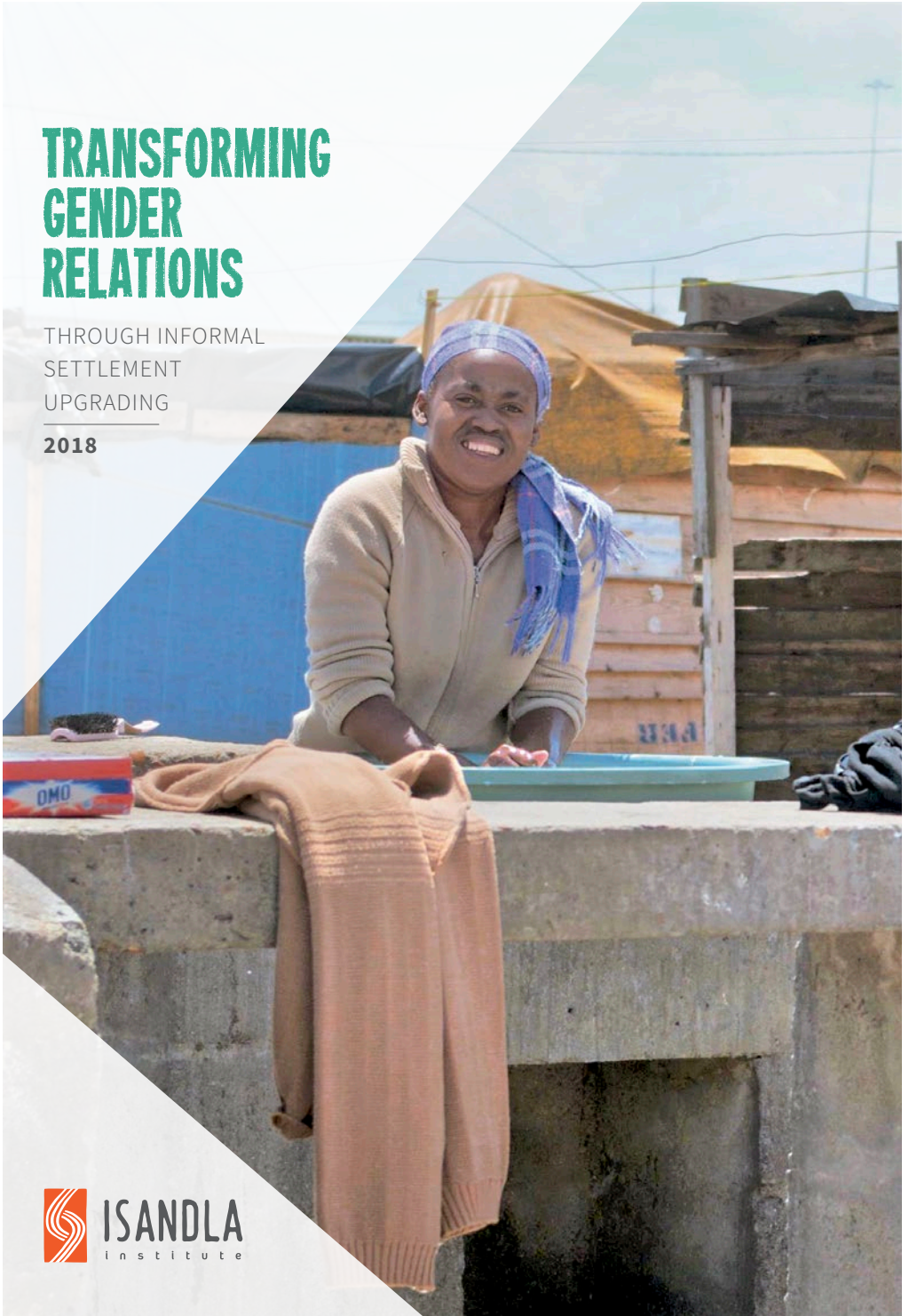


TRANSFORMING GENDER RELATIONS

THROUGH INFORMAL
SETTLEMENT
UPGRADING

2018





This document was produced by Isandla Institute as part of the Collaborative Initiative (formerly known as the Khayaletu Initiative), a project supported by Comic Relief.

