



VOICES OF THE POOR

WORKSHOP REPORT - PORT ELIZABETH, 23 MAY 2007

Report produced for Urban LandMark by the Development Action Group

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Urban LandMark

MAKING URBAN LAND MARKETS WORK FOR THE POOR

22 June 2007

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Introduction

The following groups were invited: Walmer, Helenvale, Kliprand, Moeggesukkel, Simanyene and Uitenhage. Unfortunately Simanyene and the Uitenhage group were involved in an accident and were thus unable to attend. Written submissions have been forwarded by these two groups.

The fear the groups had were that this would be just another workshop that would create expectations and that would turn out fruitless. They said that so many different workshops were held and that no one ever came back to give progress on the workshops held. Warren (DAG) assured them that this was not the case with this workshop.

Presentations

Helenvale - Mathilda Dickson

The first meetings we held in 2004 at Brister House and Erick Tindale Buildings. People were informed about the housing subsidy. The people then built ±100 shacks at the back of Barcelona, looking forward to the houses that were going to be built for them. They thought that the shacks were just a temporary measure. Unfortunately this was not the case and families got told that they were squatting illegally. Their shacks got demolished several times. Every time the shacks got demolished the people just rebuilt it. No one from the Municipality came to tell them why they are now being seen as illegal where they have been told that they would get houses in the first place. The Councilor was of no help.

Land that is available is being used as dumping ground. People are told that the Municipality is allowed to do this as it is their ground. Although the community has been told to move and their shacks been demolished several times; they got taps been put up by the Municipality. This cause confusion and the people remained. When asked for sewerage facilities and electricity they were again told about their illegal squatting. This made the community furious and they ended up toyi-toying. They were then approached and told that the Municipality has to build a bridge in that area and that this was decided 40 years ago. The community could not understand why land that was hosting 100 families should be used for this, why the bridge couldn't be build over Standford road where it was truly needed. Why were they given water when this land was going to be used for a bridge? The community called a meeting and the councilor was invited to explain, he never pitched.

Walmer - Mbulelo Tulman

In Walmer there are two informal settlements, namely Airport Valley and G-West. People from Airport Village were relocated to Walmer Township in 1998 due to it being privately sold to a Brazillian Developer. This sale however never went through and in 2000 it was put up for sale again. In the mean time people were staying on the land again and had to be removed again. This time they were going to be relocated to Chatty in the Northern Areas. The community was however not informed of this new turn of events. The land that was available for housing in



Walmer was being sold off to private developers. The councilors are not supportive of the communities' fears. It feels as if the community is not important to them. The minister of Land visited the community and told them that it was for the Municipal officials to get back to them with a resolution. This never happened. As a result the community toyi-toyed in front of Brister house. Areas are becoming over populated. Again the community went to talk to the councilor and was informed that they had to wait until he came to them, not the other way around. The people got very angry and burnt down the councilor's office. Political parties played a big role within the community. People are being taken away from their familiar ground to places that don't have any services or amenities close by. The Municipalities are using the same ground work as the previous regime did with the force removals. Leaders are promising one thing but doing the opposite. Money seems to be ruling our capitalist Government. The community now wants to take this up with the Constitutional Court. The Government is being stupid, they teach us our rights and than try to take it away from us.

Kliprand - Marlene Matthews

In Kliprand we have 500 families but only one tap. Women and children get raped when they have to go to the toilet at night as there is only 1 toilet to service the whole community. Kliprand got its name because of all the stones and rock in the area. This has now also become one of the many excuses being held by the Municipality that they cannot develop the area. Yet right next to the school there is enough land to house families but this cannot be developed as well. How can the build a school on this ground, but find it impossible to develop the area for people to live on? They had to put services in for the schools, now why can't they do it for our families to? There are no tar roads which make it impossible for an ambulance to come through when someone gets ill or dies. We had several murders and we know that they always struggle. There are no electricity and people are afraid to use paraffin stoves as there have been breakouts before and a lot of shacks got burnt down. People have to queue for water (seeing that there are only 1 tap) and than they end up fighting. You also get told that you are only allowed to get a certain amount of water per day. If that is not enough than the tap gets stolen every 2nd or 3rd week and to get that fixed is a mission all on its own. We go out and buy it back ourselves as we know that getting the Municipality to come and fix it will take another 100 years. The eldest residence is 125 years old. She has been living there for 100 years, up to today the living conditions are still the same, except for one Mass Lamp that was put in. When the councilor gets called in , he says that there is nothing that the Municipality can do as the land belongs to private owners. They don't want to meet with these owners and the community to try and resolve issues. You never get hold of these owners except if you did not pay your monthly rental of R50, than your shack gets demolished. They send people to collect money, but cannot come out when the community needs them. We know its privately owned land, but why can't the Municipality move us to the Municipal land that we have identified? They serviced it already and it is close to the schools and transport.



