

Working Paper_02

**Defiance and delusion in municipal-driven relocations: the case study of Spring Valley
informal settlement in Mpumalanga Province**



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Abstract

Despite the UN-Habitat guideline stipulating that states should exhaust possible alternatives to evictions and ensure that all affected groups and persons have the relevant information, be fully consulted and participate in the entire process, many residents of informal settlements in South Africa are victims of imposed relocation. This paper examines the disparity between the guidelines and the lived reality of those in informal settlements, illustrated by the case study of Spring Valley informal settlement in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The paper uses a conceptual framework of community participation and relocation. The study concludes that poor community participation promotes misconceptions about relocation, deprives residents of information and adversely affects their socio-economic development. This study mainly uses semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to collect empirical data, thus, making an important contribution to literature on urban development and relocations.

Key words: Community participation, informal settlements, relocation, tenure security and upgrading projects

1. Introduction

The United Nations guidelines stipulates that relocation of informal settlements needs to be implemented as a last resort:

'States should explore fully all possible alternatives to evictions. All potentially affected groups and persons, including women, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities, as well as others working on behalf of the affected have the right to relevant information, full consultation and

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participation through the entire process and to propose alternatives that authorities should duly consider' (UN-habitat 2014:9).

Despite the existence of this guideline encouraging consultations where relocation is a necessary option, some municipalities in South Africa continue to unilaterally induce the relocation of informal settlements and disregard the affected communities. Relocations are therefore conducted without exhausting alternative solutions such as in-situ upgrading projects (see cases in Huchzermeyer 2008 and Zondo and Royston 2016). This paper analyses the experiences of the residents of Spring Valley informal settlement during a relocation process, imposed by the Emalahleni Local Municipality. It reveals a lack of community participation and explains the strategies residents adopted as a response to the relocation threats. The paper describes how residents divided into two factions: one relocating and another remaining (dispositional) in the area. Furthermore, it illustrates how the Municipality of Emalahleni violated the above-mentioned UN-habitat relocation guidelines. This phenomenon of involuntary relocation in the Spring Valley informal settlement is viewed through a conceptual lens of community participation. The study has three objectives; firstly it seeks to discuss how international laws to eliminate involuntary relocations, in developing countries have limited success in context with poor local governance. Drawing on the case of South Africa it demonstrates practice vis-à-vis the international agencies efforts to promote community participation in development projects. The paper draws on the UN-habitat relocation guidelines and other South African land related legislation such as the Prevention of Illegal Eviction and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act no. 19 of 1998 to demonstrate the disjuncture between international laws and local practice. Secondly, the paper reveals how residents invoke perceived tenure security and resist non-participatory planning

approaches through adopting various strategies to challenge municipalities' non-participatory planning approaches. Lastly, the paper provides a critical analysis of community participation in the context of informal settlements relocations meanwhile drawing on scholarship covering evictions and relocation within the developing world. In the process it will demonstrate the role of community organizations in facilitating effective relocation processes.

2. Contextual background

South Africa is characterised by the legacy of apartheid policies on land use, planning and development which were based on racial discrimination and confined black South Africans in the peripheries (Pienaar, 2002). The National Development Plan therefore calls for the breaking of apartheid spatial patterns by 2030. However, for South Africa, this is a huge housing challenge and a better part of the challenge are the informal settlements (Ehebrecht, 2014). The informal settlements are characterised by poor environmental conditions, inadequate basic services and lack of tenure. This does not negate the fact that the intensity of the conditions in informal settlements often vary from community to community (van Rensburg, 2013). South Africa's post-apartheid era has seen the African National Congress (ANC)-led government formulate policies and programmes to address the legacy of the apartheid policies concerning housing and other urban development challenges. Section 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, enshrines the inalienable right to housing: "(1) everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. (2) The State must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realization of this right. (3) No one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances" (Republic of South Africa Constitution 1996, section 26).

Similarly, the Housing Act 107 of 1997 stipulates rules and responsibilities of the three tiers of Government; stating that the national, provincial and local spheres of governments must give priority to the needs of the poor in respect of housing development (Housing Act 1997: section 2 (1)). Likewise, South Africa's current National Housing Policy Framework complements the Constitution, the National Housing Act 107 of 1997, and the "Comprehensive Plan for the Development of Sustainable Human Settlements", commonly known as "Breaking New Ground". "Breaking New Ground" was approved by Cabinet in September 2004. It introduced a new human settlement plan to redirect and enhance existing mechanisms to move towards more responsive and effective housing delivery. It encouraged upgrading of informal settlements and interaction between municipalities and residents of the informal settlements. This presupposes that residents should be active participants in the process of achieving this target, however this has not been state institutions' practice as demonstrated by evictions of informal settlements (Huchzermeyer, 2009).

3. Problem Statement

South Africa committed itself to both the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the subsequent United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, in response to the Millennium Development Goals, the Department of Human Settlements committed itself to eradicating all informal settlements through facilitating denser, better located, mixed-income, environmentally sustainable housing in accordance with the Breaking New Ground strategy (South Africa Department of Housing, 2004). In practice though, difficulties occur in addressing the phenomenon, especially concerning making public land available to low income groups.

Post-apartheid government's attempts to redress the distortion in urban development through policy frameworks are thwarted by steep land costs in the urban areas which force many people to settle in periphery where land is affordable. For this reason 'residential segregation is no

longer racial but wealth-oriented' (Pienaar, 2002:4). This suggests that economic status of residents is a determinant factor on settling the outskirts of towns and cities. Nevertheless, the snail pace in redressing skewed urban development can also be attributed to lack of post-apartheid authorities' responsiveness to residents' demands (Makhulu, 2010) such as improved services.

Similarly, the responses of the South African government to the Sustainable Development Goals was the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and Action Plan 2011-2014 which promoted building of sustainable human settlements, covering upgrading of well-located informal settlements. Regardless of these initiatives, difficulties in addressing challenges of informal settlements manifest in evictions or involuntary relocations of informal settlements.

