

Experiences and Challenges of Community Participation in the Delivery of Houses through People's Housing Process (PHP) Scheme in South Africa: A Case Study of Gauteng Province

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ABSTRACT

Housing shortages is a global problem facing most countries in the world today, the situation is even worse in African countries because of high rate of unemployment and poverty. The South African government has made numerous public commitments to development, a part of it concerning extensive infrastructure investment and service delivery. Communities are supposed to participate fully in the planning and implementation of the housing projects. Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, and the decisions and resources which affect them. Involving people in order to increase awareness, empower, build capacity, or expand rights and duties may be an end in itself, but it may also function as an instrumental means for accomplishing a specific task. The Department of Housing expenditure has increased from R4.2 billion in 2002/03 to R9.5 billion in 2008/09. A total of One Million eight Hundred and seventy seven Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty Eight (1 877 958) houses has been delivered through various subsidy schemes including the People's Housing Process programme. The paper will firstly explore the concept of community participation. The paper will then look at some past experiences in relation to community participation in the People's Housing Process Scheme. Furthermore the paper will outline the challenges and problems of community participation in the delivery of houses through the PHP scheme in Gauteng Province. Finally the paper closes with some recommendations for the future.

Key Words: Community, Participation, Housing, People's Housing Process, Subsidy

1. INTRODUCTION

Provision of adequate housing for the poor to reduce poverty and improve quality of people's life has been a huge challenge to South African government over the years (Department of Housing, 2004). The Housing Code states that high levels of unemployment and relatively low average wage level contribute to a major affordability problem in South Africa, and the ability to pay for housing is severely limited among most families in the country. According to South Africa Bureau of Statistics (STATS, 2006), the current unemployment rate in South Africa is 25.5%. Consequently, the government adopted a strategy to provide assistance to households who are unable to satisfy their housing need independently. These are households that earn between R0 and R3500 monthly.

A large number of housing projects have been implemented throughout the country to deliver houses to the poor to fulfill her vision to adequate housing for all as reflected in the National Housing Policy framework. Since 1994, housing in South Africa has undergone fundamental changes and about One Million eight Hundred and seventy seven Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty Eight (1 877 958) houses has been delivered (Department of Housing, 2006). Despite the huge delivery of housing to the poor, South Africa still has a significant housing backlog that is being addressed by a comprehensive housing policy. "It is estimated that the urban housing backlog in 1995 will be approximately 1.5 million units (Department of Housing, 2000). The consequences of this backlog are physically reflected in overcrowding, squatter settlements and increasing land invasions in urban areas, and generally by the poor access to services in the rural areas. Socially and politically, this backlog gives daily impetus to individual and communal insecurity and frustration, and contributes significantly to high levels of criminal and instability prevalent in many communities in South Africa " (Department of Housing, 1995:12)

2. THE PEOPLE'S HOUSING PROCESS (PHP) IN SOUTH AFRICA

People's Housing Process is a process of self-provision of basic infrastructures including housing by the poorest members of the societies in the developing world (The People's Housing Process, 2003). One of the housing delivery programmes through subsidies is the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which is developer driven, where developers and contractors uses beneficiaries subsidy to build. Due to poor quality of houses delivered through RDP (developer-driven programme) and dissatisfaction by beneficiaries, an alternative approach was found in the People's Housing Process (PHP). This was done at a very small scale between 1998 and 2002, less than 3% of the total houses built were delivered through the PHP housing delivery programme (Baumann, 2002).

In May 1998, the People's Housing Process was officially introduced by the Housing Ministry as a means of accessing that portion of the capital subsidy assigned for the "top structure." The Minister has increasingly expressed her reliance on this process of house construction: "More emphasis would be placed on people building their own homes using subsidised materials (Huchzermeyer, 2004). People's Housing Process is a low-income housing delivery approach promoting the involvement of the beneficiaries in the development of their own houses. In this programme, the government encourages and support individuals, families or groups who wish to enhance their subsidy by organizing, planning, designing and building of their own houses and their contribution is sweat equity as opposed to hiring a contractor.