Moeggesukkel - Nginda

Let me start by saying that we have no toilets, water or electricity. Things are so bad that after lying like a wet dog in my house last night, I did not want to come up to yet another workshop that promises to end all my troubles. I also know that if we don't speak up and say what we have to go through as a community that no one would know and no one would be able to help us. There are 900 people staying in Moeggesukkel. As our name says we are "moeg van sukkel" (tired of struggling). There are no taps; we have to pay 70cents per 2liters of water. We have no electricity and have to pay R100 per month for a connection from the brick houses, if you don't pay they pull out you're connection.

When it rains the sewerage pushes into our homes, we get sick because it smells. We can't move because we don't know where to go to. We have asked the Municipality to built homes for us that are between the two serviced communities, but they say they cannot do this as it will be difficult. How can it be difficult if you have two areas that are already developed and that have all the services? Do they really think we are that stupid? We don't even want to talk to or about our councilor because he is only good for one thing and that is to make excuses. We vote like everyone else, yet the only thing our vote is good for is to put other people in a position of power. They sleep nice and warm and we have to crawl up like animals in our houses to make sure we are warm at night.

Group discussions

Participants were then divided into three groups to discuss key questions relating to land.

Group 1 Discussion

Question 1: What do you think are the major obstacles preventing access to urban land and markets by the poor?

- High rate of unemployment
- Lack of information
- Living wage
- Financial institutions (Banks, etc)

Question 2: How well do you think formal land and housing markets are working for the poor? Why?

- Houses that are built for the poor are made of inferior material and always end up leaking.
- The houses are not plastered
- No proper final inspection done
- Councilors have conflict of interest

Question 3: How well do you think informal land and housing markets are working for the poor? Why?



- Informal market does not work. People don't know when they will be moved, what conditions at the new site will be.
- There is no sanitation
- No water
- No electricity
- People's health and safety are at risk

Question 8: What are your suggested solutions for improving access to well-located urban land by the poor?

- Identify land for housing
- Municipality should stop selling of land to private developers and concentrate on land for the poor.

Group 2 discussion

Question 1: What do you think are the main obstacles preventing access to urban land and markets by the poor?

- Private Property Developers
- Refugees
- Government creating policies without input from the communities
- Councilors not addressing the community issues with Government/Municipality

Question 4: Is there adequate access to finance for accessing urban land and housing? Why?

- Yes. There is surplus money available from the previous financial year that can be used to buy land from private owners.

Question 5: In what ways does access to urban land and housing (especially in terms of location) affects social and economics networks and activities?

- Communities are taken away from areas that they are familiar with. Away from schools, taxi routes, neighbours, etc.
- More financial strain is being put on families (e.g. people have to take 3 taxi's to the hospital instead of 1)

Question 8: What are your suggested solutions for improving access to well-located land by the poor?

- Government should listen to the communities
- Government should stop selling of land to private buyers that could be used for the poor.
- Develop the land that are familiar to the communities
- Do not relocate families to areas where there are no services.



Group 3 discussion

Question 1: What do you think are the major obstacles preventing access to urban land and markets by the poor?

- Local Government often say that it does not have money to buy land
- There are absentee private property owners who do not want to sell their land
- The municipality makes promises but does not deliver
- The municipality does not have a plan to provide houses for all people in informal settlements
- People do not have enough money to buy land through estate agents
- There is not enough vacant land in existing built up areas and many people are too reluctant to move to other areas.
- People live in extended families and when the house gets overcrowded they must built shacks.

Question 6: What are the implications of urban-rural linkages (e.g. where a family has a rural home as well as an urban home) for access to urban land by the poor?

