



CENTRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT
AND ENTERPRISE

Informing South African Policy

LEARNING TO LISTEN



Communicating the value of urbanisation and informal
settlement upgrading

The Centre for Development and Enterprise is one of South Africa's leading development think tanks, focussing on vital national development issues and their relationship to economic growth and democratic consolidation. Through examining South African realities and international experience, CDE formulates practical policy proposals for addressing major social and economic challenges. It has a special interest in the role of business and markets in development.

This publication summarises the proceedings of a workshop on informal settlement upgrading and a case study on communication. This report was written by Rebecca Oliphant and Jeff McCarthy.

Published in May 2013 by The Centre for Development and Enterprise
5 Eton Road, Parktown, Johannesburg 2193, South Africa
P O Box 1936, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
Tel +27 11 482 5140 • Fax +27 11 482 5089 • info@cde.org.za • www.cde.org.za

© The Centre for Development and Enterprise

All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced, stored, or transmitted without the express permission of the publisher. It may be quoted, and short extracts used, provided the source is fully acknowledged.

ISBN: 978-1-920653-07-1

Cover: Residents from the informal settlement of Ratanda, south of Heidelberg outside Johannesburg, South Africa (Photo by Gallo Images / Foto24 / Bongiwé Gumede)



CENTRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT
AND ENTERPRISE

Informing South African Policy

LEARNING TO LISTEN

Communicating the value of urbanisation and informal
settlement upgrading

Contents

<i>Executive Summary</i>	2
<i>Participants</i>	6
Introduction	7
Research	12
Workshop Outcomes	20
Case Study	24
Concluding Remarks	36
Appendix A	39
<i>Endnotes</i>	40

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CDE recently conducted an exploratory investigation of the role a different approach to communication could play in the process of upgrading informal urban settlements. This report summarises the research and processes followed. The main components of the research were i) a study of the recent history of informal settlement upgrading and its associated issues by Kate Tissington of the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) in South Africa; ii) a review of Latin American experience of informal settlement upgrading by Dr Edesio Fernandes of London University; iii) and an overview of trends in strategic communication for development by CDE. A case study, using community radio and SMS communication, was then developed in Emalaheni, Mpumalanga to address a variety of topics regarding an informal settlement and the surrounding community.

From our exploration, we developed nine central insights:

1. *Urbanisation is positive, but difficult to manage.* Urbanisation drives economic growth, promotes inclusion and improves access to services and social networks. However, these positive elements can only be achieved to their fullest potential with effective urban management. Unfortunately this is not easy.
2. *Poor urban management fuels growth of informal settlements.* The urban poor often live in informal settlements for social and economic reasons. These settlements provide access to the opportunities that cities provide but need to be integrated into the broader urban economy. They often remain informal because of policy and delivery failures.
3. *There have been varied policy responses to informal settlements.* There have been different phases of policy regarding informal settlements in South Africa, recently returning to an emphasis on *in situ* upgrading. Previous policies focused on new formal developments and relocation.
4. *In situ upgrading provides the most benefits.* Upgrading is ideal for informal settlement residents and the overall development of the country. It is the most sustainable approach, facilitating more rapid development, community empowerment and building the livelihoods of the urban poor. National policy must meet the challenges at provincial and local levels, where relocation is often still preferred.
5. *Innovation can be a tool for addressing informality.* Innovative practices in urban development can help improve access to the cities and address informal settlements. Alternative regulations and practices can also provide preventative measures to mitigate further informal development.
6. *Government needs to communicate more effectively internally.* A communication strategy can help provide one of the missing links found in government at every level.
7. *Communication with the public needs improvement.* Often there is a gap in communication between government and the public, particularly informal settlement residents.
8. *Strategic communication methods can facilitate development for the poor.* Creative and strategic communication techniques can effectively inform, engage and empower the poor, facilitating the development process. Improved communication can also help depoliticise the upgrading process.
9. *As it stands, citizens have limited space to engage with government.* Civic engagement is a challenge with South Africa's current political system. There is inadequate accountability and obstruction of democratic practices.

THE RESEARCH

Urbanisation and informal settlements

Driven by differences in economic and social prospects, urbanisation is one of the most important trends in developing economies around the world. However, for many urban poor, there are no viable housing options. For both economic and social reasons (cost, location, community dynamics, etc.), informal settlements provide access to urban areas.

South Africa has over 1,2 million households living in 2 700 informal settlements in 70 municipalities. There have been significant changes in housing policy in the past two decades, most recently bringing one of the biggest shifts: a radical change from emphasising new housing development to a focus, once again, on informal settlement upgrading. However, the change is not yet complete. Upgrading requires a change in mind-set to a broader and more sustainable understanding of human settlements.

There is limited information on the linkages between informal settlement upgrading, informal sector development and the way people earn or generate income. It is clear, however, that residents of informal settlements have generally made conscious decisions about where to live, closely linked to their livelihoods. Thus economic integration and job creation should be cornerstones of upgrading.

Latin America, with over 100 years' experience of urbanisation and informal settlements, provides useful insights on how to address the lack of rights for the urban poor. There are important similarities between South Africa and Latin America. Informal settlements provide housing for the poor when there are no suitable alternatives; however, they are not a solution in and of themselves, particularly as the urban population is continually increasing. Broad, sustainable and inclusive regularisation programmes are needed to provide legal rights and upgrading. In Latin America, such programmes have generally followed two routes: narrow

legalisation of tenure through title deeds (as in Peru), or broader programmes which combine title deeds with upgrading public services, job creation and community support structures (as in Brazil).

Communication

Strategic communication is a way to engage and inform. Both local and international research indicate a need for improved communication practices in reasserting the importance of urbanisation and informal settlement upgrading in broader debates about development. This need can be seen in two main areas: 1) there is no clearly agreed message; and 2) informal settlement upgrading is often not implemented, in part because of poor communication strategies. Improving strategic communication can also address some general transparency issues and perceptions of corruption in the public sector, which both limit effective upgrading. The international trend is for communication, via dialogue and participation, to help reach overall developmental objectives.

EXPERT WORKSHOP

CDE hosted a full-day workshop drawing on the expertise of South Africa's leading analysts of informal settlements, and those with vast experience in upgrading, to provide feedback and give further insight based on their combined experiences (see page 6 for the list of participants). As well as highlighting vital components of the research, new and interesting points were raised:

- *Politics.* Experts identified the issue of different political agendas and their impact on informal settlement communities and urban development. Different agendas were noted across government levels as well as across political parties damage upgrading.
- *Meaningful participation and communication breakdowns.* Often there is little meaningful participation by communities, which can be fuelled by communication breakdowns. This undermines peoples' capacity to drive their own housing processes. There is very little

space for dissent, discourse and dialogue between residents and government.

- *The potential importance of reframing the issue.* It was suggested that this would facilitate a change in the attitudes and behaviours of local authorities, who were identified as a major blockage to upgrading processes.
- *Prevention.* Informal settlements can be seen as symptomatic of historically failed or currently failing urban management. To improve the functionality of cities and reduce informal development, urban development should address the needs of its inhabitants.
- *Innovation and flexibility.* Regulations and practices need to allow for more innovative solutions in addressing informal settlements. This includes looking at international best practices and creating space for new ideas and projects.
- *Lost institutional knowledge and limited data.* It is often forgotten or unacknowledged that South Africa has a history of *in situ* upgrading of informal settlements. Although upgrading presents challenges, it has been done in the past, but this has not been communicated properly. There is also a lot that is not known and un-captured data of what is happening in these settlements that can help the process.
- *Social pact.* Many asked, referring to Dr Fernandes's notion of a Brazilian social pact, what is the possibility of a South African social pact that includes informal settlement dwellers? Although Brazil has advantages over South Africa, with higher growth and lower unemployment, better linkages between economic growth, urbanisation and regularisation policies would be positive in South Africa.

CASE STUDY

A case study was conducted in Emalahleni, Mpumalanga focussing on the Spring Valley informal settlement in Witbank. A community radio programme was developed and hosted on Emalahleni FM, addressed topics that focused on this settlement and the surrounding community. The settlement lacks adequate basic services, including water, electricity and proper sanitation. Residents want their settlement to be upgraded rather than being relocated to a new development. The radio programme was done in conjunction with SMS communications and a monitoring and evaluation process. Each week had an hour show with different sub-topics:

- *Oral History and Community Issues.* Elders in the community presented an oral history, detailing why the settlement emerged and its significance in the area. They also explained some of residents' concerns.
- *Local and International Research.* This provided the academic perspective and gave examples of successful upgrading practices.
- *Neighbourhood Concerns.* Based on a survey of the community, this programme gave feedback on residents' concerns regarding informal settlements, and why they do or do not support upgrading.
- *Local Authority's Perspective.* Emalahleni FM intended to interview the mayor and/or municipal manager. This show did not take place when the municipality continually refused to participate.

The case study provided useful insights and lessons for using new methods of communication. It helped address much of the general disenfranchisement felt by informal settlement residents. The process was monitored and evaluated by Planact through community forums, in which they stated that they found the radio programme to be a positive experience that created more unity within the settlement. They learned about other upgrading experiences and had an overall sense of empowerment. Unfortunately, as emphasised in the research and by the experts, this experience

reinforces that often local government officials do not feel accountable to the citizenry. Government maintained an attitude of being 'above' the people – refusing to engage with or address their needs.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Urbanisation is inevitable and desirable, and policies and practices must be in place to manage this optimally. Informal settlement upgrading is an important aspect of urban management and can be part of an economic growth path when there is an appropriate political configuration. Limitations and conflicts in policies are exacerbated by the restricted flow of communication, with national policy shifts not filtering down to lower levels of government. National government remains insufficiently cognisant of many practical issues at local level. More strategic use of communication methods can help cohere and articulate these messages. There are a variety of creative ways to effectively promote development for the poor.

However, a key blockage is local government's inability and unwillingness to listen. Improved strategic communication is a tool to facilitate change when there is dialogue, but there are many blockages that strategic communication alone cannot address. Rather, strategic communication must be improved simultaneously with other initiatives aimed at correcting the shortcomings primarily seen at, but definitely not limited to, lower levels of government.

There needs to be space for dissent, discourse and dialogue. Rigid power dynamics and limited space for citizens' direct involvement in local politics limit accountability and impede democratic practices. There is an overwhelming sense that government 'is above' the people, rather than the people empowering government. Informal settlement upgrading can be seen in the larger context of a need to re-evaluate and affirm democratic citizenship.

PARTICIPANTS

Workshop participants: 1 November 2012

1. **Asania Aphane**, Project Manager, Grounded Media
2. **Cameron Brisbane**, Executive Director, Built Environment Support Group
3. **Liza Cirolia**, Researcher and Coordinator, African Centre for Cities
4. **Maria Coetzee**, Research Group Leader, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
5. **Douglas Cohen**, Specialist: Economic Development, South African Local Government Association
6. **Josette Cole**, Chief Executive Officer, Development Action Group
7. **Manie Geyer**, Director, Centre for Regional and Urban Innovation and Statistical Exploration (University of Stellenbosch)
8. **Liela Groenewald**, Lecturer, University of Johannesburg
9. **Marie Huchzermeyer**, Professor, Wits University
10. **Geci Karuri-Sebina**, Executive Manager of Programmes, South African Cities Network
11. **Felicity Kitchin**, Independent Architecture and Planning Professional
12. **Kristen Kornienko**, Researcher, Wits University
13. **Koffi Kouakou**, Project Director: PCGCM, Wits Business School
14. **Charley Lewis**, Senior Lecturer, Wits University
15. **Mike Makwela**, Programme Coordinator, Planact
16. **Lochner Marais**, Professor, Centre for Development Support (University of the Free State)
17. **Kammy Naidoo**, Head of Information and Research, FinMark Trust
18. **Subethri Naidoo**, Urban and Governance Specialist, World Bank
19. **Monty Narsoo**, Governance Advisor, National Upgrading Support Programme
20. **Margot Rubin**, Consultant, Margot Rubin Consulting
21. **Kecia Rust**, Coordinator, Finmark Trust
22. **Dan Smit**, Director, Dan Smit Development Capacity
23. **Maryna Storie**, Senior Researcher, Gauteng City-Region Observatory
24. **Kate Tissington**, Senior Research and Advocacy Officer, Socio-Economic Right Institute
25. **David van Niekerk**, Chief Director, Neighbourhood Development Programme (National Treasury)
26. **Sonja Verwey**, Head of Department of Strategic Communication, University of Johannesburg
27. **Tanya Zack**, Urban Planner, Tanya Zack Consulting
28. **Sarah Hudleston**, Communications and Media Manager, Centre for Development and Enterprise
29. **Jeff McCarthy**, Programme Director, Centre for Development and Enterprise
30. **Rebecca Oliphant**, Researcher, Centre for Development and Enterprise
31. **Evelien Storme**, Researcher, Centre for Development and Enterprise
32. **Lydia van den Bergh**, General Manager, Centre for Development and Enterprise

Introduction

South Africa approaches development through an urban-rural divide. There is significant focus on rural development issues, and though this is important, it should not diminish the dialogue around urbanisation, which lacks focus. Already over 60 per cent of South Africans live in towns and cities, and this share is likely to increase. This report reviews the Centre for Development and Enterprise's (CDE) exploratory investigation of how more strategic communication can be used to improve the message of urbanisation and, more precisely, urban informal settlement upgrading in South Africa. CDE approached local challenges of urbanisation by examining the prospects for informal settlement upgrading through 1) in-depth research on national and international trends and a local case; and 2) improved strategic communication practices in relation to the prospects for upgrading.