Despite the Upgrading Informal Settlement Programme's (UISP) recommendation that relocation should be a last resort, some communities in South Africa suffer from relocations induced by municipalities as a standard practice (Huchzermeyer, 2004). The decision to relocate informal settlements is driven by a desire to make space for formal housing development (Huchzermeyer, 2011; Jordhus-Lier and de Wet, 2013). This trend worsens residents' insecurity in informal settlements and their economic stresses. Instead of implementing responsive programmes, municipalities resort to evictions (SERI, 2013; Huchzermeyer, 2011). Poor local governance therefore underpins the failure of municipalities to implement the policies. The effects of the poor governance manifests in lack of service delivery which underpin service delivery protests estimated to be 317 by monitoring agencies in 2015. These challenges have become a pressing concern for the international community; for instance Habitat III Agenda put emphasis on inclusivity in cities and leaving no one behind (Un-Habitat, 2016). This can be interpreted as a call for nation states to give utmost priority to community participation and the needs of residents of informal settlements. However, for

South Africa, as many other developing countries, translating it into practice remains to be seen.

The Prevention of Illegal Eviction and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act no. 19 of 1998 clearly articulates conditions under which evictions can be executed and prohibits unlawful eviction. It dictates that a court order needs to be granted for evictions. For instance, the occupier must be given a court notice 14 days before a court hearing (PIE, 1998). Likewise, the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act of 1996 which is applicable to people who have informal land rights (including informal settlements) provides temporary protection of certain rights and interests in land. For instance, it states that ‘no person may be deprived of any informal right to land without his or her consent’ (The Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act of 1996, section 2). Translation of the policies into practice has not materialized and this is reflected in involuntary relocations. The recent legal battle between Slovo Park informal settlement and the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality illustrates this assertion. The High Court of South Africa, ruled in favour of the informal settlement and instructed the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality to apply the Upgrading of Informal Settlement Policy as opposed to eviction.(case no² 02752/2014). This judgement highlights the fact that relocations or relocation threats should be the last option. This study reflects on the local practice in relation to policies and links it to broader literature on relocations and evictions.

4. Conceptualising relocation and community participation

² Melani and Others v City of Johannesburg and Others (02752/2014) [2016] ZAGPJHC 55; 2016 (5) SA 67 (GJ) (22 March 2016)

Relocation

Relocation is the physical transfer of individuals or groups from their usual home to another location, and may be voluntary or involuntary (UN-habitat, 2013). Voluntary relocation could be experienced by people migrating from one area to another for economic opportunities, for example. Involuntary relocation is a phenomenon in developing countries, often forced upon a settlement externally by the State and private developers for reasons relating to natural disasters, war, or development projects (Getachew, 2014). Involuntary relocation occurs when affected persons or committees do not have the power to refuse land acquisition or being moved to another place. Involuntary relocation may also occur when land supply for development in lucrative areas is saturated to a point where developers begin to target undeveloped areas (Viratkapan & Perera, 2004).

Scholarship points out that an effective relocation plan needs to ensure minimal disruption to people's networks and livelihoods. Residential displacement clearly disrupts the family life of households, the social fabric of the community and sources of income (Duplessis, 2006; Durand Lasserre, 2006; Couldrey & Herson, 2010). Important factors to consider when conducting a successful relocation are community, education and jobs. In view of the three factors, scholarship observes that relocation should avoid breaking down the community, increasing transportation costs and distances from work, schools and depletion of opportunities of the families

The negative economic effects include loss of income that have been generated from running a home based business and other informal trading in nearby areas or informal places. People are relocated to remote areas which are quite distant from the established source of livelihoods (Abbebe and Hesselberg, 2013). On relocation, people who have jobs may travel long distances to their work places, and often have to use public transport. This becomes an additional expense especially if previously they were within a walking distance from their work

places, and this is of particular concern to women and girls, who are more at risk of violence on their journeys to work or school. Relocation has varying effects on residents according to gender, age and other social factors. For women in particular, access to assets such as land has far-reaching ramifications in terms of their decision making, political influence and power (Domingo et. Al, 2015). Any form of distraction on access to land is bound to adversely affect their economic development. Relocation therefore may create impoverishment through landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization and food insecurity (Cernea, 2000). It can be argued that involuntary relocation makes the victims susceptible to chronic poverty therefore community involvement must be a priority in situations where relocation is necessary.

Community participation

Community participation is a complex process engaging participants in all stages of a given activity (Cornwall, 2008). Important in this definition and what is often overlooked by many is the involvement in all stages. Community participation promotes inclusive representation (Gaventa, 2006; Chambers, 1997). This assertion can only apply where caution has been exercised in identifying the stakeholders in a given community. Participation provides space for residents to voice their needs to local officials and brings government closer to the people, thus, increasing responsiveness (Stringer et al, 2007). The observation is shared by Mansuri and Rao (2003) who argue that potential gains from community –driven project include responsive government and improved service delivery. Although community participation does not always improve project outcomes, scholarship generally observes that it often yields positive project outcomes. Benefits of community participation include promoting community development, reducing social exclusion, improving social accountability and social cohesion, increasing communities' knowledge, experience skills and sustainability (Burns et al, 2004). These benefits far outweigh the costs of community participation, which explains why international organisations are inclined to it. Whilst there is plenty of scholarship on community

participation, the work rarely investigates lack of participation and its effects on relocation processes. This study therefore provides empirical evidence demonstrating the phenomenon, and that participation may enrich the relocations process.

The World Bank asserts that participatory governance should be underpinned by engagement among citizens, community groups, businesses and local authorities (World Bank Group, 2015). In urban areas, the World Bank encourages participatory upgrading projects to improve the social, economic, organisational and environmental living conditions (World Bank Group, 2015:13). The literature on community participation explicitly dismisses top-down approaches such as involuntary relocations at community levels.

Involuntary relocations associated with lack of community participation are a pressing concern for international organisations, practitioners, journalist and academics. Lack of community participation aggravates the negative perceptions of relocation. Involuntary relocations have tainted meaningful development projects as affected communities become disillusioned and resentful of potentially positive development projects. To avoid these negative effects, states must embrace a human-rights based approach to managing relocation, which prioritises accountability and involvement of the affected people in decision-making concerning development projects and relocation (UN-Habitat, 2014).

