



HOW PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND MONITORING DRIVES MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC SPACES: EXPERIENCES FROM THE UPGRADING OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE BUFFALO CITY METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

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In 2014, the National Department of Human Settlements¹ appointed a consortium of planners, engineers, social facilitators and environmentalists² to develop upgrading of informal settlement plans for 32 informal settlements in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM).³



THE PLANS WERE developed using participatory planning methodologies.⁴ Afesis-corplan, as the social facilitator on this project, was responsible for managing the participatory planning process, in particular conceptualising, organising and facilitating the community workshoping process, as well as providing an overall supportive role to informal

settlement committees involved in the planning process.

This paper shows that participatory planning processes that are supported by social facilitation partners like Afesis-corplan, and as was followed in the development of upgrading plans for informal settlements in BCMM, provide a useful model that

can be used by other municipalities planning for the upgrading of informal settlements. Informal settlement committees, elected by residents of informal settlements, are identified as a vehicle through which residents can play a central role in influencing and formulating upgrading of informal settlement plans so as to claim their areas as collective democratic spaces.

The paper also argues that residents of informal settlements that are being upgraded also need to be involved in monitoring and holding to account those responsible for the implementation of these plans. Informal settlement committees can, in future, also play a central role in monitoring the implementation of projects emerging from these upgrading plans.

In short, informal settlement committees provide valuable democratic spaces through which participation and accountability can be channelled. However, practice shows that committees are not always able, on their own, to successfully fulfil their mandate to monitor implementation or to hold municipalities to account. On this basis, this paper calls on government to continue to allocate sufficient funds for social facilitators to be involved, alongside town planners, engineers, environmentalists, and other technical specialists, in the development of upgrading plans for informal settlements, and importantly, motivates for government to allocate additional funds for social facilitators to support informal settlement committees in monitoring the implementation of the plans that are developed. In this way, the plans that get developed can better reflect the needs and aspirations of the residents concerned, and those responsible for the implementation of these plans can be held to account.

The paper starts by defining participatory planning and participatory monitoring, and then summarises how informal settlement committees working with other stakeholders, through a series

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of facilitated workshops, were able, in the Buffalo City experience, to develop upgrading of informal settlement plans that were relevant to their local circumstances. The discussion then turns to explain how the informal settlement committees planned to monitor the implementation of the plans they had developed. The next section notes that informal settlement residents are worried that the municipality will not implement the plans they have helped to develop, and cautions that, given progress to date in implementing the plans, these concerns need to be taken seriously.

Recommendations are then made for how social facilitators, working with informal settlement committees, need to be involved, beyond just the stage of planning for informal settlement upgrading, and also need to be involved in supporting informal settlement committees in monitoring the implementation of projects that are identified through the planning process. The paper concludes by calling on government to help fund and support this comprehensive social facilitation process so as to collectively claim informal settlements as democratic spaces.

THE PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND MONITORING PROCESS

According to the Institute of Development Studies (undated), the process of participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation 'aims to shift power from development professionals to the intended beneficiaries of the intervention. With participatory

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approaches, it is these people who set the direction for change, plan their priorities, and decide whether the intervention has made progress and delivered relevant change’.

In participatory *planning*, members of local communities discuss and prioritise their development needs, and external actors draw on this information to inform plans and projects. Participatory *monitoring* is where members of local communities monitor those things that have been identified in the planning phase to ensure that these are implemented as per the agreed plans.

The participatory planning methodology used in the development of informal settlement upgrading plans in BCMM involved a series of three workshops:

- ✦ Workshop 1 introduced the upgrading process; developed asset maps of local natural, physical, economic, social and human assets; and developed a draft vision statement per informal settlement.
- ✦ Workshop 2 provided a more detailed introduction to the incremental upgrading process and developed preliminary draft upgrading plans per informal settlement, building on the various asset maps that were identified in workshop 1.
- ✦ Workshop 3 reviewed the draft upgrading plans and discussed and developed action plans for implementation.

The 32 pre-selected informal settlements were divided into eight geographical clusters.⁵ The above mentioned series of workshops were organised for each cluster. Each informal settlement elected a delegation of between five and ten representatives

(with larger informal settlements electing more participants) to participate in these workshops. This delegation is referred to as the informal settlement committee. Additionally, in principle at least, two representatives from the relevant ward committees, the local Community Development Worker as well as relevant ward councillors were also invited to these workshops.⁶ Officials from the Municipal Planning and Human Settlements Departments were also invited to participate. A Community Liaison Officer (CLO), drawn from the community in consultation with the ward councillor, was appointed for each cluster to assist in organising these participatory workshops and to ensure that there was adequate pre- and post-consultation between the workshop participants and the community.