CDE started this project with initial premises and assumptions derived from our previous research, and an understanding that current policies and practices do not sufficiently address the issue. Although some initial perceptions remained true, we developed nine central insights:

- 1) *Urbanisation is positive, but difficult to manage.* There are many positive aspects of urbanisation, social and economic. International experience, such as from India and Brazil, shows a strong correlation between urbanisation and economic growth. The current dialogue in South Africa's public sector is dominated by rural development, with almost no reference to the economic benefits of urbanisation.¹ More needs to be done to redirect the focus on to the realities of urbanisation and its positive attributes, such as how it drives economic growth, promotes inclusion and improves access to services and social networks. Although South Africa has unique policy challenges, urbanisation is an international phenomenon, and it benefits us to gain an understanding of international practices, as their successes can help us develop policies which are more likely to work.

However, the positive elements of urbanisation can only be achieved to their fullest potential with effective urban management. Unfortunately this is not an easy task. South African cities still reflect apartheid-era city planning; correcting this and improving urban spaces requires constructive engagement and practical programmes that focus public investment on improved access. The apartheid government systematically created divided cities and limited their functionality for the majority of the population. Thus municipalities and metros need to not only overcome historic challenges of city structures but also face modern-day challenges of a growing urban population.

Since 2004 there has been a shift in roles and responsibilities in government, with more power handed down to local governments. However, many municipalities have not been able to handle the pressures of urban management. For example, processes of housing delivery are generally opaque and complicated with issues such as the numerous housing lists, as well as different methods of management and allocating housing. This has resulted in a lack of consistency in government and poor communication to the potential beneficiaries.

- 2) *Poor urban management fuels growth of informal settlements.* Informal development, including informal settlements, is directly linked to poor urban management. Although poverty is a

Already over 60 per cent of South Africans live in towns and cities, and this share is likely to increase

factor, in many areas poverty rates have actually decreased while informal land development has increased.² Informal settlements provide access to the cities for the poor, offering accommodation as well as access to jobs and opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable. Although access to low-income housing (of which there is not enough access to at present) can mitigate the situation, it is not a cure-all. Informal settlements need to be viewed in the context of their integration into the broader urban economy, and allocations of public resources beyond just housing. Informality persists because of policy and delivery failures.

- 3) *Varied policy response to informal settlements.* Human settlement policy has been in continuous flux since the end of apartheid, with changing priorities and perceptions of how to approach informal settlements. Though there has been some progress, all levels of government have been unable to meet their goals or fulfil their promises to low-income households and those living in informal settlements. There has been an increase rather than a decrease in the housing backlog, with those considered 'inadequately housed' increasing from 1,5 million to 2,1 million in 16 years.³ There have been different phases of legislation, with policies now returning to an emphasis on *in situ* upgrading (first emphasised in the early to mid-1990s, but de-emphasised during the 2000s).

Government has now made a shift towards concern for 'Social cohesion, security of tenure and economic development. In an additional break from the past, the programme seeks to provide phased upgrading, beginning with basic services and possibly ending with the provision of a top-structure.'⁴ This is more in line with international best practice, such as in Brazil, which has focused on integrating the urban poor into broader urban management plans for decades.

- 4) *In situ upgrading provides the most benefits.* As reflected in the recent shift in policy, there is a general acknowledgement at national level that *in situ* upgrading is the preferred model of responding to informal settlements. It is the most beneficial for the residents and for the country's development. International experience shows that incremental *in situ* upgrading of informal settlements is the most sustainable approach to housing the poor. It facilitates development, community empowerment and building the livelihoods of the urban poor. There needs to be a clearly communicated message that upgrading is an obvious and proper part of overall development. It should be the rule rather than the exception, relocation being only a last resort (such as for the safety of a settlement's residents). Recognising the rights and needs of the least privileged citizens is fundamental, as well as acknowledging the socio-economic advantages.

Government policies must also reflect and address the challenges of *in situ* upgrading, particularly at the provincial and local levels. Policy towards human settlements is improving overall, but in several areas remains reactive and inadequate. There is often still an inability to effect change at local level. Indeed, there is often a gap between legislative intent, documentation and implementation. Although there has been substantial (but faltering) progress since the 1980s on informal settlement upgrading, there is still a long way to go. A national paradigm shift in legislation has not fostered the change or commitment required at provincial or local levels.⁵ Often officials will provide any excuse to maintain the status quo, in part because it is just easier, and also because reasons for the new national policies have not been well articulated. To choose but one province, numerous Gauteng municipalities use relocation rather than *in situ* upgrading, and informal settlement communities are treated like 'figures on a chessboard.'⁶

Informal settlements provide access to the cities for the poor

Overall, there is general distrust in government of informal settlements, spurred by a lack of capacity and continued corruption in many municipalities.

- 5) *Innovation as a tool for addressing informality.* Innovative practices in urban development can help improve access to the cities and address informal settlements. Alternative regulations and practices can also provide preventative measures to mitigate further informal development. By thinking about urban spaces in new and creative ways, South Africa can better address the needs of the urban poor and promote development. Internationally, governments have sought innovative frameworks for handling informal settlements. For example, special zones of social interest (ZEIS) in Brazil. ZEIS provide legal recognition for informal settlements and certain legal guarantees. They create special regulations and different rules for the area to better facilitate upgrading and improve security of tenure for the urban poor. This addresses that many of the current regulations and laws are dated and inhibit rather than facilitate the necessary development.
- 6) *Government needs to communicate more effectively internally.* A communication strategy can help provide one missing link found in government at every level. If the National Department of Human Settlements has an agenda (*in situ* upgrading of informal settlements), that message must continually be communicated to provincial and local governments. There must also be space for lower levels of government to discuss their challenges nationally. Strategic communications practices can help this messaging, however, this will require much work, as strategic communications appear to be almost completely underdeveloped in this field.
- 7) *Communication with the public needs improvement.* There is a gap in communication between government and the public, particularly informal settlement residents. Current communication strategies are not working, and there are missed opportunities due to poor understanding of the role of urbanisation and upgrading of informal settlements in promoting development in poor communities. Many experts report that upgrading is neglected because of serious issues of corruption in housing and delivery of other services, and a lack of political will to change. There have been many government campaigns against informal settlements, portraying them as sinister, criminal and harmful to the nation. South Africa is not unique in this view; many countries have made attempts to physically eradicate informal settlements rather than improve the lives of their residents. There is a strong case for using communication to improve dialogue and provide a positive message around informal settlement upgrading. Communication in regard to human settlements has been viewed only through the lens of public participation, and there must be more innovation and strategy in communicating with the urban poor. Improving the understanding and giving more information about the processes will also help to depoliticise development activities.
- 8) *Strategic communication methods can facilitate development for the poor.* Creative and strategic communication techniques can effectively inform, engage and empower the poor, facilitating the development process. Internationally, the trend is for communication to be an integrated tool helping to reach overall objectives rather than as a one-directional flow of information. Thinking of communication as a strategic tool will promote transparency and help engage the public. There is currently misunderstanding and disconnection between what officials say is being done and what the community understands in terms of development. Strategic methods of communicating can improve participation and buy-in, facilitating the development process.

Often officials will provide any excuse to maintain the status quo, in part because it is just easier

- 9) *As it stands, citizens have limited space to engage with government.* Civic engagement is a challenge with South Africa's current political system. Citizens are not fully involved in the democratic process, with government having a sense that it is above the people rather than working for them. There is inadequate accountability of public officials. Attempts to engage with public officials are often met with disinterest or complete disregard.

Through extensive consultation, research and a workshop amongst experts, CDE built on these key points, identifying issues related to urbanisation (specifically from a human settlements perspective) and how to develop a relevant communication strategy.

INCREMENTAL UPGRADING OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: AN OVERVIEW

National government has tried to address informal settlements in different ways, including housing subsidies, greenfield development of alternative accommodation, and now incremental *in situ* upgrading.

The urban poor live in informal settlements for social and economic reasons: location, space for income-generating activities, community support systems, costs, etc. Although informal settlements can present several challenges to government, it is widely recognised that *in situ* upgrading is ideal. It is one of the few options that protect the interests and rights of informal settlement residents, as they often prefer to stay where they are. However, it is often a complicated process and costly in the short term and sometimes not feasible (e.g. if there are health or safety concerns). Greenfield development of alternative accommodation is often less complicated, but sometimes ignores the reasons why informal development takes place – failing to acknowledge the social and economic functionality that these locations serve.

Incremental *in situ* upgrading programmes are intended to provide services and tenure rights to informal settlement residents in their current location. They focus on sustainable development, community empowerment and building the livelihoods of the urban poor in contrast to relocation, which often displace communities to the urban peripheries and perpetuate an apartheid-like city.

There is substantial funding for the Department of Human Settlements, with a total annual budget for 2013/14 of about R28 billion. Some of the funding mechanisms include:

- Upgrading Informal Settlements Programme (UISP): from the Human Settlement Development Grant (HSDG), allocated to provinces, UISP facilitates structured *in situ* upgrading of informal settlements as opposed to relocation. It does not cover provision of top-structures (i.e. houses). It is intended to be handled at municipal level, but when there is no capacity, the municipality may get assistance from the province.
- Integrated Residential Development Programme (IRDP): Also from the HSDG, it is a subsidy in which the municipality acts as developer (if capacitated) and applies for funding from the MEC, who approves reserves and distributes the funds. The IRDP provides for both subsidised and finance-linked housing.

- Urban Settlement Development Grant (USDG): a conditional grant transferred to municipalities for infrastructure development to support the upgrading of informal settlements and increase the provision of serviced land in metropolitan municipalities.
- Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG): a capital infrastructure allocation to local and district municipalities.
- Individual Subsidy Programme: a housing subsidy that provides access to state assistance to acquire an existing house or vacant residential serviced stand linked to a house construction project. This is for properties in the normal secondary housing market.
- Consolidation Subsidy Programme: a housing subsidy for services sites acquired under pre-1994 state housing schemes to complete, construct or upgrade a top-structure.
- Institutional Subsidy Programme (ISP): a housing subsidy to provide affordable rental housing to the low end of the market.⁷

CDE's Approach

CDE adopted a multifaceted approach to the challenge of enhancing communication around informal settlement upgrading. It did this by first updating international evidence that there are benefits to urbanisation, and that informal settlement upgrading is a vital aspect of effective urban management. Secondly, it sought to compare this evidence to recent trends in local practice, seeking to situate and re-incorporate international messages into the broader public discourse, and through testing more strategic communications at local level.

