

Poor communities' relocation to braamfischerville



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Chapter 1: Introducing the study area

Introduction

“ There is a crisis in housing in the third world. Large increases in the urban population of third world countries have dramatically increased the demand for housing. ‘...traditional values, and increases in urban population have resulted in the deterioration of housing conditions in larger cities’” (Aldrich and Sandhu, 1995).

As quoted above, housing has really been a problem in third world countries, of which South Africa is considered to be, as much as population increases has been emphasized South Africa has another distinctive and very effective factor that affected housing and development, namely apartheid, prior 1994 apartheid laws restricted the non-white population of South Africa from residing where-ever and whenever they wanted. The influx laws that controlled the movement of the non-white population were further emphasized by limited amounts of money put forth for the development of black communities. De Loor (1995: 158) as cited by Oosthuizen (2002) points out that from an initial amount of R402 million that was transferred to the Department of housing during 1990/1991 for national housing developments only R4 million was used the black communities' development and revolving fund, this amount only constitutes about 1% of the total amount. It is as a result of this that there were an increased number of informal settlements in South Africa.

After being elected as president after the first democratic elections in 1994 then President Nelson Mandela promised the South African citizens a better life for all (RDP white paper, 1994: 1), a better life for all includes better

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living standards such as better housing, clean water, electricity, safety and better health care and etc. With the aim of achieving the goals put forth by President Nelson Mandela the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) was initiated early 1994. This program was mainly aimed at developing South Africa to a better country socially and economical especially the poor. The question at hand currently is whether this has been achieved thus far, Sowman and Urquhart (1998) as cited by Moolla (2008) points out that informal settlements consisting of self-built squatter camps made from a variety of materials such as corrugated iron, plastic, tin cans, wood, and cardboard are still prevalent in South African cities, this also implies that living conditions are difficult and very unhealthy.

There are many localities in South Africa where such informal settlements are found so, with still the aim of improving the lives of South Africans the government continued the RDP and built low-cost houses for the poor. These areas where these RDP house are being built became of much interest to academics and they became good research areas.

In 2008 Raheesa Moolla of the Department of Geography, Environmental Management and Energy Studies, University of Johannesburg conducted a study on one of these newly developed areas namely, Braamfischerville, her research was aimed at understanding whether the residence of Braamfischerville were satisfied with their new homes. This research showed much dissatisfaction by the community, it shows an increase in dissatisfaction levels from 37.3% in 2002 to 44.5% in 2008 (Moolla, 2008), this is just general dissatisfaction including factors such as housing qualities and sanitation.

The results from the above mentioned research stimulates an interest as to whether Braamfischerville is different from where most this people come from or not? It is important to understand this so more effective solutions can be found to put these people out of their misery.

Research Questions and aims

This research is aimed at understanding what new changes, if any, that the move to Braamfischerville has brought to its community, whether their satisfaction level has changed for the better or worse.

The research further more aims at answering the following questions:

- What is the cause to such increases in dissatisfaction levels by the community?
- What is the community's perception on Braamfischerville as compared to where they come from?
- What improvements can be made to Braamfischerville in order to make it a better place?
- With great considerations, this research can contribute to the governments goal to providing a better life for all by drawing attention to what the people really need i. e. what they want the government to do in order to improve their lives.

Study area: Location and History

Braamfischerville is located on the outskirts of Soweto, south west Johannesburg, some few kilometers away from Dobsonville (see figure 1) thus forming one of the 87 townships (Wikipedia contributors, 2009) found in

Soweto characterized by formal and informal settlements, squatter settlements and shanty towns. Braamfischerville is predominantly composed of RDP houses, 30m² on a 250m² plot, consisting of an open plan, bedroom, lounge and kitchen, and a separate toilet (Moolla, 2008).

In total Braamfischerville is made up of four phases (namely phase 1, 2, 3 & 4) with only main roads having been tarred since the beginning of this development in 1996. On this report only phase 1 will be investigated. Phase 1 is composed of approximately 3000 houses (Moolla, 2009; Personal communication) predominantly RDP houses, bond houses and squatter settlements.

Though the governments aim with these developments was to provide basic services, such as shelter, running water, sewerage and electricity, and amenities, such as schools and clinics, in the Sowetan newspaper as cited by Moolla (2008), Mohlale (2002) reported that many of these services are still absent in this area after six years of development.

Methodology

In 2008 the University of Johannesburg conducted a questionnaire survey on housing satisfaction amongst the Braamfischerville residents, this survey was a revalidation of a survey of the same kind that was conducted by the former Vista University (Now known as University of Johannesburg Soweto campus) both these studies used the same survey.