The aim of the Collaborative Initiative is to advance models for participatory informal settlement upgrading through knowledge sharing, collaboration and experimentation. Isandla Institute's role in the Initiative is to inspire and inform communities of practice through research and the facilitation of engagement between practitioners in the field of informal settlement upgrading. One of these engagements takes the shape of a Cape Town-based Community of Practice. This document distils the knowledge emerging from the local community of practice engagements, and offers lessons from both theory and practice.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This practice brief acknowledges that men and women have unequal access to and control over resources that enable participation in informal settlement upgrading. This inequality is seen in who does what: who has access to and control over resources, who sets the agenda, whose contribution is valued/undervalued etc. A participatory and incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading should aim to be representative of gendered experiences, inclusive of all voices and responsive to diverse needs. This entails attentiveness to how an informal settlement-upgrading project affects men, women and minority gender identities - both in terms of how the settlement design addresses their needs and in terms of their participation in upgrading projects.

In this practice brief we advance practices that shape and foster more balanced power between men and women, such that they are enabled to participate equally and meaningfully not only in upgrading projects but also in broader society.

Isandla Institute acknowledges the contributions made by representatives from Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading, Community Organisation Resource Centre, Federation of Urban Poor, Development Action Group, People's Environmental Planning and Social Justice Coalition during the local Community of Practice held on 20 September 2018.

INTRODUCTION

Informal settlement upgrading affects men, women and minority gender identities¹ in various ways, both in terms of how the settlement design addresses their needs and in terms of their participation in upgrading projects.

An upgraded settlement, designed according to the principles of participation and incrementalism, reflects the everyday life and needs of settlement residents, and so it captures experiences of different genders in the community. Hence, the contributions and inputs made by men, women and minority gender identities in upgrading processes tend to differ.

Understanding this leads us to recognise the ways in which informal settlement upgrading is not a gender-neutral process². Gender specific roles and responsibilities play out in this context and produce (or re-produce) gender relations that may empower one group and/or exclude another. Reflecting gender relations in broader society, informal settlement upgrading tends to give bias to male influence and marginalise the voice, agency and influence of women and minority gender identities. Good practice in upgrading projects recognises that the knowledge and skills of all residents are what make the community survive on a daily basis, and harnesses this to produce sustainable, integrated and well-established neighbourhoods.

In the context of gender inequality (institutional and lived reality) in South Africa, it is necessary to give attention to how gendered experiences imbue human settlement conditions and the urban built environment, and the ways that informal settlement upgrading practice can transform gender disparities. This focus forms part of a broader socio-political agenda and makes an argument for the potential of participatory informal settlement upgrading, which is inclusive, to contribute towards gender relations that are more equitable in society.

This practice brief draws from the knowledge and practices of Cape Town-based NGOs who work on informal settlement upgrading. It aims to advance practices that shape and foster more balanced power between men and women, such that they are enabled to participate equally and meaningfully not only in upgrading projects but also in broader society.

Minority gender identities:

Minority gender identities are those identities that do not subscribe to the gender binary of "men" and "women". They include people who identify as transgender and non-conforming gender identities. Their experiences are typically unaccounted for which makes them a vulnerable group in practices of informal settlement upgrading.



DEFINING GENDER RELATIONS

Gender relations, in this context, refers to the structural role that gender plays in shaping who participates in decision-making, what they contribute and how decisions affect them (Haug 2005). This constitutes a power that effectively regulates community participation in informal settlement upgrading.

Bina Agarwal (1997:1) describes that gender relations are revealed “in the division of labour and resources between men and women” and “in ideas and representations – the ascribing to women and men of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behaviour patterns, and so on” (Agarwal 1997). Gender relations develop in multiple contexts and across various levels in society, such as, in the home, the community and even the state and mediate the roles that men and women perform.

So when describing gender relations, we are implying that certain norms and cultural values create the conditions in which men, women and minority gender identities act and relate to one another. The effect of these conditions is in who does what: who has access to and control over resources, who sets the agenda, whose contribution is valued/undervalued etc.

Good practice in upgrading projects recognises that the knowledge and skills of all residents are what make the community survive on a daily basis, and harnesses this to produce sustainable, integrated and well-established neighbourhoods.