The initial step was to gather *extensive research* to understand the local and international context of informal settlement upgrading practice. To gain a comprehensive overview, CDE broke the research down into three main components:

- 1) A review of recent South African scientific and policy research on the inter-relationships between urbanisation, economic growth and informal settlements. This research, conducted by the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) and commissioned by CDE, reviews the historical components of informal settlements and their upgrading. It then places them in the context of current policy approaches and attitudes towards urbanisation, with a focus on challenges to the legitimacy of informal settlement, and current upgrading practice.
- 2) A second piece of research was commissioned from Dr Edesio Fernandes, an expert in Latin American urbanisation and informal settlements and their upgrading, as well as extensive knowledge of the local scene. This provided an up-to-date report on the Latin American experience (primarily Brazil and Peru) and the importance of regularisation programmes for informal settlements as a key component of effective urban management, economic growth and basic human rights.
- 3) To address communication strategy, CDE conducted research to gain a deeper understanding of how to apply existing capacity in strategic communications, supplementing this with local expert commentary. This research, based on local and international best practice in strategic communication, identified a potential local model of how best to communicate the benefits of informal settlement upgrading.

There is a strong case for using communication to improve dialogue and provide a positive message around informal settlement upgrading

This research was further informed and developed by a *full-day workshop* drawing on the expertise of South Africa’s leading analysts of informal settlements, and those with extensive upgrading experience. They gathered to discuss the research papers, provide feedback and give further insight based on their experiences (see page 6 for a list of participants). The workshop also drew on a range of experts familiar with communication processes. The workshop provided opportunities for our researchers to revise and finalise their reports, and helped provide overall project direction and understanding of the contemporary urbanisation and communication environment. A major theme was the apparent marked gap between local government officials and informal settlement residents on whether and how they should be upgraded.

The next step in the CDE research and policy process was a *communication case study*. The project was on an experimental basis, inspired by the commissioned national and international research, area-specific research (that is, describing and evaluating the chosen case study area) and extensive consultation and meetings with civil society organisations, informal settlement community members and committees and communications experts. From these insights, CDE put together a small case study, incorporating

a community radio programme covering various themes and content issues. The programme, focussing on the Spring Valley informal settlement, was hosted on the community radio station Emalahleni FM.

To assess the impact and success of this programme, a *monitoring and evaluation* exercise was conducted by Planact, a developmental NGO familiar with and operating in the area. From this, CDE derived recommendations for possible future consideration of a similar project. The monitoring and evaluation helped provide accountability to the experiment, as well as useful insights and lessons for possible future interventions.

The overall research and policy/strategy development process provided significant insight and understandings. From this, we have drawn conclusions, implications and further questions in addressing general issues around the urban poor, and informal settlement upgrading in particular. We believe these now deserve to be shared with a wider public.

Although most people living in informal settlements are poor, many settlements, particularly those that are well located, have diverse populations

Research

CDE was informed by three detailed research reports and a number of smaller studies and in-house research. For local research, CDE commissioned Kate Tissington and the research team at the Socio-Economic Rights Institute based in Johannesburg. Dr Edesio Fernandes of London University, an urban/legal expert, focused on urbanisation and informal settlement upgrading internationally. Communication research was done mostly by CDE (supported by expert external comment and advice, primarily from Prof Sonja Verwey of the University of Johannesburg). The detailed three reports are available as resource supports to this document.⁸

One of the most important issues highlighted by the research is the global confusion around what is meant by informality; and, even more confusing, what it means to ‘upgrade’ an informal settlement. As one expert in the workshop put it, ‘No one is on the same page about what informal settlement upgrading is.’ Although flexibility in terminology can allow for diverse implementation options, it can be problematic in understanding policy documents and ensuring basic standards.

In some respects this is surprising as, at least during the early to mid-1990s, there was policy consensus on the meaning of informal settlement upgrading. Nowadays, our workshop revealed, there are different understandings and interpretations across municipal officials, councillors, practitioners, communities, civil society organisations and the public.

Thus, it is important to start by describing these different interpretations. This may help explain the complexity of the struggle to achieve a cohesive understanding of what is meant by informal settlements and informal settlement upgrading today. Questions include, what are the features of informal settlements? Who are the residents? Where are they located? And what does it mean to ‘upgrade’ or ‘regularise’ them?

Locally there is no single standard definition; official sources use a variety of definitions. Even more problematic is that official documentation does not always disclose which definition was used, and this can affect the research and recommendations.⁹ According to the Housing Development Agency (HDA), the definitions incorporate a reference to both the status of the land (illegal or not officially sanctioned or documented) and the dwelling (a makeshift dwelling). Definitions may make specific reference to the lack of municipal services.¹⁰ The National Housing Code uses five characteristics to define informal settlements: illegality and informality; inappropriate locations; restricted public and private sector investment; poverty and vulnerability; and social stress.¹¹ According to Statistics South Africa the key indicator is ‘an unplanned settlement on land which has not been surveyed or proclaimed as residential, consisting mainly of informal dwellings (shacks)’.¹²

As in South Africa, definitions used in Latin America are imprecise and multidimensional. Informal settlements can be seen through a physical, socio-economic and/or legal perspective. Frequent differences in definitions have led to non-comparable figures across space and over time.

The demographics of those living in informal settlements is diverse, so their socio-economic status cannot be the main criterion to define urban informality. Although most people living in informal settlements are poor, many settlements, particularly those that are well located, have diverse populations. In terms of employment, an informal settlement is not homogeneous, as there is often a mixture of those in formal and informal employment. For example Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro’s largest *favela*, has a dynamic and diversified informal economy involving several social and capital networks, as well as the increasing presence of formal providers of goods and services.¹³

If there are many definitions of ‘informal settlements’, ‘upgrading’ is a similar, if not even more challenging, problem. Upgrading an informal settlement can be interpreted differently by various stakeholders. The most common misconceptions revolve around the difference between total redevelopment of an informal settlement at a greenfield site versus *in situ* upgrading in a phased approach on the existing location.¹⁴

Locally, upgrading is discussed in the National Housing Code (2009) under the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP), outlining key objectives intended to promote *in situ* upgrading:

There are more than 4,4 million people living in informal settlements across South Africa

- **Tenure Security:** to enhance the concept of citizenship, incorporating both rights and obligations, by recognising and formalising residents' tenure rights;
- **Health and Security:** to develop healthy and secure living environments by providing affordable and sustainable basic municipal engineering infrastructure. This must allow for future scaling up; and
- **Empowerment:** to address social and economic exclusion by focussing on community empowerment and the promotion of social and economic integration, building social capital through participative processes and addressing the broader social needs of communities.¹⁴

However, these objectives remain ambiguous as well as imprecise. The Outcome 8 Delivery Agreement, signed in 2010, provides a national target of upgrading 400 000 households 'in well located informal settlements with access to basic services and secure tenure' by 2014.¹⁶ But not only was the number selected rather arbitrarily, there is still no uniformity on what constitutes upgrading or what is meant by well located.¹⁷ Also, there are varying understandings of appropriate tenure rights, with many experts worried about highlighting the notion of 'formalisation.' Lessons and practices from Latin American policy and interventions, as well as an evaluation of South Africa's own cases, can bring clarity to upgrading processes.

In Latin America, what the term 'regularise' entails is also debated. The most complete understanding is a process that combines upgrading and legal title deeds, also incorporating socio-economic aspects (such as public investment, job creation, etc.).

Informal Settlement Upgrading in South Africa

South Africa already has an urban population of 62 per cent, which rose by 5 per cent in the past decade alone.¹⁸ There is an obvious trend of migration out of rural areas. SERI's research reviewed the statistics, which highlight important trends; assessed policy and legal actions and how they have shifted over the years; and concluded by evaluating the linkages of informal settlement upgrading to economic opportunities and growth.

Demographics and Statistics:

- Over 1,2 million households, more than 4,4 million people, live in shacks in informal settlements.
- There are 2 700 informal settlements in 70 municipalities.
- 23 per cent of households living in informal settlements comprise a single individual; 38 per cent comprise four or more people (average household size is 3,2).
- 65 per cent of informal settlement residents surveyed in 2007 said they had not moved since 2001.
- 89 per cent of households indicated that they were living in an informal settlement (not necessarily the same one) five years previously.
- 75 per cent of households living in informal settlements earn less than R3 500 per month; 38 per cent earn less than R1 500 per month.
- Unemployment averages 32 per cent in informal settlements. But it varies greatly across different provinces and informal sector activity is probably under-reported.

75 per cent of households living in informal settlements earn less than R3 500 per month; 38 per cent earn less than R1 500 per month

- 37 per cent of employed adults living in informal settlements are permanently employed in the formal sector and 27 per cent in the informal sector (again, the informal sector is most likely under-reported).
- The main source of household income is salaries/wages (66 per cent), which is higher than in formal dwellings (59 per cent).

Policy Shifts

Joe Slovo, the first democratic government’s Minister of Housing, was supportive of the upgrading of informal settlements, after decades of hostility to this by the apartheid regime. Since then there have been significant changes in housing policy over the past two decades, not all of them positive. However most of the recent changes reflect the internationally-acknowledged norms in how to address housing and the proliferation of informal settlements.

The 2004-2009 period signified one of the biggest shifts in South Africa, from new housing developments to accommodate the poor toward a focus on informal settlement upgrading, with the introduction of Breaking New Ground (BNG) in 2004 and the National Housing Code in 2009. Although BNG has been criticised for not providing strategic direction, it did focus significantly on upgrading informal settlements, but this was misinterpreted in practice.¹⁹ The National Support Upgrading Programme (NUSP), formed in 2008, focuses on facilitating the incremental upgrading of 400 000 informal settlements from 2010 to 2014. NUSP takes a pragmatic approach towards some major challenges identified in the Outcome 8 Delivery Agreement, such as inconsistency of upgrading, misalignment in application of policy, poor communication, inability to bring incremental upgrading to scale and weak engagement with municipalities and communities. Much must still be done to meet the targets for 2014.²⁰

Since 2009, a number of new financial interventions support informal settlement upgrading, particularly in metropolitan municipalities and large towns. However, there is confusion over the shifting roles and responsibilities of municipalities as well as different priorities for grants at national level. One participant explained her experience with discussing upgrading with local government: ‘We’ve gone around briefing, and I’ve just come back from the Northern Cape where we were asked to brief councils, and in those briefings there was huge, huge resistance because they’re saying that they’ve been promised money for housing.’

Upgrading informal settlements is not simply a housing issue, hence incremental upgrading does not prioritise simply the top-structure component

Thinking about informal settlement upgrading and housing must be separated. Upgrading informal settlements is not simply a housing issue, hence incremental upgrading does not prioritise the top-structure component. Public facilities, (schools, clinics, sports fields, etc.) tend to be neglected when upgrading is allocated to ‘housing’, and the economic, entrepreneurship and employment dimensions become marginalised. Also, unlike the traditional understanding of housing delivery, informal settlement upgrading requires a participatory, community-based approach.

Economic opportunities and growth

There has been limited information on the linkages between informal settlement upgrading, informal sector development and local economic income generation. According to the National Development Plan, ‘there is an insufficient understanding in policy of the informal and adaptive strategies and livelihoods of the poor. The relationship between where people live and how they survive is often overlooked.’²¹ Case studies have indicated that ‘African adults in informal dwellings are significantly more likely than African adults living elsewhere to be employed and, over time, employment rates among informal dwellers have increased, whereas they have fallen among African adults in formal and traditional dwellings.’²¹

An important component of ensuring the potential for jobs and growth is tenure security, giving residents security to make investments and provide or improve basic services and access to public facilities. It should not be an all or nothing approach, but incremental. There are many different types of tenure; the Project Preparation Trust developed a tenure 'continuum' that can be considered in various contexts (See Appendix A).²³ Policies need to focus more on income generation and the role of the home and its location. Informal settlements have linkages to both the formal and the informal economy. Thus, municipalities need to take into account the complexities of localised economic activity when thinking about upgrading versus relocation projects.

The primary message is that informal settlements provide affordable access to the cities and that the time people stay in informal settlements is increasing, as there is a lack of affordable alternatives. Residences of informal settlements usually make conscious decisions about where to live, closely linked to livelihood. Thus economic integration and job creation should be the cornerstone of upgrading.

SERI'S SUMMARY ON ABAHLALI BASEMJONDOLO'S CHALLENGE TO THE KZN SLUMS ACT

There has been significant legislation to protect the rights of informal settlement communities. In 2009, a case in the Constitutional Court was brought forward by Abahlali baseMjondolo, a Durban-based shack-dweller movement started in 2005 opposes corruption and coercive attempts to remove informal settlements from in the Durban area. Abahlali challenged the province's legislation, the KwaZulu-Natal Elimination and Prevention of Re-emergence of Slums Act 6 of 2007 (KZN Slums Act). The Act focused on three key areas in regard to informal settlements (or 'slums'): their progressive elimination; preventing the re-emergence of slums; and the upgrading and control of existing slums.