2.1 The aims of PHP programme are to:

- Mobilize and support community effort

- Facilitate access to subsidies in appropriate ways to support people's housing initiative.
- Promote the most cost effective use of resources, choice of and trade-offs between options.
- Foster partnership between all levels of government, civil society, the public sector and other players.
- Regularize settlements and create secure tenure options.
- Build capacity and skills whenever required
- Promote the culture of saving
- Facilitate maximal transfer of skills for economic upliftment and employment
- Apply state funding to achieve maximum leverage of non-governmental resources

The Department of Housing has listed the advantages of PHP as follows:

- Save on labour costs
- Avoid having to pay a profit
- Optimize decision in terms of trade-off with regards to materials procurement
- Choice of beneficiary related to:
 - Product house type, size, specifications
 - Construction process
 - Contribution. (Department of housing, 2003)

The process is divided into three phases: Facilitation phase: Organising several workshops to awareness. Capacitation phase: Production of business plan, training of both the housing support centre staff and the beneficiaries, identifying the building teams. Construction Phase: the physical construction of the houses.

2.2 People's Housing Process Support Organisation

It is a developer that has transformed itself into People's Housing Process support group and they are good at going in when the subsidies are approved and everything has been done (Napier, 2003). According to Department of Housing, a support organization must be established or identified. It must be a legally registered entity and shall carry out the technical, financial and administrative support to families building their own houses. Any of the following organizations can assume the role of a support organization:

1. Provincial Government
2. Local Government
3. Community Based Organisation (CBO)
4. Non- Governmental Organisation (NGO)
5. Religious bodies
6. Building Material Suppliers
7. Development Corporation

8. Voluntary Organisation
9. Labour Unions
10. Employer Organisation

2.3 Functions of Support Organisations

The support Organisations shall provide the following technical and administrative support, where appropriate, to beneficiary families:

1. Preparation of various house plans and cost.
2. Ensure that materials are ordered and delivered on time.
3. Preparations of a project application pertaining to housing subsidies as well as the establishment grant and submit to Provincial Housing Development Board (PHDB) for approval.
4. To supervise and support beneficiaries who have been trained to build their own houses.
5. Arrange for inspections to be done by building inspectors of Local Authority.
6. Appoint certifier to certify the different stages of construction.
7. Prepare and submit monthly report and financial reconciliation statements to the Department of Housing.

3. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN HOUSING

According to the World Bank 1994, participation is a process through which the stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, and the decisions and resources that affect them. The colonial administrators used community participation as a means of improving local welfare, training people in local administration and extending government control through self-help activities (McCutcheon, 1995). Participation implies involving individuals, families and communities in any part of developmental process of projects. Community participation in housing indicated that communities and beneficiaries should be actively involved in interventions to promote development and reduce poverty. The rationale for community participation is not only for people to influence the activities affecting them in relation to housing, but also to participate as this will help the communities to build capacity and empower the communities through skill transfer. In community participation, people are at the central point of development process, their capacities and skills should be developed so that they can negotiate and source materials they require for improving their lives (UNDP, 2000).

Friedmann, 1992 defined community participation as everybody possessing of his/her own and nobody can interpret it better than that person that is the reason why development begins with people who understand their livelihood better than any other person. The objectives of community participation as an active process are: empowerment of individuals in the community, building beneficiaries capacity, increase project effectiveness, improve project efficiency and project cost sharing. Community participation framework identifies for levels of participation, namely: information sharing, consultation, decision making and initiating action. This framework has been accepted by development agencies worldwide. However, its criticism is that is 'project based' and it does not include full spectrum of community participation approach.

4. EMPOWERMENT AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The principle of empowerment states that people participate because it is their democratic right to do so (Wignaraja, 1991) and participation means having power (Tacconi and Tisdell, 1993). According to this concept, participation is the natural result of empowerment. Empowerment is not a means to an end but is the objective of development. Empowerment entails more than having the power to make decisions. It demands the knowledge and understanding to make correct decisions. Communities cannot make wise decisions if they do not have required information. The support organisations are required to be sources of information and should be a channel of information to the communities so that they will be able to make right and wise decisions.

4.1 Importance of Community Participation

Community participation is more successful if communities take over much responsibility in issues regarding to improvement of their livelihood instead of leaving it to the hand of the public agencies. The importance of community participation is that the community participation begins and ends with people: the people know what they want, the capacities of individual are enhanced to be able to help themselves, and the effectiveness and the efficiency of projects are enhanced by the people. Community participation is essential for sustainable development projects. In order for a project to be sustainable, the communities need to participate and be committed to it.

With community participation, people will take responsibility for the project and will also be able to contribute to the maintenance of the project as result of this, the total cost and the maintenance cost of a project will be reduced (De Beer and Swanepoel, 1998).