¹ For further insights in to experiences of minority gender identities in South Africa see Corrina Kern’s photography project, “Transgender women in South Africa” (<https://www.lensculture.com/projects/122730-transgender-women-of-south-africa> and Matebani, Z., Monro, S., Reddy, V. (eds.). 2018. “Queer in Africa: LGBTQI Identities, Citizenship and Activism”, Routledge: New York

² Gender refers to socially constructed roles/attributes and should not be conflated with the biological category, sex.

POLICY PROVISIONS

Presently, there appears to be a gap in human settlements policy that explicitly considers the participation of men, women and minority gender identities in informal settlement upgrading.

Draft frameworks, such as the Gender-Responsive Planning Framework postures towards implementing and supporting gender-responsive policy priorities but it is yet to be finalised. The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) is the one legislation that explicitly prohibits practices of unfair gender discrimination in South Africa. Where other draft policies and frameworks do exist, they are dated and do not specifically address social transformation in human settlements programmes. The following policy provisions uphold the values embedded in efforts to transform gender relations in society.

Draft Gender-Responsive Planning Framework (2018)

The Draft Gender-Responsive Planning Framework, compiled under the mandate of the Department of Women, is an attempt to operationalise the Constitutional vision of gender equality and women's empowerment at a high-level. It advocates for evidence-based evaluations of gender-responsiveness in government programmes (specifically, outcomes and budget allocations).

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and National Treasury intend to drive the implementation of the Framework together with the Department of Women across four phases from 2018 to 2021.

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act no. 108 of 1996)

The principles of freedom, equality and justice that are enshrined in the Constitution should be upheld when considering gender relations in local community participation. Section 152 requires the municipality to structure and manage its administration, budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote its social and economic development. A response to the needs of communities must equally consider the practical and strategic needs of women and men.

The Municipal Systems Act (no. 32 of 2000)

The Municipal Systems Act (no. 32 of 2000) recognises that processes of community participation should take in to account the needs and abilities of various people groups. Section (2) states that “a municipality must establish appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures to enable the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality”. Section (3) then goes on to state that, when establishing mechanisms, processes and procedures in terms of Section (2) the municipality must take into account the special needs of women and other disadvantaged groups.

Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (no. 4 of 2000) (PEPUDA)

PEPUDA is a national anti-discrimination legislation aimed at eradicating social and economic inequalities. Section (8) of the Act promotes the dignity of women and equality between men and women. It prohibits “any policy or conduct that unfairly limits access of women to land rights, finance, and other resources” and discrimination that limits “women’s access to social services or benefits, such as health, education and social security”. The Act promotes gender equality as a democratic characteristic of human relations in South Africa.

National Housing Code (2009)

The National Housing Code prescribes the policy principles, guidelines, and norms and standards that underpin housing provision in South Africa. The Code aims to promote equal and equitable access to housing opportunities, to redress the effects of systems and practices that entrenched discrimination according to race and gender under apartheid. Part 3 of the National Housing Code contains the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP), which guides the process and procedure for in situ upgrading that empowers residents and addresses community needs. Empowerment, in this context, is regarded as a means to address social and economic exclusion through participatory processes. So, a focus on those most excluded can be used to highlight the effects of gender inequality in informal settlement upgrading.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Three key principles underpin a gendered focus on informal settlement upgrading, namely representation, inclusivity and responsiveness.

Upgrading processes should not separate the built environment of a settlement from the social life that inhabits it, as informal settlement environments become materially and socially transformed in to sustainable neighbourhoods.

Representation

A focus on gender relations in informal settlement upgrading is not only about the numbers of men and women represented in decision-making. Rather, the emphasis is on making sure that the community's issues are heard and equally reflected in the upgrade. An upgrading project should equally represent the different experiences of women, men and minority gender identities. An integrated settlement design portrays the needs, preferences and interests of various genders– ranging from safety concerns to recreational social facilities.

Inclusivity

Inclusive spaces for planning, negotiation and decision-making can be created by recognising and equally valuing differences between individuals/groups. Inclusivity is achieved when men, women and minority gender identities feel engaged, valued and are provided with practical opportunities to participate in upgrading processes.

Responsiveness

One of the aims of a participatory and incremental approach to upgrading is to respond to the essential needs of residents in a way that diminishes their vulnerability. To do so effectively requires recognising that gender roles contribute to how individuals experience a settlement. A responsive intervention takes in to account gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities.