The most problematic aspect was elimination, which enabled and encouraged eviction without meaningful engagement. Early attempts to stop the bill were unsuccessful. Abahlali had challenged the constitutionality of the Act in 2008, but the application was dismissed by the Durban High Court. In May 2009, the matter was taken to the Constitutional Court where arguments were made against aspects of the Act, specifically those regarding forced evictions by the municipality (section 16). The applicants argued that this was in contradiction to section 26(2) of the Constitution for three main reasons:

- it precluded meaningful engagement between municipalities and unlawful occupiers;
- it violated the principle that evictions should be a measure of last resort;
- and it undermined the precarious tenure of unlawful occupiers by allowing eviction proceedings to begin without reference to the procedural safeguards in the Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act 19 of 1998 (PIE Act), which prohibits unlawful eviction and lays down procedures for evicting unlawful occupiers.

The Constitutional Court ruled that section 16 of the KZN Slums Act was unconstitutional and thus invalid. This ruling reinforced the need for proper engagement, taking into consideration not only the needs of those affected but prioritising the possibility of in situ upgrading. The judgement reaffirms that eviction or relocation should only be a last resort. Abahlali is currently contesting inter alia, considerable under-spending of budget by the eThekweni Housing Department, which they interpret as a reluctance by the Department to upgrade informal settlements.

Lesson from the Latin American Experience

The extensive research by Dr Edesio Fernandes highlighted a critical factor – a need for a paradigm shift away from traditional perceptions of housing (primarily as a top-structure) towards a more comprehensive understanding that includes the regularisation of informal settlements. This must be incorporated in a broader redefined national housing policy, as well as policies of provincial and local governments. This requires a different dynamic of ‘intergovernmental articulation.’ South Africa needs to find new ways for government to connect with, as well as empower, the poor. Currently the urban poor lack legal, financial and other resources to defend themselves and their rights.

Latin America has had over 100 years’ experience of urbanisation and informal settlements. Given many similarities between South Africa and Latin America (particularly Brazil), there is an accumulated body of knowledge that should not be ignored, and fundamental lessons, both positive and negative.²⁴ However, unlike South Africa, urban development has long been consolidated in Latin America, where 80 per cent of people live in urban areas (83 per cent in Brazil).

Informal settlement policies and implementation practices need an interdisciplinary approach to the multidimensionality of the phenomenon, since informality cannot be reduced to a simple economic, social or legal factor. Unfortunately, most attempted regularisation programmes for existing informal settlements have been conceived in isolation. One of the biggest policy blockages is the debate around the causes and implications of informal development.

A major misconception is that poverty is the primary cause of informal land development. Data in several Latin American cases indicate that levels of absolute poverty have decreased while urban informality has grown. To a large extent, urban informality has been generated by the urban planning and management system itself.

Urban planning is central to development. In Latin America, urban planning, in conjunction with the lack of systematic public investment and service provision in areas where most of the urban poor live, has reinforced and created informal processes. Governments must use regulatory policies to promote effective management and better settlement practices at all levels of government. However they must be clear that they are ‘regulating more that which needs to be regulated – not merely dispensing with questionable requirements, but firmly indicating in the local plans social housing as well as creating the necessary urban management processes, mechanisms, instruments and resources conducive towards the materialisation of this objective.’²⁵ This type of thoughtful regulation emphasises that although informal settlements provide access for the poor when there are no suitable alternatives, they are not a solution in and of themselves, as they do not meet the growing needs for sustainable development and security in the light of increasing urbanisation. There is a significant social, political, health, environmental and financial cost to informal development, and comprehensive policies and regulations need to deal with all these aspects.

In the long run, informal development can be costly. Dr Fernandes highlights two key lessons. Firstly, reducing the need for further informal development is imperative. Secondly, the deficiencies of consolidated existing settlements must be met urgently through regularisation programmes that involve communities and individuals, remedy gaps in public services and promote local economic opportunities and growth.

Latin American cases indicate that levels of absolute poverty have decreased while urban informality has grown

In Latin America, consolidated informal settlements often become recognised legally as part of the regular development of the city, through either official actions or the accretion of rights over time. Regularisation programmes in Latin America have generally followed two main paradigms, best seen in the Peruvian and Brazilian cases. The first, exemplified by Peru, involves narrow legalisation of tenure through land titling (at a cost of US\$64 per title deed). This approach is inspired by Hernando de Soto's hypothesis that tenure security is a trigger for economic development, stimulating access to finance, economic activity and residential upgrading; however, according to Dr Fernandes, evaluations have indicated that tenure security has had little impact on access to credit, yielded some investment in housing, and may have contributed to some poverty alleviation, but not the decrease of informality. Many countries have followed a form of the Peruvian model, including Salvador, Cambodia, Vietnam and Albania.

In Brazil, a broader regularisation programme combines legal titling with the upgrading of public services, job creation, and community support structures. At US\$3 500 to US\$5 000 per household, these programmes are much more costly than Peru's titling system. The few evaluations that have taken place indicate that the increase in property values associated with upgrading exceeded its cost, similar to the situation in Peru.²⁶ In Brazil, municipalities have been far more successful in upgrading informal settlements than in legalising them and there is an issue of scalability. For example, of the 1 200 *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, the costly *Favela-Bairro* programme has covered fewer than 100.

There is more evaluative evidence about Peru but, overall, both have been successful in providing more secure tenure and producing benefits that exceed programme costs, although neither met all the declared objectives. There are other cases beyond state intervention, In Venezuela, for example, community organisations (*Comites de Tierras Urbanas*) have taken the lead in regularisation. In several countries, academic institutions and international development agencies have also had a fundamental role.

Some key lessons are that regularisation policies should have a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process; they should be diverse and multidimensional; and there should be meaningful popular participation. Regularisation should focus on sustainable outcomes derived from an integrated approach. Overall, any programme will be complex, as there are no simple answers or one-size-fits-all solutions.

Any programme will be complex, as there are no simple answers or one-size-fits-all solutions

A New Communication Paradigm to Improve Development

In addressing informal settlement upgrading, CDE researched new strategic communication paradigms, with an emphasis on development, specifically focussing on informal settlement upgrading. CDE has evaluated various components of strategic communication and case studies to learn how to bridge gaps and ensure that not only is information better understood, but how to better communicate that pro-poor development benefits the country as a whole. Through our research, one thing became clear – inadequate communication strategies have hindered the development of informal settlements in two main regards: 1) there is no clearly agreed message of the broad objects of upgrading; and 2) policies are not being implemented, in part due to limited and/or poor communication strategies.

Lessons, both from South Africa's own experience and international best practice, highlight the need for improved communication and reasserting the importance of urbanisation and informal settlement

upgrading in the broader developmental discourse. But the question becomes, what are the details of the message and how do we get it across? How do we mobilise the historical institutional memory and experience from the higher levels down? As one expert from the CDE workshop said when talking about incremental *in situ* upgrading, 'it might be within our national policy framework, the president might have got it, the minister is talking about it, but we are having real problems around people understanding incremental upgrade *in situ* from provinces and local government.'

There is little effective communication to relay from national to local level the importance of why the policy shift occurred. Similarly, there are barriers for communicating practical issues and challenges at lower levels to the national government stakeholders. According to Emiel A. Wegelin, an international urban economist, effective upgrading 'requires a sustained level of political commitment, active mobilisation of communities and sensitisation regarding long-term sustainability issue.'²⁷ Incremental *in situ* upgrading helps to both improve living conditions and maintain communities' social networks, creating a positive environment that is not only socially compelling but also maintains economic opportunities and jobs. Recent national policies call for a new way of thinking, creativity and innovation but have not put in place means of achieving this. Reframing the importance of urbanisation and the integration of informal settlements can help improve the overall implementation of these policies at provincial and local levels.

An improved communication strategy can also address general public sector transparency issues. A recent Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) survey across 21 municipalities, looking at indicators such as transparency, accountability and integrity, concluded that government needs to improve transparency, communication and the flow of information, and that more legal action must be taken against those guilty of misuse, mismanagement and irregularities with public funds.²⁸

Internationally, the trend is for communication to be an integrated tool helping to reach overall objectives rather than being thought of in silos, or as one-directional flow. Different methods can be used depending on the situation and audience. For informal settlements, relying on more advanced technologies is impractical and not cost-effective. They do not promote and participation. However, an integrated approach can include various methods such as cell phone technology, community radio programmes, newspapers, television and face to face meetings, as long as there is an underlying strategy.

Strategic communication is a way to engage and inform. Looking at communication in a strategic way helps set the agenda and ensure that policies are articulated successfully. It also helps to ensure that organisations play an effective role, and that the voice of the community is heard. Strategic communication creates a general impression that a plan is in place - notably by an organisation, company or group - that purposefully positions the mission, vision, values and information in a consistent and deliberate way.²⁹

Thinking of communication in this way can strengthen democracy. An effective communication strategy promotes the flow of information and dialogue around issues of mutual interest. It can be an indicator of a healthy democracy, working to ensure good governance by promoting accountability, legitimacy and credibility. There has to be a paradigm shift away from the traditional authoritarian model of communication to practices appropriate for a democratic state. New strategic communication methods allow for a pragmatic way of promoting good governance outside the framework of political or ideological agendas.

Reframing the importance of urbanisation and the integration of informal settlements can help improve the overall implementation of these policies

In the context of informal settlement upgrading, CDE focused on community radio as a medium for advocacy and policy discussions. Community radio creates a conversation, making it a fundamental tool for advocacy and debate around key issues. It can empower all levels of society, not just those with the easiest access, but reaching those who are often disengaged and removed from the conversation. This has been used in many parts of the world, such as Nepal, Kenya, Uganda and Benin, to address development needs.

Strategic communication has made a leap from a more corporate philosophy to providing innovative solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems.³⁰ This is in large part due to the shift in understanding around strategic communication and the values around development practices. Institutions are moving away from hierarchical, top-down, stagnant and structured communication practices towards coordination, collaboration and strategic interventions that promote dialogue, participation and a bottom-up approach.³¹

Poor communication practices are often the norm, and a significant hindrance in organisations' and individuals' abilities to address informal settlements' needs

Workshop Outcomes

Through our workshop, we hosted a thoughtful conversation about the most pressing gaps in urbanisation and informal settlement policy and implementation, and how we should move forward. (See page 6 for a list of participants). Ultimately, a lot is known, significant progress has been made, but there is still a lot more to be done. Despite extensive research, there are still misconceptions and confusion around the legal, social and economic rights and benefits of informal settlement upgrading.

The stigma of informal settlements and misconceptions surrounding them will – in the absence of intervention – continue to dampen social development practices and preclude the policies needed to address informality. Improved communication is a major factor in possible interventions, as seen below; however, even better strategic communication is not a silver bullet. The expert workshop highlighted vital components of the research and raised new and interesting points.

Politics

One of the first points to emerge was the differences in political agendas and their impact on informal settlement communities and urban development. Different agendas were noted across government levels as well as across political parties. One participant said, 'It's about power, it's about politics and it's about leadership. Zuma has a rural constituency. The focus is on the rural and we haven't come up with an overarching framework within which people can, at local government or any level, locate what they're doing in a bigger picture. Until we grapple with the bigger picture we'll never get down to this fundamental flaw.'

At the local level, there is also a lack of a unified agenda and tension over how money is spent. With so many grants, there is confusion about what they apply to and how to use them. This came up many times; one participant brought attention to the 'severe gap between the clearly identified and recognised need by government and what is allocated at national level. This severely limits the local state, where

accountability lies, but not the real power over implementation cost.' Often, local governments are reluctant to spend money on upgrading, as they receive money to build new houses instead. There is general conflict and confusion around the political agendas.

There is general frustration about how municipalities carry out policies. Academic experts and practitioners alike acknowledge 'that since 2004 there has been a flexible instrument in the policy, and yet municipalities have carried on pretending that it didn't exist and...dealing with informal settlements in that simplistic way of handing out houses to very few and displacing a lot of people.' This apathy calls for a shift in culture within provinces and municipalities. A participant noted that 'one thing I've been struck by when dealing with many, many local government officials is their absolute antipathy towards informal settlement dwellers and the myths and urban legends they propagate about informal dwellers. How do we combat, how do we dispel these entrenched ideas around all kinds of informality?'