Throughout this process, the participatory planning methodology emphasised the importance of informal settlement residents using their own organised community leadership structures (their social assets), and dedicated community members who want to see development occur in their area (their human assets), to help drive and steer development in the community. By the end of the participatory planning process, the workshop participants appreciated that they could not rely on the social facilitators, CLOs, the ward committee, or anyone else to ensure that these plans were implemented. Responsibility for monitoring and driving development in their areas rested with them.

The participatory planning process was well received by the workshop participants. Participant evaluation exercises after each workshop scored good to very good in terms of participant satisfaction with the workshop process and outcome of the workshop exercise.⁷ One of the CLOs, at the end of the participatory planning process, summarised community satisfaction with the planning process as follows:

When communities started participating in the upgrading workshop series they did not really understand what upgrading was all about. As they followed the workshops they started to appreciate more what upgrading could achieve. Light has been brought to people who attended the workshops. They now know how their community can be developed. They know what they have to do to get development happening. They know they must not just rely on the ward councillor and committee but they need to also take responsibility for seeing that development happens in their communities. Communities don't trust anyone these days who tells them that some development is going to happen as they have been lied to too often in the past where promises were not kept. (Afesis-corporation, 2014:2)

The informal settlement committees that participated in the participatory planning process, agreed during workshop 3, to work as clusters with other informal settlement committees to monitor that the projects identified in the planning process would be implemented. A two-pronged approach of engaging with the municipality was agreed to by these committees:

- ✦ Informal settlement committees, as clusters of informal settlements (and where possible as a network of clusters), agreed to regularly arrange follow up meetings with municipal officials involved in the upgrading process to find out what progress was being made in implementing the plans.
- ✦ Through their ward committees, and through the municipal Integrated Development Planning (IDP) process, informal settlement committees would monitor progress in the implementation of upgrading plans. In this way, the informal settlement committees would make sure that their

plans would get picked up in the municipal IDP process, were reflected in Built Environmental Performance Plans and in Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plans and in municipal sector department plans and budgets.

In the BCMM planning for upgrading informal settlement project, informal settlement committees decided that they needed to continue to play a monitoring role as they felt they could not hand over the monitoring responsibility toward committees or any other structure. Ward committees, in the context of upgrading, were regarded as ineffective for two main reasons. Firstly, ward committee structures operate at a larger scale than informal settlement committees. In contrast, it has been shown through many international and local examples of informal settlement upgrading, that dedicated participatory planning structures, like informal settlement committees, at the scale of each informal settlement, ensure that upgrading plans truly reflect the needs and aspirations of informal settlements residents, and that the residents feel that they are part of the process of plan formulation. (See, for example, the following articles in previous State of Local Government publications: Tissington 2012; Bolnick 2012; Fieuw 2013; Matanyaire 2014; Tshabalala and Mwau 2014; Webster 2015; Fieuw 2015 – and also see: Bosworth 2016; NUSP (undated); The HDA 2015; and UN Habitat (undated).)

Secondly, ward committees do not offer residents an effective project monitoring tool. Relying on the ward committee system to monitor the implementation

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of informal settlement upgrading plans shifts the impetus for monitoring the implementation of the upgrading plans to a higher scale that is more removed from the residents themselves. Siphokazi from Jevon informal settlement near Scenery Park in East London noted (as reflected in Corplan Development Services [CDS] 2015: 58) that it is hard to work with ward committees 'because on numerous occasions, when the tap breaks down we report to the ward committee to pass the information to the councillor but when we call the councillor, we realise that the information was never reported to him'.

Furthermore, residents of informal settlements felt that they, rather than ward committees, would be more likely to be consistent in monitoring and checking progress in the implementation of plans, as failure to implement the plans directly affects them. The people closest to what is being implemented are able to provide rapid and valuable feedback to those implementing the plans when these plans run into challenges, and they are able to assist in finding the necessary steering measures to ensure that implementation moves back on track. The community is more likely to help resolve challenges in implementing the upgrading process - like dealing with relocation and boundary disputes between residents in informal settlements - if they are involved in monitoring this implementation.

Informal settlement committees create valuable democratic spaces, at a scale close to where people are residing, in which residents of informal settlements are able to ensure that upgrading of

informal settlement plans reflect the needs and aspirations of the residents concerned, and they are able to hold to account those responsible for implementing these plans.

CONVERTING PLANS INTO PROJECTS

The participatory planning process facilitated by Afesis-corplan in the BCMM upgrading project offers a useful participatory model for informal settlement upgrading. However, if these plans are not converted into projects that are timeously implemented, then the participatory planning process would, at best, be a waste of time and, at worst, discourage the community to engage meaningfully with government in future planning and development processes.

The informal settlement residents in the BCMM upgrading project identified this potential problem of plans not being converted into completed projects at the outset of the participatory planning process. Participants complained in the first set of workshops that they were tired of engaging with the municipality in ward meetings and IDP road shows and repeatedly finding that very little ever gets done thereafter.