Participatory processes that lead to decision-making and implementation should aim to be representative of different experiences, inclusive of all voices and responsive to diverse needs.

SEEING GENDER IN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The diversity within informal settlements comes to the fore in moments of ongoing community participation, characterised as an iterative process of planning, negotiation and decision-making.

‘The community’ articulates diverging (and sometimes competing) needs and aspirations, and an individual resident’s capacity to participate in their community is influenced by the gender relations that enable them to do so.

Informal settlement upgrading practitioners have noticed that, in many instances of community participation men tend to dominate in leadership roles whereas engagement around specific issues, such as the geo-location of toilets or standpipes, features strong female voices. Observations like this are important when trying to understand gender dynamics to ensure that men, women and minority gender identities are equally involved in participatory processes.

The often-made assumption that elected leaders in participatory processes equally represent the interests of the community needs to be interrogated. Those who take the lead in participatory processes can do so in a way that serves to maintain skewed power dynamics and exclude certain voices. Similarly, when this principle is appropriated with the aim of transformation, leadership roles can serve to distribute power. For example, the SA SDI Alliance has taken the approach to prioritise women in leadership roles to offset the male power biases that have characterised participatory processes (Denoon-Stevens 2016).

Another observation showed that women tend to raise more technical and vulnerability-related issues, such as safety concerns about the geo-location of toilet or play parks. Whereas, men raised issues that are more political such as partisan representation on leadership structures. Giving attention to the types of concerns raised and by whom shows the different ways that residents engage and the issues that are of value to them.

While these observations are useful in a case-specific gender analysis of community participation, it is important to avoid using them to reinforce stereotypes or reduce individuals merely to their gender identities. Seeing gender in community participation requires an attentiveness to taken-for-granted assumptions about who does what. It can be a substantive means to understanding existing challenges in the community and addressing these in a way that equally considers the views and opinions of affected settlement residents (UN-Habitat 2012).

UNEQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Gender inequality is just one of the multiple inequalities that exist in South Africa, and in informal settlements it intersects with access to basic services, economic activities and social benefits.

A 2014 HSRC baseline study of informal settlements found that while informal settlement residents are predominately female (53.1%), 54.7% of households are reportedly male-headed and 62.8% of unemployed residents are females (Ndina et al 2017).³ The implications of this for upgrading interventions should not be side lined if we pursue informal settlement upgrading for its potential to address social inequality in South Africa.

The disaggregated data that emerges from studies like the 2014 baseline study and enumeration studies for informal settlement upgrading makes it possible to compare and contrast the situation of men and women. Interpreting this gives a picture of the role that gender plays in people's abilities to access resources and opportunities (UN-Habitat 2012). It shows differences which must be taken in to account, answering the question: Who has access to what resources, and what is the effect of this distribution?

In participatory processes, it is critical to ensure that men and women are equally involved at all levels. This also involves taking note of who has access to what resources.

Access: Gives a person use of a resource. For example, land control allows a person to make decisions about who uses the land or to sell the land.

- **Economic resources - land, credit, cash income, employment**
- **Political resources - education, political representation' leadership.**
- **Time: Critical resource, which increasingly acquires a monetary value**

(United Nations Development Programme 2000)

Those who have limited access to fewer resources have less bargaining power to influence decisions and are more vulnerable to marginalisation. It is, therefore, necessary for survey data and analysis to be comparative and review the situation of men, women and minority gender identities in relation to one another.

For example, a study of Turflaagte – an informal settlement in Bloemfontein – observed significant differences in the socio-economic statuses between women and men.⁴ In the study, more female-headed households⁵ tended to have an income of less than R750 (67.5% vs 42.5%), were unemployed or receiving social grants or pensions (64.9% vs 44.7%), and achieved an education level lower than Grade 8 (62.9% vs 47.7%) when compared to male-headed households (Venter & Marais 2006). These figures show that women are proportionally more vulnerable with less access to resources. The study concludes that low-income single female-headed households do not have the same levels of economic means as their male counterparts to enable equal participation in the incremental housing process.

While the extent to which men and women have access to and control over resources affects social and economic participation more broadly, it also affects local community participation in Informal settlement upgrading (Beall, 1996:2). The resources needed in community mobilising for upgrading is often undervalued. It is resource intensive in terms of economic and political resources and time.