- People sometimes own a house in an area but than move to another area and rent out that house (the same thing happens with shacks, than they take up more sites)
- Sometimes people who lived in a place for a long time deserve to get a house, but people from outside come and get houses instead.

Question 7: How does access to urban land and housing differ between men and women (and man-headed and woman-headed households?)

- The main issue is of access of single people (without child dependants) to housing subsidies.

Question 8: What are your suggested solutions for improving access to well-located urban land by the poor?

- More information on vacant land is required erf numbers, who owns it, etc.
- Vacant land owned by absentee owners needs to be acquired.
- Informal settlements need to be upgraded with people remaining in the same area.
- Must look at ways of developing difficult sites (stones, clay; these areas are often used as an excuse to be ignored for development).

Plenary discussion

Obstacles to access to urban land

- Government has enough money to build housing for the poor.
- Who gave them the mandate



- President is selling us overseas
- Newly elected councillors don't waste time on communities and their problems
- Councillors are greedy
- They have conflict of interest (e.g. resulted in overturning of resolution to reserve land for housing).

Formal land and housing market

- subsidy being increased to R54000(operation thunderstorm in improving existing houses
- Political parties use the poor for their own benefit
- If one wants to buy and RDP house he just have to go to the lawyers and draw up contracts; the estate agents do it to.
- RDP homes have no value and it's not easy to sell. Lawyers charges you almost R15000 on admin fees.
- After getting a bond it's so hard to pay it off you end up in the informal settlement again.
- Unemployed people in RDP homes are forced to sell as they have no money

Implications of urban-rural linkages?

- Frustrating for people looking for a house when others have two. And how is it possible (subsidy info is on computers)?
- The same thing happens in PE, e.g. a councilor owns almost 30 homes including a house he bought from a woman for R 4000 so that she could bury her brother.
- There should be a restriction that people should have only 1 property per person.
- Loan sharks takes ownership of your house when you can't pay them.
- There should be a law against people taking title deeds as collateral for a loan. (Legislation prevents this; loan sharks are not allowed to take I.D's , bank cards or title deeds as with registered micro-lenders wouldn't do this)
- Information regarding this legislation should be freely available.

Access to urban land different for men and women?

- If you're married the man is automatically the owner but the woman has lots of legal rights
- A single woman owner who gets married should she transfer the property to a man?
- If the woman and man own a property the man can't chase the woman away and say that the property is his only.
- Married but separated and applied for a house. They said she must get her husband to sign, how can she do this when she reported him missing in action 7 years ago



- Law will never result in a woman with children being thrown out of their homes and the man ending up with the house
- The partner who leaves the house lose their right to the property (whether it's the man or the woman)
- Contradictions of the law



Annexure A: Attendance register

First name and surname	Organisation
N. Nginda	Moegesukkel
A. Mngxuza	"
T. Mlonyeni	"
M. Mdyo	"
Marlene Matthews	Kliprand
Jerome May	"
Gail May	"
Standford Mema	"
Mathilda Dickson	Landless People
Dorothy Claasen	"
Sylvia Claasen	"
Japie Williams	"
Desiree Pellem	"
Daluxola Jobo	Airport Valley
Nompulelo	"
Mbulelo Tulman	"
Lauren Royston	Urban Landmark
Ben Hiles	Urban Services Group
Adré Bartis	"
Clive Felix	"
Vijoya Harri	"
Warren Smit	Development Action Group



Annexure B: Written submission by Simanyene Housing Co-operative

Simanyene Housing Co-operative, previously known as PESHARD Housing Co-operative, was founded during 1998. We started to apply for land during 2000, on which we wanted to build our houses, to the Port Elizabeth Municipality. We never received any reply or acknowledge for this application, hence during 2002 we applied again, but still no reply was forthcoming from the PEM.

November 2005 we applied again, for the third time, with the help from a local Regional & Town Planners (Metroplan) and a Non-Governmental Organisation (Urban Services Group). This time we were fortunate - we did receive a reply from the PEM. Our hope and inspirations were short-lived as we were sent from pillar to post by the PEM officials (we know who they are).