Communities generally resist the top-down impositions in local governance (Mathekga, 2006) thus, the importance of community participation in development. The assertion evokes the question, would the Spring Valley residents have responded differently to the Municipal Council's relocation instruction had they been involved in the initial stages of relocation? This question cannot be directly answered in this study, however the high level of dissatisfaction among residents about the lack of consultation and the scant information they had about the

relocation justifies investigating community participation in Spring Valley informal settlement relocation.

5. Research Methodology

The Researcher reviewed both primary and secondary resources to enhance her understanding of the issues in Spring Valley. A case study approach has been employed to examine the effects of a lack of community participation in relocation process. A case study is a research strategy which comprises empirical investigation in a local setting and employs different methods to understand a phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Two research assistants conducted semi-structured interviews between July and August 2016 in Spring Valley where Planact³ executes its participatory programmes funded by the RAITH Foundation. The research assistants conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 key informants - residents who defied the instruction of the municipality to relocate to Klarinat and one who relocated to Klarinet but later returned to Spring Valley. Key informants were randomly selected based on being affected by the project and availability. The questionnaire had forty semi-structured questions meant to give insight into the extent of participation of residents during the relocation process.

Questions asked for instance included:

How did the municipality communicate the relocation instruction to you? Were you aware of the reasons for being relocated? How much time was given to you to prepare for the relocation? What was your response to the instruction to relocate?

These and other questions enabled the study to obtain important data about the relocation process and its effects. The study also used focus group discussions to gather data. The first focus group discussion was held in January 2015 with eight members of Spring Valley informal settlements who were selected for their involvement in community development and were long

³ Planact is a non-governmental organisation based in Bramfontein executing three programmes: participatory governance, integrated human settlement and community economic development in low-income communities.

term residents of the settlement. A second focus group discussion was held with ten residents of Klarinat (who relocated from Spring Valley) in March 2016. The focus group discussion enabled the researcher to obtain data on the residents' perceptions regarding the relocation. The group at Klarinat helped the study to gain insights into the living conditions in Klarinat - the host area and their perception about the relocation. The Researcher also participated in the Spring Valley Development Committee meeting where the issue of relocation was one of the agenda items, thus, obtained valuable data on their concerns. To gain multiple perspectives into the contexts, perceptions and experience of the community, the researcher reviewed articles and case studies of Spring Valley informal settlements which are available on Planact's website. To analyze the data, the researcher reviewed the data and used content analysis, with a focus on identifying themes. The researcher tracked common patterns and relationships related to the subject matter thus enriching her understanding of the phenomenon.

6. International perspective on informal settlements and relocation

The Sustainable Development Goals agenda did not succeed in eradicating all slums therefore the New Urban Agenda also addresses the issue of informal settlements (UN-HABITAT, 2016). Goal 11 of the sustainable development goals which is 'to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' has not been achieved. This does not negate the fact that the proportion of the world urban population living in slums declined from 39 per cent to 30 percent. (United Nations 2016). However, in Africa, slums remain a pressing concern as 61.7% of the urban population lives in slums. The urban population has increased from 400 million to 1.2 billion (Un-Habitat 2016). The increase of the urban population suggests that governments need to embrace proactive strategies to meet its housing and services needs. As Habitat (2016:7) observes the 'growth rates signal a major challenge to their resource base, to

build and to sustain adequate infrastructure and public services for their growing populations'. Informal settlements in Africa's cities and towns therefore epitomise the housing challenge.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) projects that Sub-Saharan Africa's urban population will double between 2000 and 2030 (UNPF, 2007; UN-Habitat, 2016). This heightens the need for additional housing closer to the city where there are jobs and economic opportunities, essential in improving the standards of living. Sadly, many African governments have not invested enough towards addressing this challenge. Lack of land closer to the city and the fact that the poor cannot afford high rentals and expensive land closer to the city, has compelled them to occupy any land available to them (Napier et al, 2013). Scholarship generally notes that inadequate capacity of local authorities to provide planned, and serviced land coupled with poor policy enforcement contribute to the growth of informal settlements. Consequently, informal settlements are therefore prevalent and high numbers of residents gathering together is used as a strategy to attain legitimacy (Shretha et al, 2014) as observed in the South African context.

7. Informal settlements in South Africa

South Africa's population was estimated to be 55.91 million mid-2016. Currently, 22 per cent of South Africa's urban population (51 percent) resides in informal settlements. The number of informal settlements in South Africa have increased from around 300 informal settlements to over 2600 informal settlements between 1994 and 2010 (Cities Alliance undated). Statistics South Africa (2016) reports that informal settlements comprises almost 1.4 million households. In South Africa, other factors contributing to increase in the informal settlements is the escalating housing backlog which compel people to look for alternative ways of improving their chances to own a home by invading existing land (Huchzermeyer, 2011). Land invasion therefore is considered 'a response to unbearable living conditions, the expenses of renting,

and insecure tenure in friends and families homes' (Lemanskie and Oldfield, 2008:6). Basically, it should be seen as a calculated move towards owning a shelter and subsequently improving ones' social and economic opportunities.

Certainly, most of the informal settlements have a history of illegal land invasions closer to the city (Huchzermeyer and Karam, 2006; Mears, 2011). The people living in these settlements cannot claim ownership of the land because they are occupants with no legal documents to prove ownership. They live in a state of uncertainty and fear of being evicted by land owners (Durand-Lasserve and Selod, 2007). However, they do invoke their legitimacy based on their numbers and the period spent in the area. The trend though is that developers often claim such illegally occupied land parcels and demolish the houses or shack dwellings in the proposed area for development (Getachew, 2014). Development agendas from land developers for urban renewal programs usually facilitate involuntary relocation of these communities through processes acted out by the State (Viratkapan & Perera, 2004). Relocation in this sense becomes involuntary for the residents due to the decision not being in their best interests.