These concerns are not unique to South Africa's context, but can be observed in other parts of the world. The case study on the establishment of the School of Women Leaders on Secure Tenure in Bolivia also illustrates the effect of inequality in access to resources. Although inequality is a great challenge to participatory processes it is also an opportunity to innovate and support initiatives that empower women to become equally participants in their community (See textbox).

It is, therefore, necessary for survey data and analysis to be comparative and review the situation of men, women and minority gender identities in relation to one another.

³ Based on a research sample of 2380 households across South Africa.

⁴ The study assessed gender-sensitivity in South African housing policy using a case study of Turflaagte in Bloemfontein. The authors argued that while women may be beneficiaries of housing provision, they do not always benefit from the incremental nature of housing policy.

⁵ The head of the household is defined as the main decision-maker, or the person who owns or rents the house, or the person who is the main breadwinner, as designated by the household (Statistics South Africa 2004).

CASE STUDY: BOLIVIA

IMPROVING LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN AND EXCLUDED FAMILIES IN BOLIVIA

In 2011, Habitat for Humanity in Bolivia, in partnership with NGOs CIUDADANIA and Gregoria Apaza set up the 'School of Women Leaders on Secure Tenure' programme. The schools were established in District 9 of the city of Cochabamba in response to the vulnerability of women whose rights in land and property were unrecognised.

In Bolivia, the names of women were unrightfully excluded on title deeds where they co-owned land with their husbands. In many instances a husband and wife would save up to purchase a piece of land together, but the title deed would include the husband's name and merely reflect his spouse as 'lady'. This omission left women vulnerable to the threat of dispossession if they separated from their husbands.

The insecure tenure faced by women in Bolivia was a power related issue (political and economic) and culturally influenced by a society wherein women are underrepresented and marginalised. Urban land and property entitlements became a vehicle for realising broader social transformation, specifically around the ideas about/representations of women.

By 2013, the School of Women Leaders on Secure Tenure had trained approximately 275 women and 31 men in:

- **The use of low-cost technical solution for land survey, such as GPS**
- **Participatory mechanisms for conflict resolution**
- **Improved standards of land use**
- **Capacity to identify the legal significance of different property documents required to access their property rights**

As the programme spread across the district, they formed a women-led network that forwarded the work and advocacy of the school. Through these schools and supplementary community mobilising, the group of women leaders were equipped and empowered to advocate for legislative changes. They collaborated with local authorities to streamline administrative procedures that changed title deeds to reflect the spouses' names.

Consequently, the effectiveness of the schools was demonstrated in the domestic space and local government arena. Husbands recognised that their wives know their rights and are able to contest any violation of such rights. Municipal officials observed how men and women articulate different priorities around land and property. Recognising the land right of women was also a means for excluded families to overcome barriers to tenure security.

Source: <http://www.knowyourcity.tv/colabforchange/bolivia>

GENDER-SENSITIVE DESIGN FOR INCLUSIVE SETTLEMENTS

Upgrading informal settlements is about more than housing provision and the built environment.

The participatory and incremental approach to upgrading adopted and advocated by NGOs in Cape Town understands that human settlements are multifaceted spaces and so, a combination of economic, spatial and social interventions transforms the settlement. **Gender-sensitive settlement design** is an approach to developing integrated and sustainable human settlements.

Men, women and minority gender identities will often have very different ideas regarding which services will be a priority, as well as how those services affect their daily lives (UN-Habitat 2012b). Gender-sensitive design implies that water and sanitation provision, social facilities and public spaces reflect the everyday life of a community including the gender-specific roles and responsibilities that play out.

Gender sensitivity in settlement design is mindful of the impact of the geo-location of services and land use planning of a settlement on individuals based on their gendered experience. The distances between various services will often have a greater impact on women than men – for example, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) facilities in a community where women primarily do the domestic labour (UN-Habitat 2012). The location of services can also contribute to social issues that target one group over another – for example, safety concerns about the location of toilets would typically differ between men and women.

Gender-sensitive settlement design

Understanding that design elements contribute to how different genders experience a settlement.