The following statements from workshop participants, who participated in an evaluation exercise at the end of the participatory planning process reiterate these sentiments:

- ✦ Nozuko, a resident of Barcelona informal settlement in Mdantsane, said that some groups of people in her community did not trust that anything positive would come out of the upgrading project as 'they have long been promised and nothing has ever been done'. (CDS 2015: 22)
- ✦ Phendulwa from Daluxolo informal settlement in Mdanstane said that 'nothing gets done when they [government] make promises'. She noted that she and other community members had been going to the BCMM since 2000 demanding

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houses, and after years of waiting, they have given up. (CDS 2015: 31)

- * Ncumisa from Endlovini informal settlement near King Williams Town also noted that her community had, on numerous occasions, complained to BCMM about their water problem, electricity and lack of employment. She said that 'they [government] know how to promise, but they do not know how to fulfil their promises'. (CDS 2015: 13)

These voices highlight a strong view, felt by many of the informal settlement residents, that consultation and participation in development planning processes can be a waste of time if these plans are not translated into projects that change the lives of people on the ground. Residents become discouraged, disillusioned and apathetic if the projects that they helped identify and plan are not implemented. It is therefore vital that mechanisms be found that support informal settlement residents in holding those responsible for implementation of plans and projects to account.

More than one year after the participatory upgrading plans were submitted to the BCCM, these plans have not yet been officially adopted by the municipality.⁸ A few informal settlements are having communal toilets installed, and pre-paid electricity is being provided to others, but unbeknown to the residents, these activities are actually happening not because they were on the upgrading plans they helped to develop, but rather because the respective municipal sector departments were actually already planning to do these projects independently of anything that was discussed in the participatory planning process. There are some attempts, however, to use the upgrading plans to inform sector departmental initiatives. Afesis-corplan is aware, for example, that the planning department within the

BCMM has given the upgrading plans to the electrical department to inform future electrical interventions.

To the best of Afesis-corplan's knowledge⁹, the informal settlement committees have struggled to make good on their pledges to collaborate and monitor the implementation of their plans. A possible reason for this is that informal settlement committees have found it difficult to coordinate follow-up activities with other informal settlement committees and find the time to come together and meet with officials involved in the planning process to find out what is happening with implementing the plans.

What the above shows is that the involvement of informal settlement committees, through a facilitated process of developing upgrading of informal settlement plans, is just one half of what is required for residents of informal settlement committees to materially benefit from projects being implemented as part of upgrading of informal settlement processes. Consideration also needs to be given to involving informal settlement committees, in a facilitated manner, in monitoring the second half of the process of implementing projects that emerge from the upgrading of informal settlements process.

The involvement of informal settlement committees in planning for the upgrading of informal settlements, as well as in monitoring the implementation of projects emerging from these planning processes is important, but this involvement is most likely not to be enough to ensure that informal settlements are successfully upgraded. Informal settlement committees are likely to lack the capacity and insights that are necessary to navigate the complex processes of budgeting for and implementing

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the various projects that get identified in the planning process; social facilitators like Afesis-corplan are able to provide the necessary skill to navigate this process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The commitment of government to participatory approaches in the planning process for informal settlement upgrading¹⁰ needs to be extended to commitment from government to make use of participatory approaches to monitor the implementation of identified plans and projects. In the same way that government has funded social facilitators to work with informal settlement committees in the development of upgrading of informal settlement plans, government needs to also fund social facilitators to work with informal settlement committees to monitor the implementation of the projects that are identified in these planning processes. This participatory monitoring can be organised in a similar manner as to how the participatory planning process was organised in BCMM, where informal settlement committees, organised in clusters, can come together in a further series of workshops to monitor the implementation process.

The participation of communities in the upgrading of informal settlements needs to be viewed as a long-term process, starting from when settlements are identified for upgrading and continuing into the future when projects are being implemented and evaluated after completion. The participation of the community in the upgrading process needs to be facilitated in the following ways:

- ✦ Once an area has been identified by the municipality for upgrading, the community needs to participate, through their informal settlement committees, in the development of upgrading plans for their community.¹¹

- ✦ Once plans are developed, the informal settlement committee needs to monitor that these plans get formally approved and adopted by the municipality as a whole and that all the relevant municipal and other appropriate government departments budget for the various projects identified in these plans.¹²
- ✦ Once the necessary funding is secured for project implementation, the informal settlement committee needs to monitor that identified projects are being implemented according to approved project business plans, and steer and modify implementation activities as the various upgrading projects are being implemented.
- ✦ Once various projects identified in the upgrading plans are complete and the budget has been spent, the informal settlement committee needs to be involved in evaluating the extent to which these projects achieved what they set out to achieve and what can be learnt from these projects so as to improve the way the subsequent projects are implemented in the same or other communities.

