to be without a toilet or water for these toilets, as well as poor drainage. The materials from which the toilets are made are fragile and these houses are one-roomed and therefore devoid of humane living conditions for the dwellers (Manomano 2013; Zuzile 2013). This paper hopes to validate and document the challenges associated with hygiene and sanitary conditions. The researchers think that this paper could be a platform to alert the government and other housing friendly bodies to reorganize and repair those houses to ensure the hygiene and sanitary conditions are in place.

Study Aims and Objectives

This study has been derived from a broader research study whose aim was to explore the perceptions of the RDP Housing beneficiaries on the extent to which the RDP housing project meets their housing needs in South Africa with a case study of Golf Course Estate in Alice Town, Eastern Cape Province. However, this article endeavors to explore the sanitary and hygiene related challenges associated with RDP houses.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods. A use of mixed methods was especially important because the use of different designs as well as different data collection methods confirm and corroborate the findings with the results of increasing the results' validity and reliability (Rubin and Babbi 2008). The quantitative method was important to collect the magnitude of the perceptions of the participants on the subject matter, while the qualitative method was especially important to collect the opinions, feelings, attitudes and views of the participants to make meaning of their per-

ceptions (Rubin and Babbie 2008). The design was explorative, explanatory and descriptive in nature. The quantitative design took the form of a mini-survey while the qualitative design took the form of a case study.

Methods of Data Collection

The qualitative enquiry was made possible through the use of one-on-one in depth interviews, while the quantitative was made possible through the use of a mini-survey administered by the researchers.

Units of Analysis

22 RDP housing beneficiaries, one social worker, and one RDP Housing Administrator were subjected to a one-on-one interview, while 50 respondents were subjected to a questionnaire interview administered by the researcher himself. The social worker and the RDP Housing Administrator acted as key informants because social workers are directly involved in the welfare of the people while the RDP Housing Administrator is knowledgeable about the RDP houses.

Sample Selection

The study adopted both probability and non-probability sampling methodologies in selecting its participants and respondents. The probability sampling methodology was utilized in selecting respondents for the mini-survey. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were utilized because they decrease the probability of error and increase the generalization of the results in the study (Babbie 2007). Samples for the in depth interviews were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique was used because it enabled the researcher to select only the samples that carried the desired research attributes (Neuman 2006).

Instruments

This study utilized two instruments, an interview guide with unstructured questions to steer in depth interviews with one social worker, one RDP Housing Administrator and 22 RDP housing beneficiaries, and a Likert-type scale

designed to collect the perceptive levels of the 50 selected respondents on sanitary and hygiene related challenges.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This researcher was assisted by one research assistant to collect the data. The assistant also served as an interpreter as most data was collected in the Isi Xhosa language. All the data for the in depth interviews was audio taped using a tape recorder and was transcribed later on after the interviews by the researcher. Notes were taken during the interviews by the researcher on the expressions, attitudes and gestures of the participants/respondents. Qualitative data was analyzed using the content thematic analysis whereby the data was rearranged, categorized and ordered into themes according to the emergent views and perceptions of the participants. Quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in the form of tables, graphs and pie charts for clearer meaning.

Research Domain

This study is based on the findings from a study conducted by the researchers on the Golf Course RDP Houses in Alice Town, Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Golf Course was chosen as the site for the research because of complaints on the RDP houses regarding sanitation and hygiene. Moreover, since Eastern Cape is considered to be one of the poor provinces in South Africa, that made it timely for a study of this nature to be conducted. There are 1,233 houses in Golf Course location.

FINDINGS

Profile

The findings revealed a state of skewed gender discrepancy as there were sixty-two percent

females compared to thirty-eight percent males. Regarding their race, eighty-eight percent of the study participants and respondents were Black South Africans as compared to twelve percent who were colored (see Table 1). This indicates that there is a need for the government to seriously consider empowerment programs for the Blacks as well as the females who are affected by poverty in South Africa.

The findings also revealed that sixty percent of the participants were single, twenty-eight percent were married, six percent were the widowed, whereas those that were either, windowed, separated or divorced constituted two percent, respectively (Table 2). These findings indicate that single people are the dominant majority residing in those houses than the married, widowed, windowed, separated and the divorced. This points to the fact that single people are more vulnerable to the state of poverty in South Africa. It is therefore critical that the government and other housing friendly programs are initiated to take care of single people. They need to be empowered if South Africa is to score significantly in the MDG stock taking due in 2015.