Although not a quick fix, improving the message and access to the message around informality is a starting point. Participants emphasised that it is not just about legislation, but how we change some of the thinking embedded within local governments and communicate a new message. However, communication can only go so far in addressing the tension between party politics. It was said that there is a constant issue of who will 'cut the ribbon' and receive credit. This behaviour, it was said, has led to more unclear practices and confusion in the community about how things are supposed to work, as well as creating absolute distrust in government.

Meaningful participation and communication breakdowns

The workshop revealed that there is often little understanding of meaningful participation, often fuelled by communication breakdowns. An expert explained that this undermines people's capacity to drive their own housing processes. She described how people constantly complain about access to subsidies since 'that's the only thing you can do if you want to engage with the government's official process - you ask if you can get a subsidy and then go and stand in the queue. It's a real communication and conceptualisation issue.' Standing in a queue and getting subsidies cannot be the only way for the public to engage with housing.

Several participants pointed out the great discrepancy between what government and the community view as participation

Several participants pointed out the great discrepancy between what government and the community view as participation. One researcher experienced this first-hand. 'If you took what the city officials told me that they'd done in terms of community participation, it was just wonderful. There was a happy community, a whole lot of happy communities, and the city understood exactly what they wanted. They had told them what they were going to do. The community was very well prepared and very happy. Then when I looked at the field result, it fell apart. The community had never heard of the project. It was hard to work out who was telling the truth. In another project on alternative building technology housing (ABT), the government just didn't understand what people wanted. Some government officials concluded that people were very happy with their ABT houses, but the reality was that people were happy because they got land. People didn't care what the government put on the land because they did financial projections, figuring out when they had enough money to pull the ABT house down and build their own house exactly as they wanted. That is how community participation is happening, a complete mismatch.'

This story rang true for many participants. Another added 'that there is an overall mismatch between the rhetoric and what is actually going on. Engagement is buy-in at the end, when the city brings the

community a plan. The level of meaningful engagement, which the court has asked for,³² equates to buy-in to the city's plan rather than asking for community members' input into what should happen with their community. When community members are asked, and do get to participate, having the opportunity for meaningful engagement, they are excited by that prospect – which is something the country is not tapping into.'

The potential importance of reframing the issue

Since the attitudes and behaviour of local authorities have been identified as a major blockage to the upgrading process, many experts suggested that reframing the issue of upgrading would be helpful. An aspect that could be stressed is economic opportunities. However, it was acknowledged that social issues might work better to change the mind-sets of local officials as they highlight the potential positive long-term aspects of upgrading rather than the economic burden. As one academic phrased it: 'if you're a local councillor and you need to make a decision about informal settlement upgrading and the net result is more water that we need to provide, more electricity that we're not going to get funded for, versus the argument for health benefits, the health benefit is more compelling.'

Informal settlement upgrading is not just about housing in the traditional aspect of a top-structure. It is much more complex and dynamic. Unlike traditional top-structures, incremental upgrading can address urgent needs. A participant said: 'You have to improve health and safety conditions in informal settlement upgrading, whereas with a housing top-structure delivery process, people just wait in a queue without any delivery'. Participants stressed the need to start pushing the benefits of broader infrastructure-led upgrading in conjunction with better access to transport, jobs and social services that will really change the quality of life.

Prevention

Informal settlements, some said, are symptomatic of historically failed or failing urban management. As one participant articulated this, 'Where informal settlements sit today is a response to the apartheid structure; an attempt by poor people to break down the apartheid structure.' One expert stressed the need to look at the larger picture of urban development and management: 'What is the core problem? We are really talking about how to make cities work for people. It is the creation of equitable cities, not only efficient and effective, but also creating access to opportunities for people. Living and income-generating opportunities. If you widen the lens and understand strategically what is wrong with the cities, that is the really appropriate place to intervene, because if we intervene lower in the value chain we will never solve the problems.'

Many agreed that, to address informal settlements, there must be a larger understanding of cities. 'We're treating cities as the buildings and bridges, the infrastructure comes first and then the people. But cities are just footprints of what people desire and what works for people in a specific economy at a particular time.' This is important, as it highlights the flexibility of urban development. It should not be stagnant, but rather address the needs of the people.

South Africa needs to find new ways for government to connect with, as well as empower, the poor

Innovation and flexibility

Overall, South Africa should allow for more innovation and flexibility in urban development. One of the biggest issues, participants said, is the notion of security of tenure. In one person's words: 'Formal titling is not the go-to, one-stop solution. There are different types of tenure security. We should look towards innovation and alternative tenure forms that capture the social value of land and truly understand how people make a living in the city'. Participants pointed out a need for innovative solutions for the development of land, alternative strategies around planning and procedures regulations, engineering designs, building standards, construction processes and a look at how a lot of planning law and statutes regulating frameworks changed. Many local and provincial by-laws and policies are not relevant to the present situation. We must refocus on the realities of the current urban situation and try to find what is achievable.³³

Special zones, called special zones of social interest (ZEIS) in Brazil, have helped settle legal issues around informality in an innovative way. ZEIS provide legal guarantees for the social groups living there and legal recognition that these areas are destined to house those groups. They create rules of occupation that differ from the rest of the city and also create more legal rights and improved security of tenure for those in need of low-income housing.³⁴

As one expert highlighted, for South Africa it's a matter of looking at how we actually get *in situ* upgrading at scale more quickly and effectively, and what policy tools we need to do this. This will require more flexibility and openness in approach. The key is to understand the poor and their survival strategies, and respond to those needs. Most informal settlement dwellers prefer upgrading to relocation for economic and social reasons (e.g. proximity to formal and informal jobs, social networks, community cohesion, etc.). Individuals' rights and interests must be protected.

One expert explained that upgrading is not impossible, but 'space needs to be provided for real pilots - not pilots that are driven by some other target...We do not have to go back to find ways of how to do participation, or tenure security. That research has been done. We need the space where all of that can be tried out. For this, some experts are looking to NUSP to navigate, negotiate and find a way where municipalities would allow this for one settlement. This pilot can help counter populism with real messages that communicate these pilots as something positive to municipalities. A message emphasising the ease of the process.' By increasing the flexibility of these projects, it was said, there can be a shift in the dominant paradigm.

Where informal settlements sit today is a response to the apartheid structure; an attempt by poor people to break down the apartheid structure

Lost institutional knowledge and limited data

It is recognised that *in situ* upgrading is more challenging than greenfield development - it requires more initial funding, capacity, engagement and time. However, it is often forgotten or unacknowledged that South Africa has a history of *in situ* upgrading. There are assumptions that *in situ* upgrading is impossible or has failed, but as pointed out, there has been an enormous number of successful examples, as seen in KwaZulu-Natal. An experienced upgrader said: 'It's unquestionably very hard, but it can be, and has been, done locally'. Experts pointed out that the history of informal settlement upgrading goes back more than 20 years, but this has not been communicated properly. There is a myth that South Africa has no institutional knowledge of upgrading, for instance the World Bank says there isn't a history of informal settlement upgrading in South Africa, which is not totally true.³⁵

In addition to a limited grasp of history, there is a general lack of information. Participants were eager for more information, one stating that ‘we really need to get a better sense of the data. That would start to take a little bit of the politics away, because if we agree on the hard facts of what’s there, we can have a debate around how we approach it.’ It was said that data breaks down doors and limitations for those in the community as well. Currently, low-income households have limited access to finance in the formal sector. One participant said: ‘we have technology now that we didn’t have 10 years ago that can facilitate [a better understanding of the informal sector], making it accessible to the investment banker and to NGOs.’ There is more opportunity to gather information that will help us understand the workings of informal settlements.

Social pact

Dr Fernandes’ research referred to a ‘social pact’ in Brazil pertaining to informal settlements. This became a point of discussion in terms of a possible South African equivalent. A major difference here would be the role of the state, it was said by many; a social pact here will be one that ‘the state will deliver.’ To start with, in 1994, inadequate attention was paid to how properties are located in relation to economic opportunities. As one expert said, ‘people can queue for that property, but it doesn’t unlock and it doesn’t provide what people need.’ This is a very different experience from Brazil, where the social pact focused more on the move from dictatorship to democratisation.

There are assumptions that *in situ* upgrading is impossible or has failed, but as pointed out, there has been an enormous number of successful examples

Overall, the Brazilian trajectory has been different from South Africa in that they have experienced significant economic growth and low unemployment, though that was not always the case. South Africa has yet to reach higher growth and lower unemployment; better linkages between growth and urbanisation and regularisation policies can help this. In Brazil, there is also a broader notion of ‘the right to the city.’ This, it was said, requires not only a broad scope of governance and democracy, but importantly a culture of urban governance (as distinct from government). Locally, participants said, we often see rights and development as separate issues. This leads to good rights decisions that might not make developmental sense, or vice versa.

Case Study

To put some of these ideas into action, CDE did a case study to see how to improve communication with an informal settlement and the surrounding community. This was a short-term, exploratory project, intended to give insights into possible feasibility and expansion of such a project. Through extensive consultation and discussion, we put together a communication strategy addressing some of the pressing issues highlighted above. This case was to develop a community radio programme in Emalahleni, Mpumlanaga, focusing on the concerns of Spring Valley, an informal settlement in Witbank. The programme, in conjunction with SMS communications and a thorough monitoring and evaluation process, was to cover four topics.

This initiative was intended to empower the community, communicate different experiences of informal settlement upgrading, create a platform for discussion and provide insight into recommendations for sustainable development.

Process

The case study, although only short-term, required a long and thoughtful process to determine not only the best methods of communication, but also who the primary targets are, what are the objectives and what is financially feasible in terms of future scalability. After conducting research into strategic communication and starting to better understand specific issues relating to informal settlement upgrading, we investigated ways to develop and implement a communication strategy.

Once CDE had a sense of the background, we set out to consult experts, holding initial meetings with Planact and Grounded Media. We wanted to gain perspectives from an organisation working with informal settlements as well as communication professionals with experience of development issues. We had to work out not only the objectives, but specifically how we could have a real impact and where a communication strategy was most needed. The primary meetings were brainstorming sessions as well as a first step towards solidifying this component of the project.

The initial meeting brought out that there are numerous ways to engage with a community and improve the flow of information – mobile applications, social media, TV, radio, SMS, face to face facilitation, etc. However, there are issues around cost, the feasibility of implementation and the overall impact in terms of creating dialogue. One must also take into account what the real need is. Planact identified one of the biggest gaps as between communities and government officials, especially at local level. More generally, people are tired of ‘talk shops’, often saying ‘ok, I feel capacitated, now help me stay in this settlement’.

From there, we discussed where a potential pilot programme could be launched. Because of our limited timeframes and budget, we wanted to go into a community that already had a relationship and trust with an external organisation – in this case, Planact, which identified two possible communities. We selected Spring Valley as the more suitable option for this programme. Planact was already helping the community create their own settlement management plan and working towards upgrading rather than relocation.

We were still left with many questions. CDE needed to determine the priority message and to whom and how it must be put across. What are the communication needs? It is not necessarily only how CDE wants to communicate, but understanding the best way to communicate with a specific target audience. We would have to unfold the diversity and wide range of needs, as there were many gaps in communication between different stakeholders, and focus our attention.

After more discussions, and consulting with members of the steering committee from Spring Valley, we could narrow our scope and formulate an implementation plan. The community members from Spring Valley highlighted other issues they saw as important to them specifically. Additionally, we could determine the best means of communication and monitoring and evaluation, using community radio, SMSes and community forums. Once this was determined, CDE wrote to tell the municipality what would be taking place.

The radio programme was a series of one-hour shows over four weeks, entitled ‘*Know your community, know your rights: Addressing through questions around informal settlements*’, flighted by Emalehleni FM, under the supervision of Charles Magagula, the station manager. The topics were decided through CDE’s research and consultation with Planact, Emalehleni FM, and the Spring Valley community leaders. The programme was intended to create a dialogue with relevant stakeholders. This case study

The municipality has planned to relocate the settlers to a new development in Klarinet, more than 40 kilometres away

included monitoring and evaluation to understand the impact and potential for future usage. For that process to be meaningful, and for there to be active participation and dialogue, the use of small (40 people or less) community forums would be ideal.