Organisations like the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) and the Housing Development Agency (HDA) have played a very important role in championing participatory approaches to planning for informal settlement upgrading. Such organisations need to continue to advocate for the participation of informal settlement communities in the remaining upgrading phases as outlined above. In future, once municipalities have internalised how to facilitate these participatory processes, organisations like NUSP and the HDA will no longer have to fund and drive the whole participatory upgrading process, as municipalities will be familiar with how to facilitate participatory planning and monitoring processes. Municipalities will, however, need to budget for the resourcing and funding of these processes themselves.

CONCLUSION

The participatory planning process that Afesicorplan was involved with in the development of upgrading plans for 32 informal settlements in the BCMM was well received by participants of the planning workshops. The informal settlement committees involved felt that they were able to engage in the planning process and help influence the outcome of these plans. This and similar participatory planning processes need to be replicated and further rolled out in informal settlements in Buffalo City and in other municipalities. This replication needs to be funded and supported by government, as it is very difficult for informal settlement residents to plan for the upgrading of their informal settlements without the involvement of social facilitators who are funded by government as part of a socio-technical upgrading of informal settlement planning team.¹³

The informal settlement committees involved in the BCMM upgrading process, despite their best intentions as expressed during the planning phase, are struggling to monitor and hold government to account for the implementation of the plans they

have jointly developed with government. Social facilitators need to be appointed, as part of a socio-technical team, to support informal settlement committees to monitor that projects that have been identified in the planning process are funded and implemented. The National Department of Human Settlements (working with NUSP and the HDA) should undertake pilot projects in municipalities they have already worked with (in the planning for upgrading of informal settlements phase) to demonstrate how social facilitators can support informal settlement committees in monitoring the implementation of the plans that have been developed.

Government has opened the door for informal settlement committees, working on behalf of their communities, to participate in the facilitated process of planning for the upgrading of informal settlements. Government now needs to keep these doors open to inclusive democratic practices so that informal settlement committees, continuing to work on behalf of their communities, are able to expand this democratic space, and participate in a facilitated process of monitoring the implementation of projects that have been identified in the planning process.

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NOTES

- ¹ Working through the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP). For more information on NUSP see: <http://www.upgradingsupport.org/>
- ² The following partners made up the consortium: lead consultant - SC Consulting; social facilitator - Afesis-corplan; Engineers - Bigen Africa; Environmentalists - Environmental Impact Management Services; Legal advice - Jonathan Clark Attorneys; and Socio-economic surveyors - Fort Hare Institute of Social and Economic Research.
- ³ Information relating to the upgrading plans can be found on the following website: http://www.incrementalsettlement.org.za/wiki/index.php?title=BCMM_Upgrading_of_Informal_Settlements_Policy_and_Strategy
- ⁴ The methodology on which the participatory planning process was based was the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) methodology. For more on ABCD see for example <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/>, <http://www.ikhala.org.za/abcd-mobilising-assets/>, and <http://coady.stfx.ca/themes/abcd/>
- ⁵ The clustering of informal settlements reduced the number of workshops that needed to be organised by the social facilitators thereby reducing the time that needed to be spent in workshops.
- ⁶ In reality, however, despite being invited, many ward councillors and community development workers did not attend the workshops.
- ⁷ Drawn from workshop reports which are available from Afesis-corplan on request.
- ⁸ Afesis-corplan has not had a chance to investigate the reasons for why these plans have not been formally adopted as we are no longer involved with this upgrading project. However, it would appear that one reason for this lack of progress in implementation is due to the fact that there is no single department to take responsibility for the overall coordination and implementation of the upgrading plans. Furthermore, the municipal organogram has an upgrading informal settlements coordinator in the Municipal Human Settlements department but this position has, as of April 2016, not been filled.
- ⁹ Noting that Afesis-corplan is no longer involved with the upgrading of informal settlements project in BCMM subsequent to the development of upgrading of informal settlement plans.
- ¹⁰ Government commitment to the upgrading of informal settlements is demonstrated, for example, in the various NUSP supported upgrading of informal settlement planning projects being undertaken around the country.
- ¹¹ This is as far as the participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation process has proceeded in the case of the upgrading of informal settlements in BCMM.
- ¹² This is where the participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation process in BCMM appears to be running into difficulty. As explained elsewhere in this report, the informal settlement committees are struggling, without the necessary social facilitation support, to monitor the implementation of this budgeting process.
- ¹³ It could be argued that the participation of informal settlement committees in the planning for the upgrading of their informal settlements could be classified as next to impossible, unless these informal settlements committees are able to secure participatory planning facilitation support from an NGO or some other structure.