Security of tenure vis-à-vis relocation

An inverse relationship exist between the growth of informal settlement and the lack of adequate housing and land (Piennar, 2002). Residents of informal settlement lack security of tenure and live under the constant threat of eviction. Most of the houses in the settlements are poor, thus, considered by some as highly precarious. Many scholars (for example Carnea, 1993; Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012; UN-Habitat, 2013, Abebe and Hesselberg, 2013) observe that security of tenure is a vital ingredient to the socio-economic development of poor communities. This suggests that land tenure security is an engine for development which should not be neglected. The UN-Habitat Global Land Tools Network (2008) defines land tenure as a relationship whether legally or customarily defined, amongst people, individuals or groups to land. Whereas, UN-Habitat defines land by the way land is held or owned by

individuals or groups or the set of relationships legally or customarily defined amongst people with respect to land (UN-Habitat 2013). Explicit in these definitions is the fact that land is tied to social relations involving sets of rules that affect the way that land is owned and used. Relocations of informal settlements therefore disrupts social relations of the residents who already suffer from lack of tenure security.

Lack of tenure security discourages household investments, undermines long-term planning, and distorts prices for land and services (Desoto, 2000; Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012). Tenure security impacts on access to services, access to credit, vulnerability to risks and hazards (Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012). A correlation exists between tenure security and recognition of informal settlements by municipal authorities. The problem is that municipalities often associate tenure security with title. Yet, privatisation and individual titling fails to address tenure problems (Cousins et al 2005) because some of the land problems require alternative forms of tenure. To illustrate this, perceived tenure cannot be disregarded in informal settlements who derive security from recognition by the community or neighbourhood irrespective of being unrecognised by the state (Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012). These scholars observe that other factors resulting in perceived tenure include understanding that a court order is needed before eviction, involvement of non-governmental organisations in restricting evictions, and political support.

In South Africa, the Breaking New Ground Policy was a comprehensive plan for sustainable settlements which aimed to address housing backlog and land tenure problems among other things. However, its limitation was associating security of tenure with land titling (Cousins et al 2005). Despite the existence of the policy, the poor are still unable to afford land and social housing in the urban areas (Maclean, 2006; Victor, 2009; Huchzermeyer, 2011): what can be considered an achievement of the BNG is the introduction of the Informal Settlement Upgrading Programme (UISP) which encourages informal settlements upgrading and

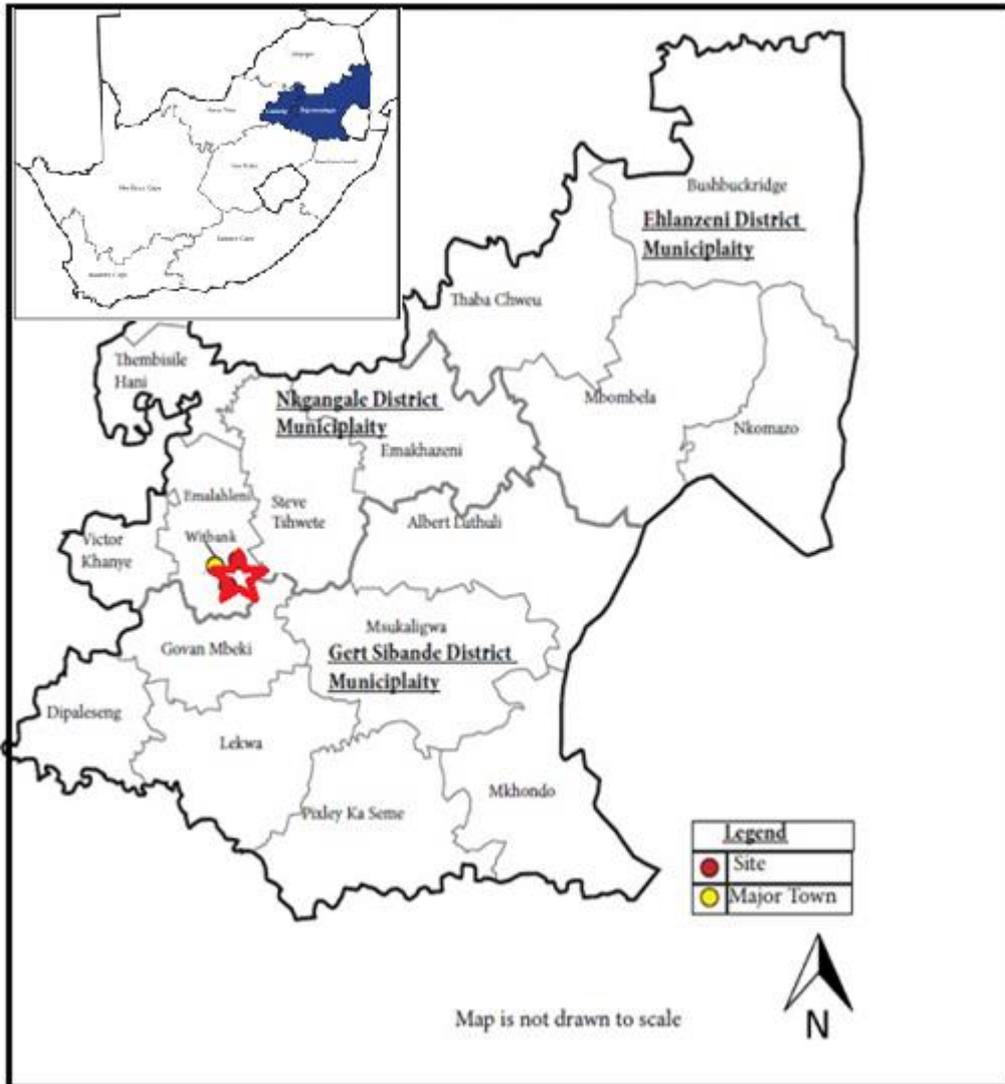
engagements between municipalities and residents of informal settlements. The programme discourages displacement of informal settlements which is disruptive to resident's networks vital for sustaining livelihoods. Municipalities have not committed to implementing it, hence, the continued exclusion of the poor in urban development and their susceptibility to involuntary relocation. The negative effects of evictions on the residents of informal settlements include disrupting their livelihoods (Duran Lasserre, 2006; Duplesis 2006.Huchzermeyer 2009). Contrary to the stipulation by the SUIP that relocation should take place in risky areas such as those on unsafe dolomitic land, many informal settlements in non- risky areas fall victims of involuntary relocation. The case study of Spring Valley informal settlements epitomises municipal-driven relocations.

