

Introduction

[Sociology](#), [Poverty](#)



Introduction According to Tonkin (2008), low —cost housing is dwelling units whose total housing costs are deemed affordable to a group of people within a specified income range, low cost housing includes social housing and low income housing. In South Africa these houses have been provided through the Reconstruction Development Program (RDP). Since 1994, the government has been implementing this program to address the housing backlog which is continuously increasing. The post-Apartheid has era has been enlightened by different successes and failures of low cost housing. Some of the successes include provision of housing to the poor at affordable rates and failures include that it promotes continuous segregation of people in accordance with economic class and race (Tonkin, 2008). The main purpose of this paper is to identify and discuss the successes and failures of low cost housing (RDP). The Successes of Low-Cost housing in Post-Apartheid Low cost housing has brought attention of excellence to South Africa by different countries in the world. South Africa has been classified as the world's leading country in relation to the provision of houses and its inspiration to eliminate informal settlements. Researchers have suggested that South Africa by 2011 had build-up 2 million houses for the poor. South Africa has been identified on the international arena as a country leading by example in relation to the initiatives it takes to provide low cost housing (Tonkin, 2008). Furthermore, Tonkin (2008) suggests that low-cost housing has managed to provide housing to the poor who could not afford housing on the market. The market forces could not provide for choice and selection for these people to have housing of their preferred choices. Low cost housing has played a role of making equitable selection for those who cannot afford housing. This has

helped in improving the living conditions for these poor households. In addition, jobs have been created due to the low cost housing provision process. Low cost housing has played the role of job creation strategy. South Africa has been hit by massive unemployment rates since 1994, which has made most to survive on nothing, due to no shortage of employment opportunities (Tonkin, 2008). Moreover, Tonkin (2008) indicates that the historically black population, which has been suppressed by the apartheid system, have been catered for, by low cost housing. Back under the apartheid blacks were not allowed to have accommodation especially in towns. Exclusionary zoning was the ordinance which dominated the housing allocation, favouring those with money and those who are racially deemed acceptable. Low cost housing has been a catalyst in addressing this issue. Lastly, low cost housing has made availability of cheap labour especially in areas, where low cost housing is located near heavy industries. The availability of the labour has made industries to operate on low cost strategies and help them utilize their resources more efficiently and effectively. In addition expenses for these industries reduce especially in relation to wage expenses (Tonkin, 2008). Failures of Low-Cost housing in Post-Apartheid On the other hand, Low cost housing has had its failures . One of the failures of low cost housing is that a small number of the population have benefited from the program. In South Africa a larger share of the total population lives in informal self-built houses. In reality low cost housing has failed to benefit large groups of people (Zhang, 2008). To add more, Zhang (2008) clarifies that low cost housing has even made lives of the poor to become more difficult, this is because the (RDP)s have been

characterised by the issue of being of low quality. Reports have made variously about their lack of quality by occupiers. Some of the issues raised include that the roofs in some instances are always leaking when it rains, another issue has been of the material used which can be easily get damaged by wind or other elements of nature. Furthermore, low cost housing has been responsible for the failure to link efficiently and effectively people to employment areas (Zhang, 2008). Land near the central business district is mainly expensive, therefore cheaper land is found in the outskirts of towns and that's where low cost housing is built. This has made people to travel longer distances to their employment areas, eventually people will be forced to fork out large sums of money. Tonkin (2008) has highlighted that most (RDP) houses have become residential dormitories because most beneficiaries choose to rent their homes and move back to informal settlements or other housing closer to work. In addition, Tonkin (2008) suggests that low cost housing has been unable to create or provide integrated development. Segregation of the poor households still exists and in some racial segregation is also present. Therefore this perpetuates marginalisation of the poor and does not contribute to the compaction, integration and restructuring of the apartheid city (Zhang , 2008) This segregation has made South African cities to be identified as some of the least dense cities in the world and eventually in the end low cost housing does not allow mixed housing as an alternative solution. According to Zhang (2008), (RDP) housing in some instances has promoted violent clashes amongst different groups of low cost housing recipients, the main reason is that housing has not been adequately distributed effectively enough to cover

the whole section of those who cannot afford it. Housing delivery process has been poor. It is estimated that the 2million+ houses which were built by the government, only offered accommodation to 5 million people out of the total of the total 12million people who have been identified to have no proper housing (Tonkin, 2008). In addition, the major part of the land where the houses for RDP are built was once used as mainly farm land (Zhang, 2008). Production in the agriculture sector has been affected because land as a factor of production has been reduced. Food production has been affected by this move. The country has been forced to go through a lot of expenses to balance this situation. The use of genetically modified technologies which promote quick growth of food crops, in the same time being harmful to the human body have been adopted as options by the government (Tonkin, 2008). Low cost housing has been responsible for this effect in agriculture production. Moreover, low-cost housing has failed to leverage growth in the economy. The main reason is that government has been the main actor alone in the delivery and the private sector has only put in little effort. The Gross Domestic Product has not benefited much from the low cost housing, because of lack of investments and clarifications of the benefits of low cost housing entrepreneurship (Tonkin, 2008). Lastly, low cost housing has not been able to combat crime but rather has promoted the rate of crime to increase (Zhang 2008). The main reason is that the services within the vicinity of the housing have not been distributed efficiently and effectively . Another cause of crime is that most people are overcrowded and do not have ways to sustain their lives. Statistics in South Africa suggest that areas associated with low cost housing are prone to crime and that's were the

highest crime rates are situated in the country (Tonkin, 2008). Conclusion In a nutshell, low cost housing has been a controversial issue where it has been characterised by successes and failures. The main drawback which makes RDP housing to be a failure is the legacies of the post-apartheid system which hinder success. RDP housing has been helpful in providing accommodation for the poor and at the same time it has been of low quality making lives even difficult for the users. Reference page Guy, A 2000, *The New South Africa*, Macmillan Press, London. Tonkin, A 2008, *Sustainable Medium Density Housing: A Resource Book*, Development Action Group, Cape Town. Tonkin, A & Muthambi, L 2012, "Challenges for interest groups and their advocacy campaigns: The case of sustainable medium density housing" , in Thuynsma H A (ed.), *Public Opinion and Interest Groups Politics: South Africa's Missing Links?*, Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria. Watson, V 2002, *Change and Community in Spatial Planning: Metropolitan planning in Cape Town under political transition*, Routledge, London. Zhang, X Q 2008, *Housing Finance System in South Africa*, UN-HABITAT, Nairobi.