Each programme was preceded by an SMS campaign; Planact sending SMSes to Spring Valley community members reminding them of the date, time and content for the show. It also notified them of the community forum that took place after each show. By using bulk SMSes, Planact could afford to communicate with members of the community, start early dialogue and build up around the radio show, and use mobile technology to reach a broader audience.

Week 1: Oral History and Community Issues

Community leaders identified elders who had a working knowledge and direct experience of the history of the area. They provided an oral history, detailing why the settlement emerged and its significance in the area. This was followed by the community's present concerns about informal settlement upgrading, including social issues, alternative infrastructure provision and integrating livelihoods.

Week 2: Local and International Research

The commissioned local and international research on informal settlement upgrading and its importance in regard to urbanisation and economic growth was presented and adapted for the language needs of the community (primarily Zulu). It discussed the academic perspective as well as providing examples of successful upgrading practices.

Week 3: Neighbourhood Concerns

Margot Rubin, a researcher and urban policy and development consultant, commissioned by CDE to survey concerns of residents of the community surrounding Spring Valley regarding informal settlements and why they do or do not support upgrading, presented her findings.

Week 4: Local Authorities Perspective

This show did not take place. It was intended that Emalahleni FM would interview the mayor and/or municipal manager to establish the perspective of the local government and the challenges it faces in upgrading informal settlements. It was to be a platform for the local government to relay the role of government as well as what has been done, what is happening and what it intends to do.

Spring Valley

Planact has compiled a comprehensive enumeration report. Some details are given here to give a better insight into the community, its demographics and the challenges it faces.

Spring Valley is an informal settlement in Emalahleni Local Municipality in Mpumalanga with a population of about 400 000. The municipality is 85,8 per cent black African, 1,2 per cent coloured, 0,3 per cent Indian and 12,7 per cent white. Key languages used in the municipal area are Zulu, Afrikaans, North Sotho and Southern Ndebele; 20,5 per cent of the population speaks other languages from South

Community spokesperson: 'We are not involved in municipal planning in relation to development of the area, we are not informed about the developments or any municipal planning'

Africa and neighbouring countries. These distinctions are also evident in the community; even though the inhabitants are all considered black African, they have diverse languages and cultural backgrounds.

Maps of case study area



The main industry in the area is coal mining. The municipality says farm land around the town is fast being bought by investors, coal mining companies and real estate developers to accommodate the rapid growth of the city.

Spring Valley informal settlement is located on 42 hectares of council-owned land, with a spill over to privately owned land covering 5,8-5,9 hectares at the edge of Reyno Ridge – a wealthy suburb. The settlement was established on what used to be a farm, where a school was built as far back as 1962 for children from this and neighbouring farms. The school is being refurbished and extended by the Department of Education. Shacks are reported to have been built as far back as the 1980s and early 1990s by farmworkers who were given the right to occupy the land by the owner, joined by a group of evictees from nearby farms and later by people from different areas. Although Spring Valley has a long history, many residents have migrated there recently, reflecting contemporary urbanisation.

Most settlers are South Africans from other provinces, but there are people from neighbouring countries, including Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The settlement is in ward 34 of the municipality, represented by the Democratic Alliance (DA) since the 2011 local government elections, although the African National Congress (ANC) kept control of the municipality.

The municipality has planned to relocate the settlers to a new development in Klarinet, more than 40 kilometres away, but most community members do not want to move since the current location is closer to their jobs and means of survival.

Spring Valley is not threatened by densification, like many informal settlements. There are 1 366 stands. Based on Planact’s enumeration report, residents have been in the area since 1962, with particular growth during the past 15 years. Rapid in-migration to Emalahleni is due to economic developments there. In addition to established roots, most residents cite employment as the main reason they live there. This can be formal or informal, as there is also a desire to stay due to neighbourhood entrepreneurial activities. Although unemployment is still high, employment (including temporary and part-time arrangements) is higher than provincial and municipal averages. The vast majority, 88

per cent, of residents want to stay in Spring Valley. There is a general sense of optimism that there will be upgrading, but continued frustration at the lack of engagement with government.

The community lacks adequate basic services, including water, electricity and proper sanitation. They rely on the provision of water by trucks from the municipality that have an erratic schedule, and sometimes people go for a week without any water being provided. The mobile clinic also is undependable, residents indicating that it does not come on all the promised days. Additionally, the settlement is not cleaned, with no access to refuse collection or any other maintenance service.

There is inadequate public participation. Most residents are dissatisfied with their lack of involvement in the municipal planning process. Some made the following comments: 'We are not involved in municipal planning in relation to development of the area, we are not informed about the developments or any municipal planning' and 'The local municipality is not available to discuss anything related to development plans with us. There was never any discussion with us as a community about development issues. We were told half information about the available small piece of land in Spring Valley'. There is a sentiment that much of the issue is around party politics and they generally feel disenfranchised.



Spring Valley residents want their settlement upgraded so they can gain access to basic services, particularly water.

The settlement was established on what used to be a farm, where a school was built as far back as 1962 for children from this and neighbouring farms

Radio Programme

Each week, there was consultation between CDE, Planact, the community and Emalahleni FM on that week's topic. The shows were aired on Monday nights at 18h00. Community forums took place afterwards, hosted by Planact, to discuss the show. Each week, before the show, Planact sent out more than 400 SMSes to community members about the show to encourage them to listen so that they could participate in the community forum dialogue.

Emalahleni FM ran advertisements before the series started, to inform regular listeners. Independent research shows that Emalahleni FM had 78 000 listeners on weekdays in October 2012, Saturdays 26 000 and Sundays 32 000.³⁶ This is a large audience for community radio in Mpumalanga.

Oral History and Community Issues

The first week, Emalahleni FM discussed the history and issues of the Spring Valley settlement. Elders from the community were consulted beforehand about the process and questions that would be asked. The programme incorporated excerpts of on-site interviews conducted by Emalahleni FM with community members and leaders, amongst them members of the Community Policing Forum, two Ward Committee members, two Spring Valley Development Committee members, the principal of the local primary school and an elder who provided oral history. In studio, Councillor Botes of Ward 34 and Lucky Mayaba, the Coordinator of Spring Valley Development Committee, shared their opinions on the

state of affairs in the settlement, while Mike Makwela from Planact telephonically set the stage with an introduction to the project.

In preparation for the community forum, CDE discussed the monitoring and evaluation objectives with Planact. A set of questions was developed and then discussed with and approved by the Spring Valley Development Committee. These were used as a guide during the community forum dialogue.

The first meeting was attended by 41 community members. Some demographics are: females made up about 75 per cent, with a broad age range, from 18 and to 70, indicating that interest cut across all age groups. Consistent with findings from the previous situational analysis, unemployment levels were high, 88 per cent registering as unemployed. Educationally, where indicated, most had some but incomplete secondary education. A wide range of languages was used, the top three being Zulu, Pedi and Ndebele (also Sotho, Swahli, Xhosa, Tsonga and Tswana).

To see if mobile technology is useful in this setting, access to and use of cell phones was assessed: 82,9 per cent (34 people) of attendees put cell phone contact details on the register, with most access in younger age groups (below 40). Word of mouth was noted as a primary method to get information to those without cell phones.

The questionnaire allowed for a more qualitative understanding of the group, and whether radio is an effective means of improving communication. All participants have a radio in their home, about 75 per cent listening every day. Many stations were listened to, but Emalahleni FM was a top choice. It was confirmed that language is the main determinant of the choice of a station.

All 41 participants had listened to the initial broadcast and were interested in following the whole series. The SMS campaign appeared to be successful, as they heard about the programme primarily through the SMS. However, since many would recommend the programme, word of mouth was noted as a key way to popularise the show.

Overall, they found the show to be very interesting and representative of the situation. They gained a lot from listening, some key things being that the interviewees articulated the needs clearly, and they felt strongly that their history should be documented to preserve the institutional memory of Spring Valley once the elders pass away. Again, it was re-emphasised that the main reason people do not want to move is their livelihood. The general feeling was that the programme would enhance awareness of the area, and it was the first time they heard their issues in the news. They were most interested in hearing from local government officials – either the municipal manager or mayor.

The participants are most interested in improving their quality of life. They are in the settlement because it is close to work and makes transportation feasible. However, they said the biggest challenges of living there are the poor quality of life, services and safety. The most important upgrading need is a water pipe – essentially an extension from the nearby rich suburb.

There were some insightful reflections from the first week's evaluation:

- Unlike most community meetings in Spring Valley, this forum was mostly attended by women. They were able to share their views and have a thoughtful discussion without being dominated by men.

All participants have a radio in their home, about 75 per cent listening every day

- There was not a proportionate representation of young people, only a quarter of those in the forum being below 30 years old. This may have implications in terms of future leadership in Spring Valley.
- Two days after the radio show, there was an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) meeting, which had a higher attendance than usual. Community members expressed surprise at the number of white attendees, not a common occurrence. Unfortunately, the meeting was disrupted by residents when it became known that the mayor would not attend and that issues related to their community were not on the agenda.
- Overall, radio appears to be one of the most effective methods of communication in this area, as there was high listenership in Spring Valley.

Local and International Research

Mike Makwela from Planact presented the findings from CDE's commissioned research and the workshop discussions, and the local ward councillor also came on the show. As previously, bulk SMSes were sent out as a reminder of the broadcast. The programme was replayed at the start of the forum for those who did not listen to the initial airing and/or to remind participations of the content.

People were excited that Spring Valley informal settlement is now known to all the people in the area who listen to that station

Week two showed a dramatic drop in participation, only 21 community members attending, many of whom had also participated in week one. Thus, the demographics were similar although not identical. The gender dynamic was almost the same, being primarily women (75 per cent). It is possible, since the forum was on a Friday, that many men were either at work or seeking employment. The age demographic was slightly different, but there was some consistency, such as most participants being in the 40-49 year age group. Again, there was a high rate of unemployment, but this week there were participants who identified as volunteers in the community. The education profile was also very similar. Language however was slightly varied; although the majority still identified Zulu as their primary language, Tsonga was second. Also, mobile access remained high. All participants under 40 had access to a mobile phone.

To cater for the repetition in participants, the forum took a more discussion-based approach. Participants were asked for their views on the programme. There was an overall sense of pride and satisfaction. They praised the work of the Development Committee, this radio show being an example, indicating a sense of ownership of the programme within the community. As in the first session, people were excited that their informal settlement is now known to all the people in the area who listen to that station, and happy to hear it being mentioned on radio.

As already indicated, there is strong resistance to relocation. The community feels they are just being moved around without any consideration, especially as the surrounding suburban houses and developments came after the informal settlement community was already there. However, the situation has improved. Participants noted that they are a bit more settled now, as in the past there was forced removal. There was also a history of being taken advantage of, where people would come into the community promising to bring water pipes, and then disappear with community money. Even now there is still speculation around financing. There was a commitment from the District of R2,5 million for Spring Valley, but the money has yet to be seen.

Overall, the discussion reflected a good understanding about informal settlement upgrading. Community members wanted the government to better understand that they are mandated to improve the settlement rather than just relocate it. It is not about policies and laws, it is about government now needing to implement. They sensed that in other countries the poor are better protected and have more rights to land. And there is fear that with the proposed bill for Mpumalanga Province upgrading

informal settlements will be blocked (see box below).³⁷ There is also a fear that, as happened in Lenasia (near Johannesburg), their shacks could be demolished.³⁸

CIVIL SOCIETY'S COMMENTS ON THE MPUMALANGA ERADICATION, PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS BILL, 2012

The recent Mpumalanga Eradication, Prevention and Control of Informal Settlements Bill, 2012 has raised concern in civil society. It has noteworthy parallels to the KwaZulu-Natal Slums Act in that it emphasises the need to eradicate informal settlements and promote new developments. A large number of experts and organisations³⁹ have worked on and endorsed a submission to the Mpumalanga Department of Human Settlements to object to key aspects of the Bill.

Fundamentally, the Bill does not heed prior Constitutional Court rulings⁴⁰ and expresses a limited and partial response to the issue of informal settlements in the province. The Bill states that: 'it is desirable to introduce measures which seek to eradicate, prevent and control informal settlements in a manner that promotes and protects the housing construction programmes.' This shows a clear lack of understanding of informal settlements and the role they play for the urban poor. Rather than their elimination, the focus should be on the role informal settlements play and the importance of the provincial government providing improved access to housing and secure tenure.