As this is a small scale report and posses just small differences the questionnaire from 2008 was just used as a guideline and thus some minor modifications where done. Out of the four phases that make up

Braamfischerville only one phase was chosen as the target for this research, namely Phase 1. A random sample of 30 questionnaires was conducted to achieve the objective of this study. The questionnaires were answered by means of interviewing residents of RDP homes, squatter settlements and bond houses of Braamfischerville Phase 1.

The questionnaire looked at demographics; socio-economical and number of years these residents resided at Braamfischerville furthermore it also aimed at understanding where most of the residents resided before Braamfischerville, the main aim of the survey was to compare Braamfischerville to where most of these residents come from thus, to achieve that, the questionnaire also looked at availability of services and accessibility of basic amenities to the residents and, as a result the comparison was scaled on a scale of 3 (where 1 is worse; 2 the same and; 3 better) and thus conclusion was drawn based on this comparison between Braamfischerville and where most residents resided before.

The results of the questionnaire were captured using Microsoft excel and thus statistical analysis were conducted which resulted in graphs presented in this report. The 2008 report was used as guideline for comparative purposes.

As completion of report, as will be seen in the next part, literature review was done on what has been written in regards to housing the poor, and the progress thereof. The rest of the report will be based on results from site visitation and validation, if any, of literature based on the topic of study.

Chapter 2: Low cost housing defined and explained

Radikeledi (2007) cites Meng *et al.* (2004: 88) as they define low cost housing, they define it as “ a type of low profit commodity housing with government subsidies and policy support aimed at providing a large number of decent homes for middle and lower-middle income households.”

RDPs' function and continuation

“ The RDP endorses the principle that all South Africans have a right to a secure place in which to live in peace and dignity.... One of the RDP's first priorities is to provide for the homeless” (Bond, 2008). Furthermore Bond (2008) mentions key things that RDP housing must provide as follows:

- Protection from weather;
- A durable structure;
- Reasonable living space and privacy;
- Sanitary facilities;
- Storm-water drainage systems;
- Electricity and;
- Convenient access to clean water.
- To ensure that these goals are achieved the Johannesburg City council in the financial year 2007/2008 allocated a budget to the different departments.

RDP's progress in Johannesburg

Knight (2001: 1) as cited by Radikeledi (2007) states the goal that was set by the African National Congress (ANC) after winning the election in 1994 that they will ensure that with RDP 200 000 houses will be built annually until all

South African citizens are fully accommodated, especially the previously disadvantaged.

In contrast, the delivery of RDP homes has been heavily criticized, not only in Johannesburg but all over South Africa. 14 years into democracy still, a variety of self made informal settlements are still prevalent in South African cities (Moolla, 2008).

One of the major criticisms against the delivery of RDP homes has been the procedures followed in order for one to obtain such a house. Marx and Royston (2007) identifies three ways in which people find opportunities to access land:

- Through legal procedures involving local authorities, councilor and municipal officials.
- Family and friendship network.
- Information and assistance provided by the committee members through community meetings.
- Ndaba (2003) as cited by Moolla (2008) found that allocation of low cost homes in South Africa was undermined by corruption and malpractice from the officials. Furthermore Moolla (2008) cites The Star newspaper (Radler, 2008) which reveals that some 830 000 people have been on the waiting list since 1994 and are still waiting for their homes.

Living conditions in RDP homes

' Matchbox House' is it may be known to many, RDP homes are generally a 30m² house on a 250m² plot (Moolla, 2008). As cited by Moolla (2008),

Haggard (2006) states that a typical RDP house consists of a toilet, open lounge, two bedrooms, kitchen and dining area (Haggard, 2006). However, Moolla (2008) states that not all RDP houses are constructed in this layout but are rather made up of an open lounge, kitchen and single bedroom with no dividing walls, and a separate toilet.

Furthermore, Dangor (1998) compares the RDP houses to the old apartheid matchbox houses and in this comparison no difference was found as far as standard is concerned but much difference in size as matchbox houses are rather slightly bigger than the RDP houses was noted.

Part of the objective of the RDP was the availability and accessibility of basic services and amenities respectively. Amenities include schools, clinics and transport however, Moolla (2008) states that many of these services are still absent in these areas.

It is due to the absence of basic services and poor infrastructure that dissatisfaction levels regarding the area has increased by 7.2% within a period of six years i. e. 2002 - 2008.

Chapter 3: Demographics and socio-economical characteristics of inhabitants

This chapter will present findings on demographics and socio-economic characteristic of the inhabitants, also to be looked will be proximity from basic amenities and delivery of services to the residents.

Research shows that migration into phase one has been trending since 1996 this can indicate the unavailability of houses in the years of low migration.

Demographic and socio economic characteristics.