Addressing gender-specific needs in upgrading plans leads to a more inclusive settlement. At times, it requires an intentional approach and using the following tools can support this:

- **Enumeration and profiling:** Sex-disaggregated data gives a snapshot of the settlement, so that practitioners know whom they are working with.
- **Situation assessment:** To determine what aspects of community life are unique to different gender groups and design participatory processes that incorporate these findings.
- **Gendered stakeholder analysis:** This recognises that stakeholders are also not gender-neutral actors in the process.
- **Collective community mobilising:** This method ensures that practitioners do not only rely on the community leader to mobilise and work with the community. It includes a more representative group of residents in participatory processes.



Other times, recognising gender-specific needs only requires careful attention to community life and mindfulness to the findings that emerge from a localised study of an area. Each case may be different, but the point is to recognise that these dynamics are not negligible in an upgrading project.

A study of Makause informal settlement in Johannesburg found that the environmental health (encompassing land, air and water pollution) of a settlement affects men and women differently and at different levels due to gender roles and responsibilities in the community (James n.d.). Women spent most of their day fulfilling domestic responsibilities in the settlement, while the men leave for work elsewhere. Consequently, the women are usually the ones exposed to harsh environmental conditions for longer, and so are more under the threat of environmental health consequences compared to their male counterparts (James n.d.).

This example shows that the roles that men and women fulfil in the community influences how residents experience their environment. So then, to address the environmental vulnerabilities in Makause, an upgrading intervention would need to take these gender dynamics in to account.

Gender disparities not only exist in how different residents experience the settlements, but also in how residents perceive community life. In a 2018 baseline study of a settlement in Villiersdorp, VPUU observed that men and women had varying perceptions about the most frequent type of crime in their community (See Figure 2). Respondents were asked about what type of crime they thought was most frequent in the community. The findings from such a study would then be used to inform a spatial plan to address and mitigate safety vulnerabilities.

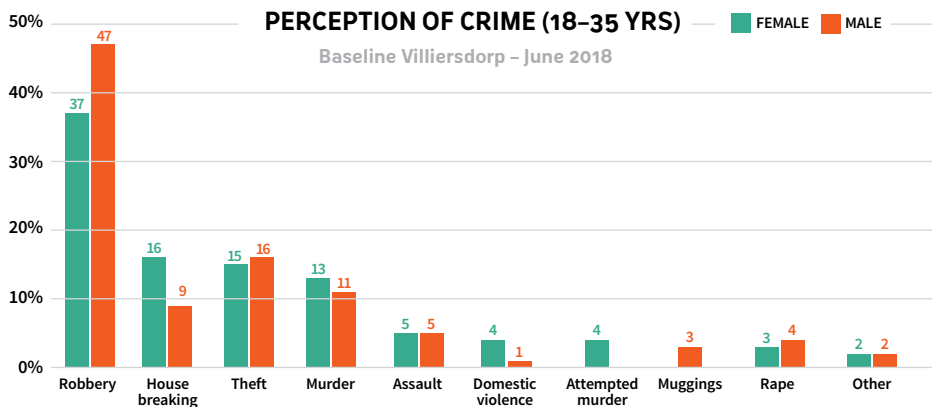


FIGURE 2: Source: VPUU2018

THE VALUE OF MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

Participatory and incremental informal settlement upgrading relies on stakeholder partnerships that strengthen and support processes.

Partnerships are often more concerned with the process of the upgrading project rather than about who is involved in that process and the effects thereof.

However, it is important for all stakeholders to be aware of the effects of gender relations on an upgrading project - not only the gender relations within a community but also between stakeholders. The main stakeholders would typically include municipalities, community residents, community leaders, social facilitators and built environment experts.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships can also function to support redistributing power imbalances, as has been the case with SA SDI Alliance partners.



The Federation of Urban Poor (FEDUP) is a women's movement anchored in daily savings and livelihood strategies and they work together with the Informal Settlement Network (ISN), which is a predominantly male-led and broad based social movement with support from the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC).

The SA SDI Alliance brings male-dominated and female-dominated spaces together through peer-to-peer exchanges and collaborative participation. This strategy intentionally aims to transcend gendered spaces and create an equilibrium in upgrading projects through partnership. Beyond the community, the SA SDI Alliance also forms partnerships with municipalities.