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

Socio-economic Status

The study revealed that fifty-two percent of the participants were unemployed, thirty-two percent were employed, six percent were casual laborers, eight percent were students, and two percent were self-employed (see Table 3). The high levels of unemployment call for interventions and strategies by the government to se-

Table 1: Gender of the study participants

S.No.	Race	Frequency	%	No	Gender	Frequency	%
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

cure these people with employment options for survival strategies. Such strategies could include massive vocational based training as well as through funding them to initiate small and medium enterprises.

Table 3: Socio-economic Status

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

Inaccessibility to Clean Water

The findings from this study revealed that ninety-two percent of the study participants indicated that they had no access to clean water, while eight percent had access to clean water (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 need clean water to flush these toilets and to drink as well because the water from the tank is affecting us and our children, we have to wait for some tanks and we have to wait in long queues that can continue through the night; everything is just unhygienic and chaotic".

"With no water to drink and yet we do not have money to buy the bottled one, life is very miserable here. The issue of having no water to flush the toilets has made the life of living in RDP houses a very debilitating one."

The findings revealed that the RDP housing beneficiaries are not happy with the inaccessibility of clean water in their houses. This is because without access to clean water, these beneficiaries' health is severely compromised. Some even pointed out that the water they painfully fetch from the tank was also beginning to affect their children. This calls for serious attention from the Nkonkobe municipality to ensure that water supply is realized in these houses.

Poor Quality Toilets and Improper Positioning

On quality of toilets, fifty-eight percent of the participants revealed that the quality was

poor, sixteen percent revealed that they were good, and twenty-six percent indicated that they were fair (see Table 4). These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments from the beneficiaries who were subjected to a one-on-one interview:

"The toilets are weak and already the seat is broken because they are so fragile; if water is going to come, we do not know how we are going to enjoy them because they are in a discrepant state"

"The positioning of these toilets is awful. Toilets are facing you as you sit, eat or do the cooking. It is indeed very embarrassing and very unhealthy. The environment is very nauseating. We do not know how these houses passed the health authority tests. It is corruption and corruption everywhere"

The findings indicated strong dissatisfactions on the fragility of the toilets as some sentiments indicated them to be in a state of total 'disarray'. The dwellers worried that upon the arrival of water, they are likely to face challenges in using those toilets. This is because some were already broken, or are very weak (Manomano 2013). The poor positioning of the toilets in the RDP house further worsens this, as they face people who are sitting, cooking or sleeping. The situation was disappointing, disillusioning, and disenchanting (Manomano 2013). When and if the toilet is used, it results in a massive discomfort and this indicates that when the construction company installed them in that manner, they had little thought for these beneficiaries (Manomano 2013). The situation raised many ethical questions with no apparent answers. Objectively, it would have been better if they were located outside, but close to the house. Perhaps the issue of toilets would not have been a challenge if the houses were spacious at least. These researchers question how the health authorities allowed the Golf Course Estate to pass the health test. As alluded above by some residents that corruption must have been involved, then it is important also to carry another research that could validate the allegation of corruption.

Inadequate Size and Space of the RDP House

On the size and spacing of the RDP houses, eighty percent indicated that the spacing was very inadequate, sixteen percent indicated that the spacing was adequate, while four percent

revealed that the space was very adequate (see Table 4). Moreover, thirty-two percent of the participants indicated that the house was very small, sixty-four percent indicated that the house was small, and four percent revealed that the house was okay.

“These houses are so small for us; though it is just a very tiny space I have to stay with my family and my in-laws. Getting even fresh air to breathe especially when people are sleeping is a big challenge. People cannot be healthy when the conditions they are living in are very appalling”

“The size of the house it’s too small for me and my grandchildren”,

“Unashamedly, the toilet is just facing you; when someone uses it, you can imagine the experience we go through in a one room with a toilet. The sanitary conditions we are in are very dehumanizing”.

“This overcrowding could make us sick. I sometimes feel we are living like animals”

The beneficiaries were not happy with the inadequate size and spacing of the RDP house. This is however unhealthy especially given the fact that the toilets are inside the one-roomed house and they are just facing the beneficiaries. The living condition is very nauseating and poses some dehumanizing challenges. This situation, in these researchers’ thinking could cause psychological loss, and could drive people to get sick. On another angle, these houses are likely to push children to stay away from these

houses by adopting other illicit approaches to life such as child prostitution. The situation could cause the dwellers to catch hygiene related diseases such as dysentery and cholera. Hence, these researchers see it fit for a study of this nature to raise a bell that will prompt the government to robustly look into enlarging these houses as well as consider the repositioning of the toilets among other options.