8. The case study of Spring Valley informal settlement

Profile of Spring Valley

Spring Valley is an informal settlement of approximately 2,500 households located within EMalahleni Local Municipality in Nkangala District, Mpumalanga Province. The geographical area of the municipality is approximately 2677 square kilometres and has an estimated population size of 395,466 inhabitants (Draft IDP2014/15). Due to poor governance, the EMalahleni Municipality was placed under Section 100 administration in April 2013 (Urban LandMark, 2013).Figure one below shows the location of the area.

Figure 1 Location of Spring Valley



Source: Map showing location of Spring Valley (Google Earth, 2012).

The Spring Valley settlement is located on 42 hectares of council land at the edge of the Ryno Ridge suburb. The settlement is established on what was previously a farm. A school which was built as far back as 1962 is located in the area and is currently being refurbished and extended by the Department of Education. The development of shacks in the area is traced back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, initiated by a group of evictees from nearby farms. People who are settled in this community come from different provinces of South Africa including Limpopo, KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng. A few of the inhabitants have migrated from Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (Urban LandMark, 2013).

The significant characteristics of Spring Valley is that many of the residents lack proper housing and as such live in shacks commonly known as *Umkhukhu* in Zulu. Shacks are made of plastics, corrugated iron sheets, card boxes and timbers. The shacks do not meet recognised South African decent housing standards; instead the settlement is characterised by the following conditions: a) inadequate access to clean water and electricity; poor sanitation and solid waste disposal and lack of tenure insecurity. Given the insecurity of tenure and the Municipality's threats to relocate the residents of the informal settlement of Spring Valley, residents lack the incentives to invest in their current housing. Through lobbying, and with the support of Planact, the community received a generator to pump water from the nearby spring, and a water delivery service provided by a contractor (Planact, 2016). Generally, residents are dissatisfied with the services provided by the Emalahleni Municipality and complain of poor governance. On different occasions, they have engaged in protests to express their dissatisfaction with the poor service delivery (Planact, 2016). The Emalahleni Municipality took a decision to relocate the residents of the settlement on the basis that the community was illegally settled. It instructed the residents to relocate to Klarinet, a community situated approximately 15 kilometres away from Spring Valley informal settlement (Urban Land Mark 2013). The section below discusses how the relocation was undertaken and demonstrates the effects of the relocation/threats to the residents.

Relocation imposition in Spring Valley

This study asked interview and focus group participants a specific question about how the Emalahleni Local Municipality introduced the relocation decision to the community and, revealed their diverse views. A common factor from the responses was that community participation and consultation process were insufficient. The statements below capture and summarise the views of the participants on how the relocation was introduced:

1. The first view is that the Municipality of Emalahleni formally informed the community about the relocation during a community meeting held at a community sports ground. Key informants supporting this view said that they were informed that the relocation would be voluntary, meaning that residents had a choice to relocate or remain at Spring Valley.
2. The second view is that the Spring Valley Development Committee⁴ informed the residents about the relocation to Klarinet at a community meeting. The key informants who subscribe to this view mentioned that the committee indicated that relocation would be voluntary.
3. The third view, is that the Emalahleni Local Municipality invited residents to a meeting held at the Emalahleni Municipal Council offices and informed them about the decision to relocate to Klarinet. A justification that the municipality provided for the relocation was that they are settled on private-owned land. This view gives the impression that relocation was a compulsory option that residents had to comply with since they were settled on non-municipal land. The Municipality owns a small portion of the land which cannot accommodate the approximately 2000 households. They furthermore speculated that the private owner of the land was a financial institution that planned to build middle class rental houses. The anticipated construction of rental houses frustrated the residents who concluded that the Municipality intended to use it as a strategy to get rid of the poor residents of the informal settlements.

The focus group participants pointed out that the municipality emphasised that they would not provide basic services to the current settlement in Spring Valley, because of its status as privately-owned land. For this reason, residents of the settlement would have to relocate

⁴ The Spring Valley Committee is a local leadership structure comprised of members from different groups in the community.

to Klarinet to access improved basic services. Many participants expressed their frustration as they related how the Municipality had not made an effort to explain the relocation issues to them.

The three aforementioned views demonstrate that there was no relocation plan presented to the community. The Emalahleni Local Municipality did not hold follow-up consultation meetings and educational workshops to help the residents understand the relocation process and prepare them for the major changes in their socio-economic and environmental conditions.

Controversy on relocation threats in Spring Valley

The focus group participants in Spring Valley narrated that before the relocation of the 650 households in 2014, the community had been threatened with relocation on the basis that it occupied private land. However, a majority of the community members opposed the idea of relocation (Focus group discussion 2014). Although the whole settlement of approximately 2200 households had been instructed to relocate, only 650 households ultimately agreed to relocate; the rest defied the Council order to relocate (Municipal Official 2016). This study identified the following main reasons for the residents' refusal to relocate:

- a) *The Spring Valley settlement has been in existence for more than twenty years, therefore relocation would disrupt the sense of community developed over the years in the area.* This reason suggests that the community did not anticipate moving. Perceived tenure security may be experienced by residents who feel 'recognised' within the community and neighbourhood. This perception occurs even if the State does not recognise them (Payne and Durand-Lasserve, 2012). Perceived tenure security can result from a number of factors including a) situations where demolishing of a structure or building requires a court order, and b) where non-governmental organisations and

grassroots movements have confronted the government by repeatedly lobbying against evictions (UN-Habitat 2014?). It could be argued that Spring Valley community enjoyed perceived tenure security because of these factors.

- b) *Residents were ill-prepared to relinquish the various established economic opportunities sustaining their livelihoods.* Smith (2005) observes that in-situ upgrading should always be pursued as an alternative to evictions or relocation to retain the social and economic links of the settlements. This is necessary because informal settlements are often strategically located on land that is closer to economic opportunities. The locational factors include being closer to schools, health clinics, shops, jobs and other support networks. Furthermore, informal settlements have low income and resilience to external shocks and stresses (Satterthwaite and Dodman, 2013). Consequently, relocation often cause severe strain and disruption to residents' lives. Considering the social and economic costs of relocation often highlights the fact that the imposed relocation is misplaced and unnecessary given what works for the residents of informal settlements.
- c) *A primary school is located in the area and is convenient for residents' children.* Residents feared that the relocation might disrupt the children's academic progress.
- d) *Residents considered the relocation threats an indication of the Municipality's strategy of getting rid of the poor and promoting its version of development ("nice houses") at their expense.* Focus group participants in Spring Valley alleged that the Municipality had given permission to a financial institution to build middle class rental housing, hence, the decision to relocate them. The focus group complained 'we have already invested in the plots yet we are not allowed to transport corrugated iron and other building material to Klarinat' (focus group, 2016). Indeed, development agendas from land developers for urban renewal programs usually facilitate involuntary relocation of

these communities through processes acted out by the State (Viratkapan & Perera, 2004).