Like the KZN Slums Act, the Bill emphasises eviction without acknowledging upgrading or engagement with informal settlements, despite the precedents set and available budgets. The province needs to deal with the reality of urbanisation and accommodate expanding cities. Limiting informal settlements without providing for urban migration is unreasonable and overly stressing eradication neglects the need for upgrading. For example, sections 9, 10 and 11 of the Bill do not mention upgrading in the called-for municipal informal settlements eradication programme. Rather, they talk about control and eradication. The bill does not address the rights and needs of the poor and ignores national policy.⁴¹

Main points to come out of the discussion include:

- Much development is dependent on political officials. There has been regular reshuffling and turnover in local government. New people always insist on starting over, and have their own excuses why there is no implementation. This significantly delays any attention to the informal settlement.
- There are significant issues with party politics. Spring Valley is in a DA ward, but community members do not care which party it is, they just want services. The ward councillor has never been to Spring Valley.
- The local government refuses to engage with the community and will not answer questions around upgrading or where the money is that was committed to Spring Valley. The community's main interest is piped water. The community has stated they are willing to pay for water through a shared meter system. They would also like to discuss security of tenure and the legal requirements for upgrading.
- Again, there is interest in hearing from the mayor (scheduled for week four's show). People specifically want answers to questions around upgrading processes.

Neighbourhood Concerns

During initial conversations with leadership from Spring Valley, it appeared there are a lot of misunderstandings in informal settlements about how they are viewed. Community members initially believed hostility from the surrounding community to be along racial lines, but now realised that it was predominantly socio-economic, much of the resentment actually coming from higher-income black residents in and around Witbank. In the light of this, CDE commissioned Margot Rubin to conduct a small pilot survey, to get an initial sense of the different perceptions there of informal settlements.

She presented her findings on the radio show, and drew some interesting conclusions. In total 15 people were interviewed, divided between telephonic and face-to-face interviews, using a semi-structured interview technique and standard discussion guide. A broad range of people from different backgrounds and with different linkages to Spring Valley was surveyed.

Respondents noted that Emalahleni has had significant growth in general, leading to increased demand for housing and services. Political tensions were also identified, internal to the ANC municipality,

and within the DA wards. Almost all respondents reported problems with water (quality and quantity), electricity supply and potholes. As one respondent put it, 'if we have water today, we are happy. If we have water and electricity today than we are very happy'. People said that the area has not been able to handle the rate of urbanisation, with the municipality not meeting increased demand while maintaining quality for the pre-existing community. Overall, there was concern about a lack of accountability, particularly with development, as new construction is being undertaken without the required planning permission. Residents said this was largely caused by nepotism and corrupt practices, while municipal officials do not have the skills to deliver services.

There was a commitment from the District of R2,5 million for Spring Valley, but the money has yet to be seen

Reyno Ridge, an exclusive wealthy suburb of Emalahleni, has had significant redevelopment, primarily catering for a mostly, young, professional and black market who work in the mining, construction and power sectors. Residents in this area indicated that Spring Valley has been earmarked for private development and that most residents will be relocated to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing, Klarinet, approximately 40 kilometres out of town. Two other developments were also discussed. Frustrated respondents argued that there are currently insufficient services to Reyno Ridge, so how would the area deal with 2 000 more households? When the issue was raised at a community meeting, the developers

apparently ignored these complaints, saying that they had obtained a Council Resolution, and could develop the site as agreed, regardless of residents' concerns.

Key themes to come out of the survey include:

Contrasts and contradictions. There were substantial contrasts in some perceptions around Spring Valley, its current demography and plans for the settlement. The question of who lives in Spring Valley was revealing as it exposed some embedded but incorrect notions about informal dwellers and uncovered how little outsiders know about Spring Valley. Responses included: that most inhabitants were foreigners; that most are women and children; and that most residents are child-headed households who are victims of AIDS/HIV-related deaths. Overall, there was a perception that Spring Valley is associated with crime and safety problems in the area. However, those familiar with the area, specifically the Community Policing Forum, acknowledge that crime there is actually very low. Opinions on property values also varied, ranging from that the informal settlement has no impact to

those who feel they can no longer sell their homes. These examples show how polarised the surrounding community is, and the need for better relations and communication between the two.

Misinformation and distortion. There was overall frustration with local governance. There are contrasting views whether the lack of water delivery is due to party politics or lack of capacity. Another major distortion was that the vast majority of respondents reported that as far as they knew the council planned to clear the settlement and relocate informal dwellers to Klarinet and Pine Ridge. Lack of information and communication in the settlement has meant that there is some confusion and has sown fertile ground for rumour and unhelpful political gossip.

Justifications for relocation. Respondents expressed two justifications for relocating Spring Valley residents: existing conditions in Spring Valley and the quality of the settlement in Klarinet. In terms of the first point, there was a complete disconnect to the fact that the worst conditions could be alleviated very simply by providing very basic services and do not require relocation. The second point reveals no appreciation of the value and meaning of people's homes in the informal settlement.

Ripples and unintended outcomes. The survey revealed two main unintended outcomes of the relocation that has already taken place. Firstly, some beneficiaries' lives are worse directly because of relocation, through increased transport and service costs, so some have moved back to the settlement. Secondly, it has transformed the area around Klarinet, the new greenfield development. This RDP project has made real the fears of lower property prices and has failed to improve social and economic integration with the surrounding community, thus maintaining spatial segregation.

Based on this research, Planact conducted the community forum. Unfortunately, due to a technical error by the station, there was no recording; discussion therefore relied largely on individual recollections of the interview. About the same number of people attended the third meeting (19), again predominately women and the elderly. Unemployment was still high, with a similar education background. Zulu was still the primary language, but again, the second language was not consistent, being Sotho. Again, there was an indicated high rate of mobile phone access, correlated to age. The reasons for living in Spring Valley were consistent, with work a priority. However, they also mentioned the school, cheap transport, shops and space for gardens.

To start, participants were asked to recap the week's topics. Comments included: 'The neighbours clearly don't like us'; 'Black people are the most negative. They accuse us of depleting their water supply and not paying. The white people are better'; 'They complain now about property values but why did they buy here in the first place?' Interest was expressed in following the series as they found this week's show to be very interesting and would definitely recommend it to other people.

A main point the community picked up is that opposition to the informal settlement is more of a class than a race issue, and the black middle class is more intolerant of it than white residents. Overall, they felt the content was helpful for bringing awareness to the area as they are learning more about informal settlements, which can give them an advantage when negotiating.

Participants' concerns were in line with previous weeks, with water delivery the priority. The main reflections were that there was a general sense of unity amongst the community and that radio is seen

A main point the community picked up is that opposition to the informal settlement is more of a class than a race issue

as an important feature, participants recognising that they are learning more about themselves as well as other informal settlements.

Week 4: Local Authorities Perspective

The final segment of the series did not take place. The municipality was originally told about the series on 9 May 2012, when an official letter was sent to and received by the municipal manager on behalf of CDE, Planact, and the Spring Valley community. The letter explained the project and its objectives, and that we would like to engage with key members from the municipal office.

Once dates for the programme were set, we repeated our request for an interview with the municipal manager or mayor. Emalahleni FM sent another written request along with proposed questions about the view of local government and the challenges they face, with a focus on informal settlement upgrading. It was made clear that the questions were flexible and we were mostly interested in an opportunity for engagement. When no reply was received, Emalahleni staff followed up with phone calls and emails, again to no avail.

On 8 January 2013, CDE emailed the municipal offices directly, resending the original letter of request and proposed questions. Over the next two weeks we followed up with more than 10 phone calls and were never able to speak to the municipal manager. In the last call, the municipal manager's personal assistant told us that he would not be interviewed. When asked why, she said it was a matter of time and content, but would not provide alternatives to either.

Spring Valley continued to try and get hold of a municipal official over the next three months. They went to the offices and submitted more letters of request to the mayor. It emerged that the municipal manager has been 'chased away' and his office is closed, as his staff demanded he be fired because of prior criminal and civil charges, including a sexual harassment conviction.

Evaluation

We learned much from this case study. Although a small project, feedback from the community came through lively discussion and debate. Demographically, one of the most interesting aspects of these community forums was the gender dynamic. The majority participation by women is a very positive outcome, as in previous community meetings there has been serious concern about women not participating or being able to voice opinions. As mentioned in the research, many residents of informal settlements are employed, which can explain the low participation by men. Thus, timing is critical. In future it may be considered to hold two forums, one during the week, which allows women to participate, and one over the weekend, when men can share their thoughts.

The age dynamic was also interesting, with only 25 per cent of the attendance below the age of 30. Older participants took this as a sign of lack of interest in development and were concerned as they regarded the youth as custodians of the future. Moreover, in general, participation was lower than expected. Although the SMS campaign worked in informing participants (SMSes were in Zulu and allowed for responses/enquires to be sent directly to the Spring Valley Development Committee), more needs to be done to gain initial interest.

There was overall frustration with local governance



Mike Makwela, Planact, leading the community forum in Spring Valley

Technically, there were some limitations. The commitment from the radio station did not completely carry through to implementation. Out of the one-hour programme purchased by CDE, only about half was content (the rest being news, sport or music inserts). The community was frustrated by the DJ, who did not allow the flow of information, limiting the time for speakers and listeners to present their views and ask questions. Although the radio station was briefed on each week's topic, this did not seem to improve the situation. Language was also a barrier. Although the station stated that the discussion would be hosted in the primary language for the community (identified as Zulu), this was often not the case, with English used instead, limiting residents' understanding and ability to participate.

The language barrier was also seen when the ward councillor (Ms Botes) participated in the second week's show. The community struggled to understand her as she spoke in English. Additionally, although she came across as sympathetic to conditions in Spring Valley, she could not commit to raising the challenges of Spring Valley in council meetings.⁴²

There were further technical issues at the radio station, including poor recordings of the shows, with one week not recorded at all. Also, the station indicated that they had statistical data and could provide information on the listenership – this did not happen. The capacity of the station proved a limitation. Costs did not always reflect the quality of service. In future similar exercises more will have to be done directly with the station to ensure high standards and shorter sessions, even 15 minute segments, would be better and more cost effective.

Despite these challenges, community members found the experience to be positive and experienced more unity within Spring Valley. As emphasised in the research and workshop, there is a general disenfranchisement of informal settlements. The radio show gave residents an assurance that Spring Valley was still on the agenda and 'not forgotten,' renewing hope for development (as money is allocated for Spring Valley, this is very positive). They also felt better informed about upgrading processes and policies. One result was an abnormally high attendance at the IDP meeting two days after the first programme. Spring Valley Development Committee members reported that for the first time the white community, who do not attend IDP meetings regularly, were in a majority.

Another major impact followed week three. Most of the informal settlement residents had the perception that divisions in the community regarding the settlement emanated from racial prejudice. However, the survey indicated differently, illuminating that the issues are more class- than race-based. Even with all the positive impacts, the municipality refusing to participate and the local ward councillor not committing to addressing Spring Valley's concerns reinforced the notion that local government was uncooperative and unwilling to have a dialogue.

This experience reinforced findings of the research and expert workshop, and highlights the limitations in the political system, as government does not feel accountable to its citizenry. Party officials are unmotivated and de-incentivised to learn about the needs of voters. The party hierarchy and appeasing the leadership seem to remain the priorities, so that there is no need to appeal to constituents or be accountable. The electoral system seemingly creates disengagement and low participation, as seen by the community's frustration with the municipality. This creates an impression that government 'is above' the citizenry rather than responding to their needs, limiting how people, particularly the poor, can engage.

Community members found the experience to be positive and experienced more unity within Spring Valley

Overall, community radio proved a valuable medium for communicating issues around informal settlements. It gained views from different sectors, despite the noticeable absence of the municipality. This reinforces the conclusion that community involvement and ownership is key to success, and the Spring Valley Development Committee played a central role in organising the meetings and building interest. The impact of radio should not be underestimated, as it not only informed the citizens, but helped them articulate their opinions and perspectives and build a better connection between the informal settlement community and the surrounding areas.