4.2 Advantages of Community Participation

Since community participation starts and ends with people, one of the numerous advantages of community participation is that it helps to empower individuals and community towards housing development (Theron, 2005). It also increases the individuals' senses of controls over issues that affects their lives and promote self- confidence (Oakley et al, 1991). Community participation ensures that projects are tailored to the need of the people (Raniga and Simpson, 2002).

4.3 Disadvantages of Community Participation

One of the major disadvantages of community participation is that it does not guarantee success if there is no clear guidelines for community participation as this may result to lack of accountability by the stakeholders (Emmet, 2000). Community participation is time consuming. The problem associated with community participation varies from one community to the other as a result of different perception of community participation (Oakley and Marsden, 1984).

5. INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

5.1 Organised Self –Help Housing in Cuba

One of the international experiences of community participation could be seen in the Organised Self-help programme in Cuba which is similar to the People's Housing Process in South Africa. Organised self help programme requires the knowledge and competence in planning and

implementing of housing, particularly concerning the responsibilities and roles of the households and the facilitating organisation and authorities. Organised self-help housing is not only a method of meeting housing shortages, it enhance organisation of resources and also promote community participation in housing development. When communities and families are involved in organized self help housing, the expectations usually exceeds what can be achieved with the amount of credit they can obtain.

According to Rodriguez and Astrand (2000), the implementation of organized self help projects are in four stages:

- Social: Increasing participation and involvement of the residents in solving their problems. It is important to create monitoring mechanisms to anticipate problems of relationship and leadership.
- Stage 2- Construction: This focuses on all activities and integrating, defining training needs so as to ensure quality control by families themselves and monitoring plans and schedules by the communities.
- Stage 3- Administration: this involves materials procurements, distribution and control of expenses.
- Stage 4- Financial activities: cash flow control and monitoring the budget against the expenses and the progress of work.

5.2 Training of Communities in Cuba

Training is one of the core components of Organised Self-Help programme in Cuba. Training is organised to transfer technical, legal and management skills to the communities. The aim of the training is to make the communities members' to be able to participate actively in the construction process and improving their management skills in negotiating and solving conflicts. Training must be practical in common areas such as social developments, construction, management of housing in relation to projects, programming and budgeting techniques (Rodriguez and Astrand, 2000).

6. CASE STUDIES

Case studies were undertaken in Kanana zone 12, Rieger Park, Doornkorn, Orange farm and Ivory Park extension 2. These sites are PHP sites where houses were delivered to beneficiaries through subsidies. Individuals, families and communities are required to participate in the delivering process of their houses in accordance with the objectives of PHP delivery process.

6.1 Results of the Case Studies

6.1.1 The stakeholders' response as to whether the beneficiaries are trained before the commencement of the construction process

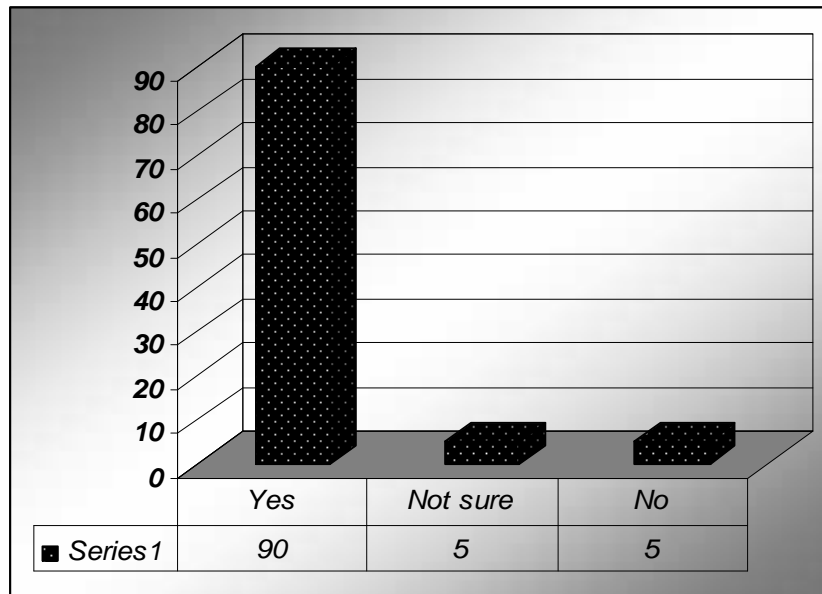


Figure 1: stakeholders' response as to beneficiaries training

90% of the stakeholders indicated that the beneficiaries were trained before the commencement of the construction process of PHP houses, while 5% of the respondents indicated the beneficiaries were not trained.