Despite the reluctance of the majority of the households to relocate to Klarinat, eviction threats from the Emalahleni Local Municipality continued. Eventually, approximately 650 households accepted the alternative Reconstruction and Development Programme⁵ housing provided by the municipality at Klarinat. Members of the Spring Valley Development Committee assert that a majority of the 650 households resorted to this decision for two reasons. First, because of the continued threats from the Municipality of Emalahleni, which worsened insecurity in the area. Second, because of fear that the Municipality might embark on drastic measures to get rid of them. For this reason in this paper the relocation of the 650 households is classified as involuntary relocation as well.

The nature of consultation on relocation in Spring Valley

This study established that the decision to relocate Spring Valley informal settlements in Emalahleni Local Municipality was a Council resolution which was unaccompanied by a mitigation plan. A key informant from the Municipality of Emalahleni said that the decision to relocate the Spring Valley informal settlement was taken at a Council meeting (Municipal official, 2016). The motivation was that the community occupied a large portion of private land. The Municipal official narrated that the initial Council plan was to relocate all the 220,000 households which were identified during a census conducted in the area. However, many

⁵ The RDP was the first development policy of the post-apartheid government which was concerned with correcting discriminatory spatial planning that marginalised the poor from job opportunities and accessing amenities (Pillay et al 2006). During the apartheid period, Black South Africans were forced to live in homelands characterised by poor services and also low per capita income. The programme therefore aimed at providing housing and services to the previously marginalised poor segment of society and improving the quality of life in the rural.

residents resisted relocating, thus only 650 households were relocated to Klarinet (Municipal official interview⁶ 2016).

When asked if the 2000 households would have been accommodated at the available housing in Klarinet, had they agreed to relocate, the official's answer was affirmative. She alluded to the fact that Klarinet has mixed housing meant to accommodate 12,000 households. A total of 5000 RDP houses were built to accommodate qualifying individuals⁷, therefore all households from Spring Valley would have been successfully provided with houses.

Residents' defiance and strategies

The community of Spring Valley responded in different ways to the Municipality's instruction to relocate to Klarinet. Approximately 1500 households in Spring Valley refused to relocate as instructed. Semi-structured interviews and focus group participants observed that residents were ill-prepared to start a new life in Klarinet. They had adapted to their livelihood strategies in Spring Valley, thus, viewed relocation as disruptive force. Consequently, the Spring Valley Development Committee mobilised the community to remain in solidarity (win the majority) and defied the instruction of the Emalahleni Municipality. When asked what was their response to the municipality's instruction to relocate to Klarinet, residents gave various responses.

The statements below are mainly from the semi-structured interviews and capture the sentiments of some of the residents who refused to relocate to Klarinet:

Respondent 1: *'I simply decided not to respond'*.

Respondent 2: *'I didn't comply with the Municipality's instruction (to relocate)'*.

⁶Telephone interview held with a municipal official from the Planning department on the 25 May 2016.

⁷ South African residents earning less than R3, 500-00. However in this case they would accommodate all the residents of Spring Valley regardless of their monthly income.

Respondent 3 *'I purposed to rather go back to my home in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) than relocate to Klarinat'*.

'Respondent 4: I didn't respond because I am not a member of the Democratic Alliance party'

Focus group A: *'The relocation was carelessly introduced and implemented therefore we refuse to relocate'* (Focus group discussion 2016).

Explicit in these statements is the resistance of the residents to relocate to Klarinet. Respondents 1 and 2 depict an open defiance of the municipality's decision to relocate the settlement. Respondent 3's assertion that she preferred returning to their area of origin in KZN than relocating to Klarinat illustrates residents' frustration concerning the relocation. It suggests that residents reflect on the economic implications of the relocation to their livelihoods. Respondent 4 offered a political-oriented reason which shows the political elements associated with the relocation. He considers the relocation to have been aimed at members of the Democratic Alliance or a political decision to remove non-ANC members from the area. In a focus group discussion participants indicated that Spring Valley informal settlement is comprised of a majority of Democratic Alliance and few African National Congress Members. They explained that as a result of the political arrangement, the Spring Valley informal settlement received less attention from the municipality in respect to service delivery. Focus group participants concluded that the municipality did not properly plan for the relocation and failed to put in place proper structures to guide the implementation of the relocation.

Confusion in the relocation of 650 households

According to the United Nation's relocation guidelines, eviction notices should allow and enable those subject to eviction to take an inventory necessary to assess the values of their properties, investments and other material goods that may be damaged. Those subject to

eviction should have an opportunity to assess and document non-monetary losses for compensation purposes (UN-Habitat, 2013). Surprisingly, residents of Spring Valley were unaware of the exact date when they relocate to Klarinet, the new site. Instead, they received tentative dates which in most cases were not adhered to. If these assertions by the residents are accurate, the relocation was dehumanising from a human rights perspective and characterised by a lack of information. Semi-structured interview participants in this study stated that consequences of the lack of information manifested in that:

'People left their animals roaming in the streets because they had little time to prepare'.

'Residents never had time to talk to their neighbours and request storage of their items such as stoves, window glasses, buckets and domestic animals which the municipal truck driver refused to load on the vehicle'.

'Relocation affected their culture because their belief requires that they perform a ritual to inform the ancestors about the relocation but in this case there was no time to do it'.

'People left their family graves unattended'.