Concluding Remarks

With each component of this project, CDE has uncovered important insights and information. The international perspective provides vital lessons for South Africa. Fundamentally, urbanisation is inevitable and policies and practices must be in place to manage this. Emerging from that, informal settlement upgrading is an important aspect of urban management and can be part of an economic growth path when there is an appropriate political configuration. South Africa has taken steps towards a pro-upgrading policy at national level. However we have also seen continued resistance to *in situ* upgrading and other new provincial or local policies that undermine the national policies. Clearly there is still a long way to go before NUSP can reach its targets in 2014, and there is concern that pressure to achieve these will compromise community participation and a focus on livelihoods, sustainability and process issues.

Additionally, without addressing some deficiencies in national policies (i.e. still rooted in 'housing'), the focus will remain too narrow and reactive, addressing only basic service and tenure rather than the larger picture of public realm investment, urban management and planning and broader transformation.⁴³

The limited and conflicting policy conundrum is exacerbated by the limited flow of communication – in all directions. National policy shifts do not filter down to lower levels of government, particularly municipalities. Also, national government policy development has not taken sufficient account of many practical issues at local level. More strategic use of communication methods, such as SMSes

and community radio, can help cohere and articulate informal settlement perspectives for onward transmission to local government. Each day more than 8,5 million people in South Africa listen to community radio.⁴⁴ Additionally, almost 90 per cent of South Africans have a cell phone.⁴⁵ But, as expressed in our experts' workshop and corroborated by CDE's case study in Emalahleni, a key blockage at local level is an inability and unwillingness to listen.

Through this project, CDE has noted that poor communication practices are often the norm, and a significant hindrance in organisations' and individuals' abilities to address informal settlements' needs. There is a constant breakdown of information, and innovative communication strategies are not being used.

The case study provides numerous lessons for potential similar action in future. The methods were cost-effective and provided significant benefit. Overall, it was a success in that it empowered residents of the informal settlement, improved engagement and enhanced awareness. Although the use of SMSes and community radio is positive and improves dialogue, ultimately it is not enough for the complexities and limitations we uncovered, particularly at local level. If we want to change how policies are implemented, the perceptions and realities of local government must be addressed. Communication is a tool to facilitate this, but many blockages cannot be overcome by strategic communication alone. If the public sector refuses to have dialogue or hear dissent, as in our case study, having communication systems in place is not enough.

Addressing all these challenges will be an extended process. Residents of informal settlements can learn from international experience that they cannot stand idly by waiting for the state to develop capacity. This is where community radio and local initiatives can be a positive driver for change. National government can encourage this process by improving its communication to other levels of government, with more widespread communication around informal settlement upgrading funding, the policies and strategies already in place. The skills and expertise of civil society and the private sector can be brought in to help meet these challenges. There must be innovation and a breakaway from the formal processes that have become the norm. There must be a clearer message, agreed by all stakeholders, of why policies are in place and promoting *in situ* upgrading. New methods must be seriously considered; however, if provincial and local authorities do not implement them, and/or funding models remain too restrictive, it makes no difference to the urban poor and the overall improvement of city dynamics.

Communication should not take a back seat to these concerns; on the contrary, steps must be taken to address communication breakdowns as part of the overall upgrading process. Improving strategic communication must be simultaneous with other initiatives that address shortcomings primarily at, but definitely not limited to, lower levels of government. Poor urban politics and urban management interfere with the flow of information. Thus it is a two-way street – acknowledging a new communication paradigm can improve urban management, while filling policy gaps and building the capacity of urban management can lead to improved communication.

Apart from capacity, corruption at all levels of government remains a major factor, deterring development and the creation of functional cities.⁴⁴ Rigid power dynamics and limited space for citizens' direct involvement in politics limits accountability and impedes democratic practices. As with the communication strategies, space is needed for dissent, discourse and dialogue in politics. There is an overwhelming sense amongst both our experts and community respondents that government 'is

Informal settlement upgrading can be seen in the larger context of a need to re-evaluate and affirm democratic citizenship

above' the people, rather than the people empowering government. Informal settlement upgrading can be seen in the larger context of a need to re-evaluate and affirm democratic citizenship.

The current political system has significant shortcomings. The local ward councillor system has not been effective in representing the people, promoting accountability or fostering participation, leading to lack of accountability. Outside the ward system there is limited space to engage with government. High levels of inefficiency and bureaucracy further limit civic engagement. Attempts to engage with government are met with neglect and disinterest. Citizens lack topical information as well as general understanding of their role in holding government accountable. Civic engagement is a challenge, with people not fully aware of their rights. Although a series of issues and challenges must be confronted, communication and the creation of a participatory environment can trigger some necessary changes.

Appendix A

Tenure 'Continuum' (from the Project Preparation Trust)			
Form of tenure	Characteristics	Benefits & appropriate developmental responses	Commentary
1. Municipal statement of recognition	The community has a right to remain in the settlement, and indeed may have the right to the provision of certain emergency services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional security of tenure / freedom from fear of eviction • Enables basic / emergency infrastructure and other basic services. 	Enabling, cost effective and streamlined. Lays a good foundation for further tenure responses
2. Informal Settlement special zone	'Collective' (at the settlement level) & unregulated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional security of tenure / freedom from fear of eviction • The same benefits as in the first form as well as additional security for the municipality to acquire the land and provide full services. 	
3. Community administered register	Individual & Informally regulated:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some level of tenure security to residents. • Can help with regulating influx into a settlement and the allocation and re-allocation of sites. • residents maybe be documentation confirming their de- facto residence in the settlement. 	Has limited enforceability. Unlikely to be significantly supported by municipalities.
4. Municipal / state administered register	Individual & formally regulated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high level of tenure security to residents. • May be considered sufficient for the delivery of top-structures, being a pre-cursor to a locally administered tenure certificate. 	Is more flexible, cost effective and appropriate alternative to title deeds.
5. Locally administered tenure certificate	Individual & formally regulated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very high level of tenure security to residents. • Enables the possibility of top-structures. • May help reduce informal transactions. • Upgrade-able to full title 	Is more flexible, cost effective and appropriate alternative to title deeds.
6. Title deed	Individual & formally regulated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very high level of tenure security to residents. • Allows residents to raise bond finance and to use their house as collateral or security. 	Poses major problems in low income communities & low income housing projects due to potential of owners selling the sites illegally.

Endnotes

1. The 2013/2014 National Treasury budget reflects the focus on rural over urban, the amount for rural infrastructure being almost three times the budget for human settlement and urban settlement development grants. National Treasury. Estimates of National Expenditure 2013. <http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2013/ene/FullENE.pdf>.
2. E. Fernandes, 'Questions and Lessons from the Latin American Experience Promoting the Regularisation of Consolidated Informal Settlements', Paper commissioned by CDE, 2012.
3. Financial and Fiscal Commission, 'Report on the Public Hearings on Housing Finance,' 2012, p. 13.
4. K. Tissington, 'A Review of Housing Policy and Development in South Africa since 1994', Socio-Economic Rights Institute of (SERI), 2010, p. 55.
5. There are a few examples of exceptions to this, such as the KZN Informal Settlement Strategy or the rapid assessments done by NUSP, however these more proactive measures have not become the norm.
6. M. Huchzermeyer, 'The Struggle for In situ Upgrading of Informal Settlements: Case studies from Gauteng'. *Development Southern Africa* 26(1) 2009.
7. South African Government Information: Housing. <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/housing.htm>
8. Reports available upon request form CDE.
9. Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI), 'Informal settlement upgrading in South Africa and linkages to informal sector development and economic opportunity generation'. Paper commissioned by CDE, 2012.
10. Ibid., 12.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. E. Fernandes, Paper commissioned by CDE.
14. SERI, Paper commissioned by CDE.
15. Ibid.
16. SERI, Paper commissioned by CDE: This is the first step in an incremental process of transformation to sustainable human settlements. The delivery agreement also stresses the need for integrated development planning, coordinated municipal and provincial service delivery and good urban management as part of informal settlement upgrading.
17. Discussion, Technical Workshop on Informal Settlement Upgrading 29-30 May 2012. Hosted by the Isandla Institute and Department of Human Settlements (NUSP).
18. A. Todes, P. Kok, M. Wentzel, J. van Zyl and C. Cross, 'Contemporary South African urbanisation dynamics'. Paper for UNU-WIDER Conference. June 2008.
19. SERI, Paper commissioned by CDE.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 30.
22. Ibid., 32.
23. Informal settlement upgrading strategy for KwaZulu-Natal. Project Preparation Trust of KZN, Feb 2011. 40-41.
24. E. Fernandes, Paper commissioned by CDE, 7.
25. Ibid., 30.
26. Ibid., 5.
27. E. Wegelin, 'Informal settlements and their upgrading: Building on the lessons of three decades of experience'. *Human Settlement Development*, vol 2, 237.

28. B. Mautjane, Discontent high over perceptions of corruption, Mail & Guardian, 15 April 2011.
29. K. Hallahana, D. Holtzhausen, B. van Ruler, D. Verčič and K. Srirameshe, 'Defining strategic communication', *International Journal of Strategic Communication*. 1(1), 2007. 3.
30. This has been seen by the shift where strategic communication is being used more frequently to address development issues through open dialogue. Around the world there have been many cases in which new communication channels are being used to enhance the debate around development and policy. This has included opening up opportunities for involvement by stakeholders who may have previously not been involved.
31. S. Verwey, 'Strategic communication: Implications for policy and advocacy. Paper commissioned by CDE. 2012.
32. In reference to the Constitutional Court cases (see *Abahlali baseMjondolo v The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal*).
33. M. Misselhorn, Project Preparation Trust of KZN (PPT). Personal communication 20/03/13.
34. E. Fernandes, Paper commissioned by CDE, 70-75.
35. Upgrading in South Africa was for example done by the Urban Foundation, then replicated by the Independent Development Trust, and evaluated by the National Business Initiative and Minister Joe Slovo, with positive results.
36. South African Audience Research Foundation, www.saarf.co.za.
37. Mpumalanga Eradication, Prevention And Control Of Informal Settlements Bill, 2012. This bill shows that at the provincial level, there is limited understanding of informal settlements or the national agenda. See box for more information.
38. In November 2012, about 50 houses were demolished by the provincial Gauteng housing department in Lenasia, with more demolitions planned. The plots were fraudulently sold for between R2 500 and R95 000 and buyers were issued with fake deeds of sale. The demolitions were strongly criticised by many, including the South African Human Rights Commission.
39. Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI), Abahlali baseMjondolo, Batho Land and Shelter (BLS), Centre for Urban and Built Environment Studies (CUBES), Built Environment Support Group (BESG), Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC), Planact and Urban LandMark.
40. See information on *Abahlali baseMjondolo v The Premier of KwaZulu-Natal*.
41. Recently the ward councillor resigned and by-elections will take place in the date to be determined by IEC. She did not disclose reasons why she resigned.
42. Submission to the Mpumalanga Department of Human Settlements, Nov 2012. http://www.seri-sa.org/images/stories/mpumalanga_informal_settlements_bill_submission_nov12_final.pdf.
43. M. Misselhorn, Project Preparation Trust of KZN (PPT). Personal communication 20/03/13.
44. South African Audience Research Foundation, www.saarf.co.za.
45. South African Government Information. Census 2011 results. <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/programmes/census-2011/index.html>.
46. There is an overall acknowledgement of a lack of capacity and severe issues of governance at all levels. The lasted Auditor-General's report for 2011/12 showed that only 22 per cent of the 536 audited entities received clean audits. There has been an overall decline over the years of clean audits from 152 in 2009/10 to 132 in 2010/11 and most recently 117 in 2011/12.



CENTRE FOR
DEVELOPMENT
AND ENTERPRISE

Informing South African Policy

BOARD

L Dippenaar (chairman), A Bernstein (executive director), A Ball, N Behrens, E Bradley, C Coovadia, M Cutifani, B Figaji,
M le Roux, S Maseko, I Mkhabela, M Msimang, W Nkuhlu, S Pityana, S Ridley, A Sangqu, E van As

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATE

Peter L Berger

5 Eton Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, South Africa
P O Box 1936, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
Tel +27 11 482 5140 • Fax +27 11 482 5089
info@cde.org.za • www.cde.org.za

This project has been funded by the Ford Foundation.
The funders do not necessarily agree with the views expressed in this report.



FORDFOUNDATION