FIGURE 3: The SA SDI Approach to informal settlement upgrading. Source: SA SDI Alliance 2018

The Bolivia case study similarly demonstrates the value of stakeholder partnerships in transforming gender relations. A partnership between local NGOs established the women's schools and the network of women leaders that formed through the schools worked in partnership with the government to change title deeds. In the case study, stakeholders combined their expertise and skills to bring about a social change (See text box on page 10).

KHAYELITSHA OPEN SPACE UPGRADING, CAPE TOWN

The Open Space upgrading project in Site B, Khayelitsha (Cape Town) is an example of a gender-sensitive design supported by a multi-stakeholder partnership. The space is located adjacent to four informal settlements in Site B, namely, UT Gardens, UT Litha Park, TT Section and TB Section and typically functions as a meeting space for residents.

ISN and FedUp partnerships facilitated community organizing and participation in the preparation, planning and design of the project. They then worked with other stakeholders (the ward councillor, Transport and Urban Development Authority (TDA), Water and Sanitation, City Parks and Solid Waste Management (SWM) to name a few) to implement a sub-surface drainage system, an open drainage channel, two community halls, children's playground, and installation of 120 new flush toilets and eight new water taps in the area.

In a learning exchange, community members from the area met with community members in Makhaza Park who constructed and maintained a community hall. The women of Makhaza Park, who are primarily responsible for the community hall, shared lessons from their experiences and the community members from UT Gardens, UT Litha Park, TT Section and TB Section learnt the possibilities of replicating a similar initiative in the open space.

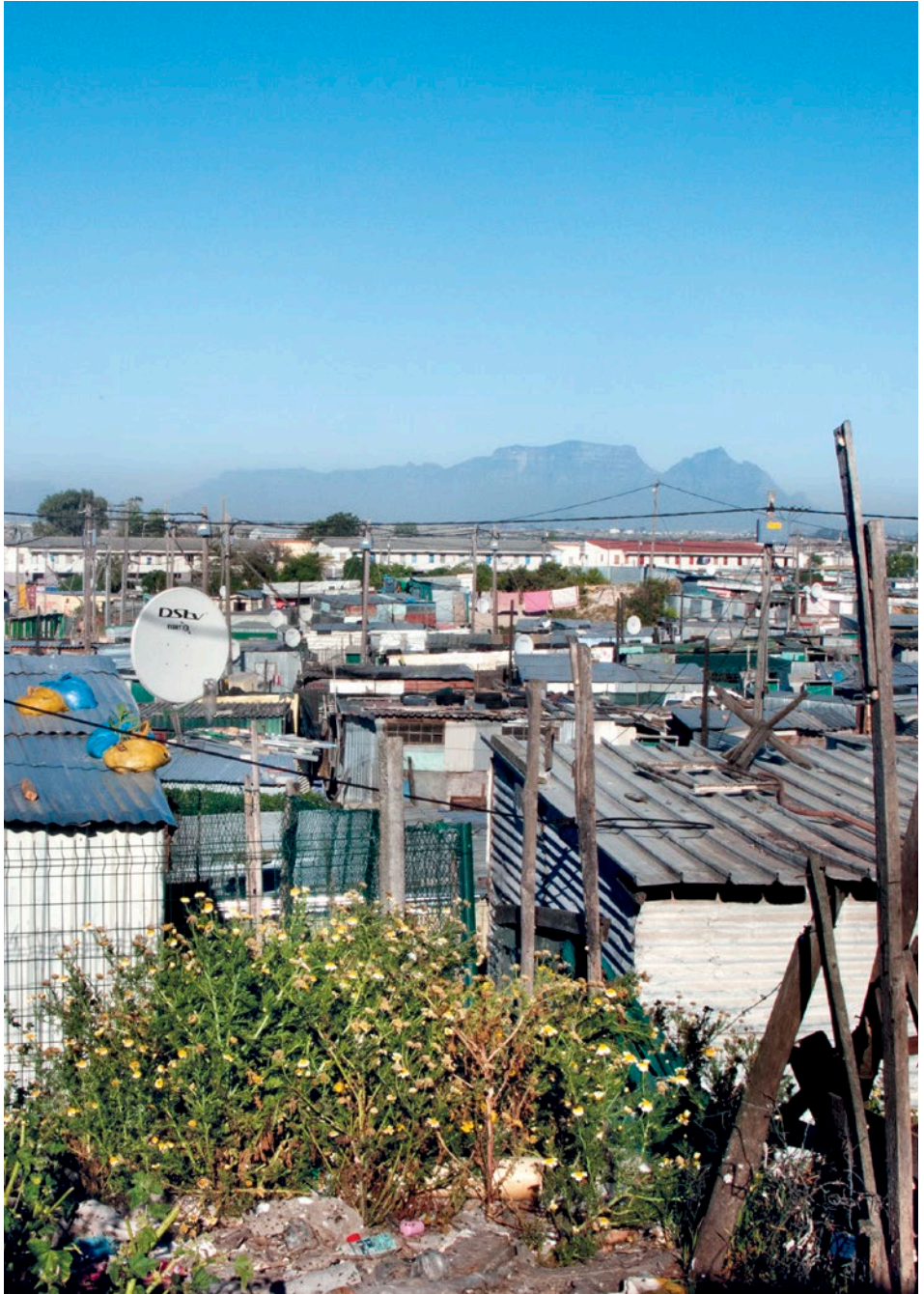
The physical and social impact of the project is, in part, due to the strength of the multi-stakeholder partnership. Physically, the infrastructure and facilities built have transformed the urban built environment and mitigated the risks associated with health hazards and poor hygienic conditions.