6.1.2 The beneficiaries' response as to whether they are trained before the commencement of the construction process

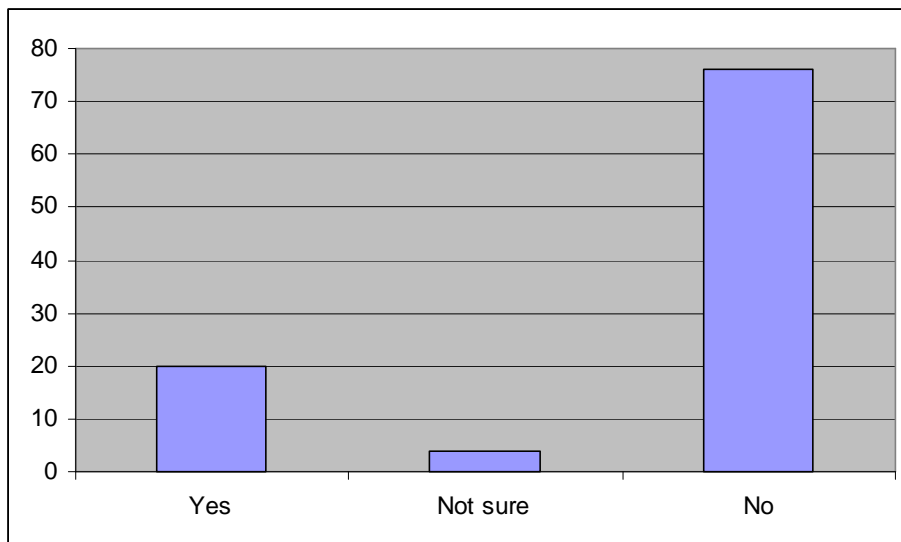


Figure 2: Beneficiaries response regarding training

The beneficiaries' response to this question is direct opposite of the stakeholders' response. 76% of the beneficiaries indicated that they were not trained.

6.1.3 Number of days of training offered to beneficiaries according to the stakeholders

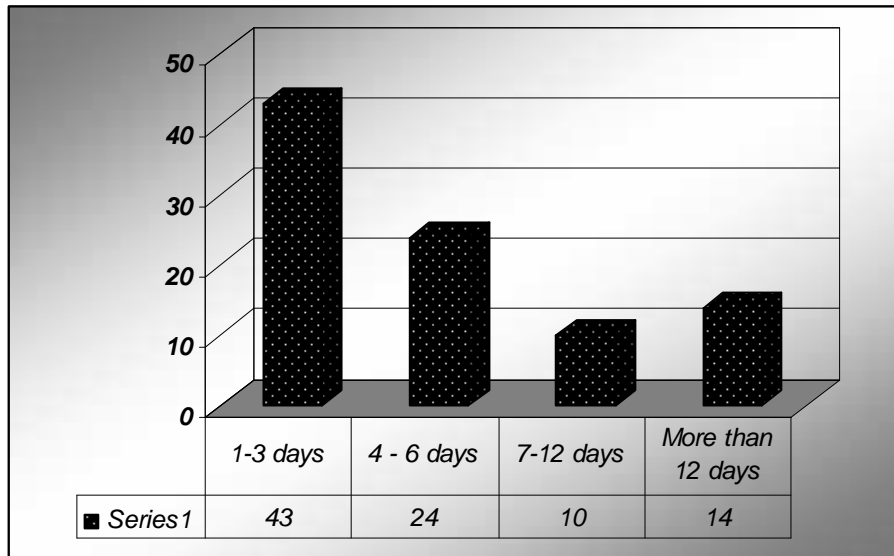


Figure 3: Duration of training of beneficiaries

According to the stakeholders' response, an average of 5 day training was given to the beneficiaries that were trained.