Walls Permitting Wind and Cold Air

The findings indicated that seventy-six percent of the participants revealed that the walls were poor, eight percent indicated that they were fair, and sixteen percent revealed that they were good. These findings were corroborated with the following qualitative sentiments:

“These walls are not strong because when it rains they get very wet and it gives us diseases”

“These walls allow a lot of wind to blow into our houses and this gives us and our children a lot of coughing”.

These findings indicate that the beneficiaries of these RDP houses were not satisfied with the quality of the walls. They stated among other factors that the house walls were not strong enough to deter winds and rain from penetrating their houses. This makes their houses primary causes of diseases such as tuberculosis and other terminal airborne diseases. There is therefore a critical need for the government to

Table 4: Perceptions on sanitary and hygiene facilities in Golf Course RDP Houses

S.No.	Space adequacy	Frequency	%	No.	Size	Frequency	%
1	Very adequate	2	4.0	1	Large	2	4.0
2	Adequate	8	16.0	2	Small	32	64.0
3	Inadequate	40	80.0	3	Very small	16	32.0
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0

S.No.	Quality of walls	Frequency	%	No.	Quality of toilets	Frequency	%
1	Good	8	16.0	1	Good	8	16.0
2	Fair provided	4	8.0	2	Fair	13	26.0
3	Poor	38	76.0	3	Poor	29	58.0
4	Total	50	100.0	4	Total	50	100.0

S.No.	Access to clean water services	Frequency	%
1	Provided	4	8.0
2	Not	41	92.0
3	Total	50	100.0

introduce effective tools and mechanisms towards rectifying the state of these walls to ensure that they promote good and healthy living conditions for the people.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study indicated a skewed gender discrepancy in that there are more females than males, the Africans outnumbered the colored, and also that there were more single people residing in RDP houses. The situation is not peculiar to the South African setting because other perceptions in African countries indicate a situation of feminization of poverty (Musekiwa 2013; Kang'ethe 2013), while other researchers indicate that the Africans are more affected by poverty in South Africa than any other race. However, statistics also indicate that single people seem to be acutely affected by poverty, which could also confirm their dominant prevalence in the RDP housing programs in South Africa (Shamapande 2007; Statistics South Africa (SSA) 2010; Rodgers 2006 as cited by Manomano 2013). It is therefore critical that the government consider empowering these people through Income Generating Projects (IGPs) as well as through affirmative action. Affirmative driven policies need to be mooted in order to uplift single people from the jaws of poverty (Kang'ethe 2013b; Manomano 2013).

The findings also indicated that the levels of unemployment were very high as most participants indicated that they were unemployed. These findings agree with literature, which indicates that unemployment is high among the vulnerable and needy in South Africa (Hunter 2007). The government needs to devise pragmatic strategies to address this quagmire. It is worrying that the pace of generating employment is increasingly slackening with time as the economy dampens. Perhaps having the country borrow a leaf from other countries that have been able to change their state of unemployment is critical. For example, Kenya has been able to have its massive unemployed youth get into the informal sector, the so-called *Jua Kali Sector*. The sector is very vibrant and constitutes a big employer of the school leaving youth (Daily Maverick 2013). Perhaps if the NGOs and private sector could offer a hand in the informal sector, it could probably accrue huge dividends.

The findings indicated that the RDP houses had no access to clean water supply making the lives of the dwellers a difficult one. Elsewhere in Sekhulune, South Africa, reports indicate that the water challenges are so severe that the residents sometimes go for days without water. Occasionally, the water that is supplied is impure, which puts the residents' health on the danger to diseases (Nabudere and Africa 2013). It also indicates that the government is not taking the health of its people seriously and it paints a bleak picture on the sustainability of these RDP houses. The residents in Chris Hani District also bemoaned their situation as they indicated that their houses do not have access to water and this makes it even harder for them to use the toilets, therefore endangering their health (Zuzile 2013). Moreover, South Africa has made signatory commitments with many World Health Organization (WHO) instruments and conventions, which means a lot is expected from it with regards to protecting and safeguarding the health of its people (Heleba 2009). This is also worsened and confirmed by statistics that indicate that the water challenges are also experienced by more than seventy percent of the South Africans leaving the hearts of many in agony concerning their future (Cosatu Section 77 on Water Crisis 2011). Thus, this developmental challenge is now a crisis that the government should take seriously given the impact of water challenges that can take the form of cholera and dysentery and this can paralyze the sustainability of their livelihoods.