At long last a meeting was scheduled with PEM officials and Swedish consultants. At this meeting it came to light that the PEM want us to be involved with Social Housing, that were not suitable for the members of Simanyene. We want land that we as disable people can develop according to our needs.

PEM officials then notify us about a housing development taken place in Motherwell (Sakhaluntu Village) were they can accommodate us. Once again we were sent from pillar to post - no meetings were held after that notification, no response to our letters, and no contact with the designated PEM official. Hence we contacted the office of the Mayoress, which refers as to the Chief of Staff. Meetings were held and promises were made about our grievances.

To date we have not receive any feedback or correspondence from any Councillor or Official from the NMMM. The last time, May 2007, we were advised to write a letter to the same officials that we had dealings with over the past seven years.

Compiled by: Lulama Mdyesha, May 2007



Questionnaire

When was your organisation established? In 1998

What are the key objectives of your organisation? The objectives of Simanyene is to acquire develop, hold ,and maintain immovable property and make housing units comprising such property available for use

Who does your organisation represent (Please specify numbers of communities/people)? Unemployed people, disabled people, low income earning people

Please briefly tell us in what ways you have engaged with access to urban land and housing over the past 5 years (since 2002).

We have written several application letters for the land. We had meetings with housing officials. In our latest attempt we wrote a letter to the present mayor

We had involvement with housing-related savings and credit schemes, but then the members decided to stop. The offices were not accessible.

Please give us your views on the following (you may focus on what you think are key issues):

What does your organisation think are the major obstacles preventing access to urban land and housing by the poor? Lack of communication between municipal officials, bureaucratic red tape.

How well do you think formal land and housing markets are working for the poor? Why? There are no formal land and housing markets for the poor. We only relay on RDP housing

How well do you think informal land and housing markets are working for the poor? Why? No comment

Is there adequate access to finance for accessing urban land and housing? Why? No, It is very difficult to access finance because we are not being recognized by local government and other stake holders

In what ways does access to urban land and housing (especially in terms of location) affect social and economic networks and activities? Land should be available nearer to the work places

What are the implications of urban-rural linkages (e.g. where a family has a rural home as well as an urban home) for access to urban land by the poor? N/A



How does access to urban land and housing differ between men and women (and man-headed and woman-headed households)? No comment

What are your suggested solutions for improving access to well-located urban land by the poor? Information should be the key. The different business units should work together.



Annexure C: Written submission by Uitenhage group

What are the key objectives of your organisation?

We went to Government to provide houses to the poor as what was promised in 1994 and to ask them to speed up the process.

Who does your organisation represent (Please specify numbers of communities/people)?

We represent the community (2500-3000 people) in their strive to become RDP home-owners.

Please briefly tell us in what ways you have engaged with access to urban land and housing over the past 5 years (since 2002).

We collectively engaged to access land in the urban areas over the past seven years. We recently had a meeting with the Municipal Official over the housing issues that needs to be resolved by Public Demand.

Due to our invasion of Municipal Land the Municipality issued an eviction notice against the community to be removed without any settlement.

Please give us your views on the following (you may focus on what you think are key issues):

What does your organisation think are the major obstacles preventing access to urban land and housing by the poor? Poor service delivery of Government to supervise sufficient budgets for RDP housing

How well do you think formal land and housing markets are working for the poor? Why? There's a substantial delay in the process of housing budgets for the poor. Housing board complaints about the financial constraints in the Annual Financial Year

How well do you think informal land and housing markets are working for the poor? Why? Currently informal land and informal settlements satisfy the poor due to the high demand of land. Inappropriate access to informal land is still a major problem in our communities

Is there adequate access to finance for accessing urban land and housing? Why? In terms of location formal housing and land distance away from the industrial areas and the centre business areas (district) and become a financial burden to the poor.

In what ways does access to urban land and housing (especially in terms of location) affect social and economic networks and activities? The implications becomes immense to the poor where some families have houses in both rural and urban areas



How does access to urban land and housing differ between men and women (and man-headed and woman-headed households)? There's a greater demand for woman-headed households for their children to have proper shelter in the form of formal settlement

What are your suggested solutions for improving access to well-located urban land by the poor? RDP houses must be prioritized by Municipality to the poor as 1st priority to access well-located urban land. The process must be speed up and sufficient budgets must be implemented