In this regard, to be looked at is the number of people occupying per household, dominating gender and employment status of these residents. Furthermore to be looked will be where the employed portion of the residents got employed i. e. in Braamfischerville or before the got to Braamfischerville.

Braamfischerville Phase 1 is dominantly composed of households consisting of 3 - 4 people per house, and rather astonishingly it is dominated by females. Also evident from table 3. 1 is that most these residents are aged between 31 and 40, educational qualifications show that most these people, especially the dominant age group, have at least a grade 12/matric qualification but yet employment levels are really low and thus most of the population is self employed by means of small businesses such as spaza shops and other retail services.

A rather fascinating finding is that, as much as the governments aim with the RDP is to empower the poor statistics show that 27% of residents in phase 1 are renting the property they live on from owners who do not even live in the neighborhood. This puts much emphasis and reasoning to the criticisms mentioned in the previous chapter as far as RDP housing distribution is concerned.

Proximity to basic services and amenities

Braamfischerville appears to be rather dominated by Spaza shops with one large Spar supermarket for formal groceries. There was no clinic, police station or pension pay out point seen in phase 1, residents complain that to get these services they are forced to go to Dobsonville which is located just a few kilometers from their homes.

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Overall delivery of services is rather poor in this area as the most important services are located very far from residents and they have to pay transport to get to them.

Living in Braamfischerville

Having to have looked at demographics, socio-economic characteristics as well as proximity from basic services residents were asked to compare Braamfischerville to where they resided before. The majority of residents prefer to have rather remained where they come from.

Reasons for such dissatisfaction from residents include that stated by Moolla (2008) of poor infrastructure, houses are leaking, poor service by municipality, absence of police for security reasons, no tarred road, unemployment, poor sanitation, no library and recreational facilities and unreliable transport systems. These results are of much surprise as the government intentions with areas such as Braamfischerville is to make sure everyone's needs are satisfied.

A large number of Braamfischerville residents come from areas such as Meadowlands and Alexandra; these areas are perceived to be of rather unhealthy, unsafe and just poor living conditions thus, to understand these results literature review was conducted about the most prominent area where these people come from.

An overview on Alexandra

Established in 1905, Alexandra is thus the oldest township in Gauteng but also one of the poorest of the province. Alexandra is located north east of Johannesburg some 3kms away from Sandton. It is characterized by lack of

infrastructure, overcrowding and high rates of crime. The lunchbox fund (2008) highlights that this overcrowding has put much pressure on service delivery thus most shacks have no electricity and only 65% of household have access to piped water.

Alexandra is made up of three different regions separated by the Jukskei River. To the west of the river one encounters the Old Alexandra predominantly composed of informal dwellings, three hostels and a block of flats, just to the east of the river lies East Bank which is predominantly middle class households. The Far East Bank which was developed recently is composed mainly of RDP houses (Wilson, 2008).

Unlike other townships, Alexandra is rather very small, extending over approximately 800 hectares of land and ironically is home to about 350 000 people (Dlamini, 2008). Wilson (2008) reveals that of the 350 000 people, 70 % of them were young people aged below 15 and 35 years with a 1: 1. 22 ratio between male (60%) and female (61%).

Former President Thabo Mbeki allocated a budget of R1. 3 billion to the development of Alexandra in February 2001 (Dlamini, 2008). This budget was to be spread over seven years but when 2008 came was extended by two more years. This budget gave rise to the Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP) which then initiated the project by building about 90 000 RDP structures and also renewed the hostels and built a clinic. The ARP is still active and is renewing Alexandra to a suitable place for all.

“ The de-densification process has been highly successful. The relocation exercise since 2001 to new developments in Diepsloot, Braamfischerville and Far East Bank extensions provided approximately 11 000 families with <https://assignbuster.com/poor-communities-relocation-to-braamfischerville/>

new homes. The ARP Housing strategy envisage the further relocation of 15 000 families out of Alexandra” (Dlamini, 2008).

Conclusions

As a result of poor services and unavailability of basic amenities, 63% of Braamfischerville’ residents are very dissatisfied with their new homes and prefer to have stayed where they resided before Braamfischerville or be relocated to a better area. The overview on Alexandra has shown that there is much progress in the development of the township, further more, all amenities that are absent in Braamfischerville are present in Alexandra, the only advantage Braamfischerville has over Alexandra would be that if these people had remained in Alexandra they would possibly still be living in shacks and other informal dwellings not that they would complain much as research has shown that 44.5% of the population is not satisfied with the houses in general either way.

This dissatisfaction levels will continue to grow until the government intervenes and start targeting areas of low satisfaction levels and attend to all basic needs, this will result in RDP houses being homes where people live with pride in and not show the clear distinction between the poor and the wealthy.