The findings indicated that the houses had poor, bad and cracking walls. This concurs with RDP houses in Cape Town that were discovered to be small and having poor material that build the walls. The researchers from Stellenbosch and University of Cape Town found out that the poor walls were responsible factors contributing to tuberculosis (TB) and diarrhea among the residents. Furthermore, there was a link between the 'defects' of the houses and the diseases. The findings indicated that leaking roofs, cracked walls, and insufficient sanitation had serious health implications because thirty-three percent of the respondents suffered from diarrhea two weeks prior to the interview, while thirty-eight percent suffered from TB (Moladi 2011). In such an unhealthy state of living, it becomes very pivotal for the government to ensure that monitoring and assessments of these RDP houses is effectuated before the targeted beneficiaries take occupancy. This is to ensure that the

health of the people is protected. To this end, it is good to note that international instruments indicate that a house should be able to protect its inhabitants from bad effects of weather such as cold, rain, wind and should adequately be sanitized (UNHABITAT 2009).

Findings indicated a lot of discontent with the toilets as most beneficiaries revealed they were of low quality materials and were breaking easily. This scenario concurs with the situation of other RDP houses that do not have toilets, prompting the beneficiaries to try other unhealthy forms of relieving themselves (Zuzile 2013). This could also further contribute to worsening the physical environment and the area's sanitary conditions. This definitely compromises the position and status of the South African government in the global village towards the role it is playing in raising the standards of living of its people. Questions also may be raised with regards to the country's progress in meeting the MDG number 7 that envisage effectuating environmental sustainability (Margai 2012). It is therefore critical that the state of the implementation of the RDP housing program be investigated and analyzed to establish the weaknesses that may be compromising its effectiveness.

Although, more than one million RDP houses have been constructed, complaints indicate that the size and spacing of these houses is too small and inadequate to accommodate the families of the beneficiaries (Nabudere and Africa 2013). Other findings indicate that the small size and spacing results in overcrowding in those houses (Aigbavoa et al. 2011:7 as cited by Uwizeyimana n.d.; Moladi 2011) as families cannot be adequately accommodated and this has resulted in some beneficiaries of RDP houses in Cape Town to succumb to TB and other lung infections (Moladi 2011). This probably validates some sentiments that the RDP houses will be the "next generation of slums" (Tutu 2008 as cited by Uwizeyimana n.d.). It is however worth noting that the South African government has not faithfully obligated itself to following the description by the United Nations on the adequacy and size of the house as it should be more than four walls (UN Habitat 2009).

CONCLUSION

The Government of South Africa has made commendable strides to redress housing disparities inherited from the apartheid government

through low-cost housing provisions such as the RDP. It is however disappointing that numerous issues of concern surround the sanitation and hygiene issues of RDP houses. Some of these concerns are compounded by the inadequacy of size and space of the houses, as well as inaccessibility of water services. The situation has largely compromised the state of sanitation and hygiene as a whole. It has been the contention of these researchers that if the government can consider renovations and expediting the efforts of providing water, perhaps the lives of the dwellers will not be frustrating. It is recommendable that creating a fund as well as collaborating with private and NGO sectors could possibly make significant inroads in ameliorating the state of the RDP houses and that of the dwellers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The fact of unemployment, as revealed by the findings calls for policy and programmatic interventions that will address the plight of unemployment in a sustainable way considering that South Africa is spending a lot of money on social security. Employment opportunities could also reduce the strain on these social assistance programs as well as reduce the burden on the national budget and taxpayers' money. Since many single people especially women were heading these houses, it is pertinent for the government to come up with strategies for income-generating projects as well as small and medium enterprises to help these dwellers.

Furthermore, these researchers advocate for the government to consider taking lessons from innovative funding approaches such as the Global Sanitation Fund as a measure to properly buttress the problems surrounding sanitation and hygiene especially around RDP houses. This can be done in collaboration with the NGOs and private enterprises in order to strengthen the intervention for better results. It could also be timely for the government to consider taking lessons from India where NGOs have engaged on low-cost innovative technology to make low-cost toilets that have supported one million households already. Though the government has put in place the Rural Household Infrastructure program, it may consider combining those efforts with the private

sector in order to embrace the challenge of sanitation and hygiene holistically.

It is essentially innovative if the government can consider rebuilding these houses to properly accommodate these people in a safe, hygienic and healthy environment that will also reduce challenges associated with air- and waterborne diseases. This is because a one-roomed small house presents numerous health challenges that defeat the goal of providing people with low-cost houses. It can be done in consultation with the beneficiaries in order to construct a meaningful house.

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