The statements above demonstrate how residents believe that the relocation was inappropriately implemented, lacked information and caused great inconvenience to them. Despite being in an informal settlement, the residents still esteem their culture and this also reinforces the importance of community involvement in relocations. In addition, residents were not compensated for most of their property left behind. They were only provided with an alternative two bedroom house (with kitchen, dining room and bathroom). This meant that the loss of other assets such as gardens, graveyards and other small businesses were not compensated for. The lack of compensation for lost assets negatively affected their economic status, because interventions to help them reestablish their livelihood strategies did not exist. The experience of the residents illustrates the repercussions of lack of community participation in relocation

projects. Had the community been involved, the likelihood of making adequate preparations for relocation was high.

Misperception of benefits and affordability concerns in Klarinat

Despite the decision made by a majority of Spring Valley residents not to relocate, about 650 households agreed to relocate to Klarinet. The focus group discussions held in Spring Valley and Klarinat revealed that the residents agreed to relocated either as a result of intimidation from the Municipality or perceived benefits in the new area. Some of the residents assumed that relocation to Klarinat would improve their living conditions. For instance, semi-structured interview Respondent 9 in this study said that

'I agreed to relocate because I didn't have access to adequate water in Spring Valley, therefore I was happy to relocate to a house with water'. She later commented that, 'when I got there I realised that there were many problems such as high water bills and no job opportunities'.

The statements reflect the sentiments of some residents who relocated to the RDP houses in Klarinat. Likewise, some residents were also excited about moving into permanent structures in Klarinat. A majority though were disappointed by the exorbitant utilities bills which were unaffordable to them. Consequently, other households' owners decided to return to Spring Valley to continue with the already established way of living. The narratives below give a glimpse into the perceptions of some of the 650 households concerning the relocation and their responses.

Narrative⁸ 1

'I didn't resist relocation to Klarinet. I was happy to relocate to the new area. I followed the municipality's advice to apply for an RDP house and submitted my application. After a couple

⁸ The study uses pseudonyms.

of months I went to the Municipality Council's offices to check the status of my application and that is when I was told my application had been approved. Although I was not told of the exact date of relocation, I started preparing for the relocation. Ultimately, I was relocated, the municipality only provided a truck which transported my household items to the new site'. (Mabuza 2016).

Narrative 2

'I was happy when the municipality (Emalahleni Local Municipality) told us that we would be relocated because I thought that Klarinet has better services than Spring valley- water and proper sanitation. I therefore went to the Municipal council offices to apply for the RDP house.' (Zolisile 2016).

Narrative3

'I agreed to be relocated to Klarinet because I was suffering in Spring Valley as a result of the difficult in accessing clean water. I followed the instruction of the Municipality concerning applying for the RDP house and indeed I was granted the house'. (Nomathemba, 2016).

The narratives demonstrate that the residents relocated to the new site with the hope of improving their living conditions. Lack of information on the host area deprives the affected residents of an opportunity to make informed decisions regarding relocation (UN-Habitat 2013). Explicit in the narratives is that the residents had a glossy picture of Klarinet and failed to consider other factors such as bills and the costs of adapting to the new area. Evident is that the participants stated that they were not aware that they would incur water bills. They did not consider the implication of forgoing the locational advantage they had been enjoying in Spring Valley which made it possible to trade or access jobs. It can be argued that the Municipality did not explain the costs of utilities such as water, electricity and waste disposal in Klarinat,

incurred in a formal township. This further illustrates the lack of community participation and information regarding the relocation process.

Disillusionment of the residents in Klarinat

This study finds that some residents who relocated to Klarinat were disappointed as reality concerning the costs of living became apparent. Focus group discussions held in Spring Valley and Klarinat revealed that some of the residents who relocated to Klarinat returned to Spring Valley because of hardships encountered in the new area. Unfortunately, the study could not ascertain the exact number of people who returned to Spring Valley. Focus group participants and the Spring Valley Development Committee concurred that these individuals had returned to their previous sites in Spring Valley, however had done this quietly due to fear of action that the Municipality might take against them for returning to the area. Efforts to interview some of these individuals were prevented by threats to the research assistant and incorrect accusations that she was acting on behalf of the Emalahleni Local Municipality. Only one individual from this group participated in the study before the disruption of the interviews by the group suspicious about the exercise. The suspicious group viewed the interviews as a strategy to identify those who violated the conditions for the relocation by returning to their former sites. Conditions issued verbally by the Municipal Officials had included the clause that residents would not retain housing structures in Spring Valley and would not return to the original site of their housing. Therefore some of the residents had breached the conditions, and were therefore afraid of being reported to the Municipality.

Disillusion with the living conditions in Klarinat are reflected in statements made by the residents who continued to stay in Klarinat. During the focus group discussions held in Klarinat with those who relocated and never returned to Spring Valley, the following complaints were expressed:

- *The houses are of poor quality and have malfunctioning plumbing system and leaking roofing.*
- *The water at Klarinet is dirty and emits a bad smell. As a result, some residents buy drinking water from a nearby area--- as a mitigation measure to the existing poor water quality.*
- *Water and electricity bills in the new RDP houses are quite high and unaffordable.*

Emphasising the concern regarding costly utilities, one lady in her sixties argued:

'I have received a bill statement from the municipality showing that I need to settle R18,000 per year in lieu of the utilities and this is high and unaffordable because my only source of income is pension'.

Residents also raised concerns regarding the fact that sometimes the houses go without running water for up to two weeks. Other concerns of the residents with regard to the relocation included the following:

- Schools are situated far away from the settlement and as such children need to catch public taxis and this is an extra financial burden to the community that previously had a primary school located within walking distance in Spring Valley.
- To access the clinic, residents need to take a public taxi to town and transfer to another taxi to get to extension 4 where the clinic is situated. The cost implications is evident: a one-way taxi trip to the clinic costs R16.00. A total amount of R32.00 per day is required to get to the clinic. Whereas in Spring Valley a mobile clinic which provided services to the residents two times a week was within a walking distance, for many within a radius of less than a kilometre.
- There is a high crime rate in the area and there is no Community Police Forum in Klarinat. The participants complained of crimes like burglary and theft.

- There is a lack of entertainment facilities such as sports facilities and community halls. The day care centre that was built is closed and the reasons for closure have not been communicated to residents.