6.1.4 Quality control role by beneficiaries during construction of PHP houses

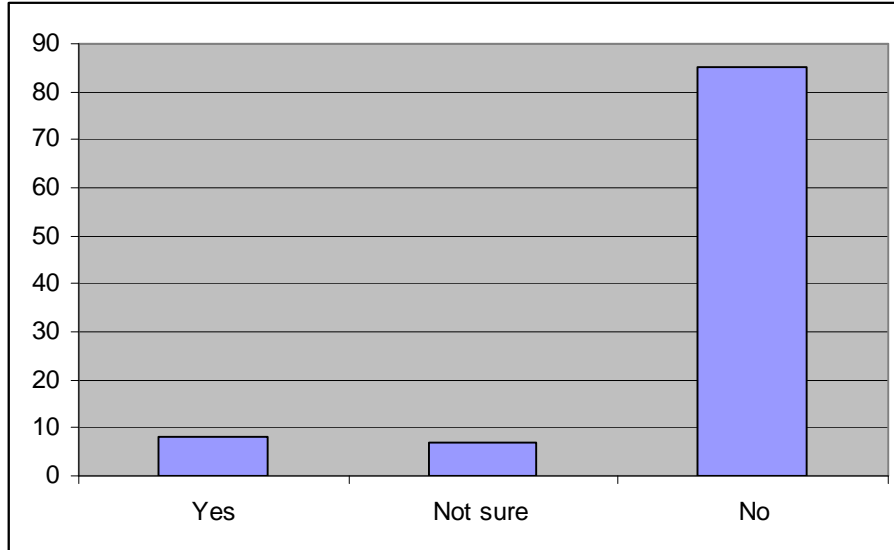


Figure 4: Quality control role by beneficiaries

83% of the beneficiaries indicated that they did not play any quality control role during the construction of their houses.

7. SUCCESS OF PHP

The Peoples' Housing Process encourages and support individuals and community in their effort to fulfill their own housing needs by assisting them to access land, provide services and technical assistance (Mthembi-Mahanyele, 2001). A number of houses have been delivered to the poor through the People's Housing Process in South Africa. According to People's Housing Process Review, 2003, the PHP approach that maximizes beneficiaries' participation, choice and control resulted in construction of better quality houses. This resulted in development and skill transfer and employment creation especially for women.

8. THE CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PHP

Communities are critical to planning and decision making process for housing delivery as a result of this, communities should participate in setting goals in projects that affect them, this implies that the communities should be given the opportunities to do so. The people's Housing Process should be seen as housing delivery through beneficiaries' participation and not as only housing delivery method. One of the major challenges of the PHP is that of the co-ordination of the communities by the support organisations: the communities are well co-coordinated by the support organisations. The support organisations merely sees PHP programme as housing delivery system, most of them did not understand the importance of community participation in the programme, their target is quantitative delivery of houses to the poor. Lack of appropriate policy support and monitoring and evaluation from the Department of Housing has allowed provincial and municipal government to do whatever they wish in respect to PHP (The People's Housing Process, 2003).

9. CONCLUSIONS

Community participation is required for projects to be executed which are required by the community (Philip et al 1992). The community should participate in the assessment of its resources and subsequently in the choice of technology. However, communities are highly complex and not single cohesive units. A community organisation which is not properly represented might create a problem and conflict that may curtail a programme. Problem may also arise if the leadership of the organisation representing the community changes.

The People's Housing Process (PHP) is seen as one of housing delivery mechanisms by the government of South Africa to provide houses for the poor particularly the poorest of the poor. This housing delivery programme has been used to deliver a good number of houses to qualified beneficiaries. One of the aims of PHP is beneficiaries' participation, according to the South African Housing Code; it is believed that if people are given chances to participate actively in the delivery of their houses, they can build houses of better quality for less money in addition to skills transfer.

The case studies of the PHP revealed that the community participation during the planning, deigning and construction of PHP houses was not well defined. The communities depend solemnly on the support organisation to do virtually everything towards the delivery of these houses, this as a result of inadequate or no training given to the benefiting communities by the Department of Housing which will enable the beneficiaries to take active decisions during the construction of their houses and also to monitor the quality of their houses.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Community participation in housing delivery should be valued. It should be seen as a concept that revolves around people to provide their needs, empower them by transfer of skills. The stakeholders should be able to organise communities and liaise with the communities on how their livelihood could be improved. The success of PHP depends on community participation.

According to the findings of this study, it is recommended that the Department of Housing should formulate a better monitoring mechanism to ensure more community involvement in housing delivery through the PHP programme.

One of the objectives of PHP is to empower people through skill transfer. Skills could only be transferred through proper training and without this training beneficiary's involvement in PHP programme will be hindered. Community participation in housing revolves around people and for people to be able to actively participate in the process they must be trained. The Department of Housing should put a proper training programme in place for the beneficiaries of PHP houses so as to train them on different trades to enable them participate and play quality role during the construction of their houses.

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