Community participation in project driven relocation

9. Critique of the relocation process

This study therefore reveals that the Municipality did not work together with the residents, thus, violating the community participation enshrined in the UN guidelines and South African policy framework. It can be inferred that the Municipality was least concerned with the interests and needs of the residents and more concerned with ‘cleaning up’ the area in preparation for its preferred development. The absence of any active engagement with the residents on the issue of relocation is a development tragedy which undermines the South African Constitution and international declarations discussed above. Other studies (Chambers, 1997, Scott, 1997; Burns et al, 2004; 2004; Cousins et al 2005; World Bank, 2015) from multiple disciplines have criticised the exclusions of communities in development projects concerning their lives. This study has provided empirical evidence on how exclusion in relocation project occurred throughout the different stages from initiation to implementation in Spring Valley. Its important contributions is also demonstrating the fact that communities are aggrieved by the marginalisation and consider it as a non-development oriented.

In this study, therefore, the municipal-driven relocation is classified as involuntary relocation, simply capturing the fact that it was imposed and non-participatory. This does not negate the fact that a few residents were happy with the idea of moving to new houses. A majority of the residents of Spring Valley were opposed to relocation and as such many of them

(approximately 1500 households) refused to relocate. The 650 households who ultimately relocated complied out of a desire to have a sense of security and improve their living standards. The fact that that a few residents were happy to move to Klarinat should not compromise the conclusion that this was an involuntary relocation. Sadly, some of them are disappointed with the conditions of living in Klarinet and a lack of information about the new site is a contributing factor.

Of importance in this analysis is the realisation that residents had scant information about Klarinet-the host area and the requirements. Had they received comprehensive information about the new houses, the likelihood would possibly be refusing to relocate or negotiating terms of relocation.

Theoretically, before implementing relocation, workshops and other consultative meetings must be held to prepare the residents for the relocation. UN-Habitat (2014) stipulates that comprehensive impact assessments need to be conducted before project initiation to ensure the human rights of affected persons, groups and communities are respected. This implies that residents should be actively engaged and their views taken into consideration in all stages of the relocation process to minimise disruption in their way of life. A mitigation plan therefore becomes necessary to guide the relocation process (Project Preparation Trust of KZN and HAD 2014). However, in the case of Spring Valley, neither consultations were conducted nor a mitigation plan was put in place to minimise disruption to residents. The findings suggest that engaging the residents would have enhanced their understanding of the relocation process and possibly encouraged compliance with the instruction.

Currently, some of the 650 households who relocated to Klarinat find it difficult to adapt to the new area, evident in the return of some to Spring Valley in pursuit of economic opportunities.

In essence, many residents were socially and economically ill-prepared for relocation. This assertion extends to the 650 households that eventually agreed to relocate.

There was a lack of a mechanism to encourage a smooth adaptation to the new area, and assistance regarding re-establishing livelihoods. In a well-managed relocation, affected residents need to have jobs and be mentally prepared to start new jobs. However, this factor was not considered during the relocation of Spring Valley. The relocation was based on a Council resolution. One would expect the Emalaheni Local Municipality to supplement the Council resolution with a relocation plan. Undoubtedly, the residents' complaints demonstrate that they lacked adequate information and were not consulted on the exercise, hence, they had wrong assumptions about Klarinet. If any plan existed it means that it was not communicated to the residents. The lack of information is a cause for concern in development because it deprives residents of their right to make informed choices about their lives.

The study revealed that within six months of relocation, other residents who had relocated to Klarinet had returned to their former shacks in Spring Valley. The Municipality had not yet destroyed the shacks on relocation of the residents, and realising that residents were reoccupying their old shacks in Spring Valley, the Municipalities attempted to destroy the shacks using bulldozers. Such an exercise was unsuccessful because community members lobbied and resisted the Municipality's efforts, resulting in the Municipality managing to destroy only two shacks (focus group discussion, 2016). This reinforces the fact that community involvement in the relocation process is a necessary component in that it influences project acceptance and settlements' sustainability.

Regarding the future of Spring Valley, the Municipal Council official mentioned that since the residents refused to relocate to Klarinet they were involved in a legal dispute with the private land owner, independent of the Municipal Council.

10. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that the Municipality did not exhaust other alternatives to relocation. It neglected the relocation guidelines stipulated by the United Nations that, '*States should explore possible alternatives to evictions, provide information and full consultation and participation in the process of relocation*' (UN-Habitat, 2014, 9). The Municipality held one meeting with the residents concerning the relocation. It can be asserted that an establishment of a relocation steering committee would have enriched the relocation process, encouraged a two-way flow of information and eased the process of adapting to the new area.

Simply providing houses does not necessarily translate into sustainable human settlements. As Parnell and Pieterse (2010:153) note 'the poor, like all other residents, need access to land in the city not only for housing but also for transport, commercial and industrial development and public services'. This statement explains that the provision of houses should take into consideration these factors to improve human settlement sustainability. Additionally, it should be combined with affordable utilities and variety of workshops that allow the Municipality to understand the needs of the residents and vice-versa. Linking housing provision with capacity building is a fundamental factor in community sustainability, in particular, beyond the project. Whilst educating communities about their rights to the city and housing is essential, these would be of less value if residents lack understanding of their development obligations or responsibilities.

Whilst participatory approaches are encouraged, South African municipalities do not always implement them in relocation of informal settlements, hence, the importance of this study which reveals the repercussions of lack of community participation in relocation projects. Scholarship on relocations of informal settlements focuses on the effects of relocation and hint on community participation. The uniqueness of this study is the focus on community

participation in the relocation process. This study therefore concludes that community participation and information are necessary components for an effective relocation process. Investigating the level of community participation in relocation of informal settlements in other provinces might reveal common patterns which could inform interventions to improve involvement of communities in relocations. Future studies can consider conducting a comparative study to investigate the socio-economic conditions of the residents who remained in Spring Valley and those who relocated to Klarinat preferably after a decade.

Acknowledgement

The research was conducted with the support of Planact, and sponsored by the RAITH Foundation and Misereor. The study also drew on a social audit on water provision funded by the International Budget Partnership, thus, grateful to the donor for the financial support. The author would like to express thanks to Nkululeko Ndlovu for coordinating the field work. Thanks are extended to Shumani Luruli and Skhumbuzo Mtshali who conducted the field work in Spring Valley and Klarinet. I acknowledge the valuable comments of Kristen Kornienko on the paper.

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