The project also had a social impact on the quality of life of the residents. The community halls that have been a shared space for various community activities, and the play park increased visibility of children and lessened safety concerns.

In the process, the communities have also learnt to organise, identify their priorities and negotiate to leverage municipal financing. This is an invaluable skill extending well beyond life in the settlement.

The Khayelitsha Open Space Upgrading project was the first area-wide upgrading project supported by the SDI Alliance. It demonstrates the SDI Alliance strategy for realising inclusive cities in action.

(Lande & Zimmerman 2018; SA SDI Alliance 2018; Lande 2017)



THE POTENTIAL FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Focusing on gender relations in informal settlement upgrading is not a means in itself; rather it is part of a broader struggle towards gender equity and equality in South Africa.

Equal participation also contributes to democratisation and the empowerment of women, fostering working relationships and mutual respect between different groups (Basset et al., 2003).

The persisting gender disparities in division of labour, and the access to other streams of income, resources, land and social services such as education are to the disadvantage of women and gender minorities (South African Human Rights Commission 2017). Upgrading practice should not merely be gender-aware so that women and men are consulted and participate equally, but so that their participation is transformative.

Measures like the Gender Gap⁶ and studies such as the Gender Transformation at the Institutions of Higher Learning, Gender Transformation in the Private and Public Sector, and the African Gender Development Index (AGDI) study⁷ give an indication of the extent to which gender relations are unequal across various sectors of society. The general findings reveal that there is still a great need to transform gender relations, to recognise that women and minority gender identities have an equal capacity to participate in relation to men and to promote equitable practices.⁸

A gendered lens on informal settlement upgrading gives attention to the power disparities in a community (and society, at large). In so doing, stakeholders are able to prepare the upgrading project better to address issues of inequality and marginalisation, in terms of the planning and community participation in needs assessments and so forth (UN-Habitat 2012). This contributes to the overall success of a project to the benefit of all.

Equal participation also contributes to democratisation and the empowerment of women, fostering working relationships and mutual respect between different groups (Basset et al. 2003). When the knowledge, skills and opinions of men, women and minority gender identities are equally valued as contributions to an upgrade, it suggests that they have reorganised and re-examine their roles and relationships towards one another. These arrangements are a framework for the kind of progressive social transformation that is fundamental to social and economic sustainability in South Africa.

⁶ The Global Gender Gap Report benchmarks 149 countries on their progress towards gender equality across four themes: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment (WEF 2018).

⁷ The AGDI study found that more girls finish school and enter institutions of higher learning, but employment statistics show that more men are in wage paying jobs, in high paying jobs and in managerial or decision-making positions than women.

⁸ These studies were informed by the Gender Commission's mandate and to measure South Africa's compliance with international and regional instruments regarding gender equality.

REFLECTIONS FROM LOCAL PRACTICE

The organisations represented at the local community of practice made the following critical reflections on the effects of gender on their own practice.

These reflections echo key lessons for influencing equitable practices in developing sustainable and integrated neighbourhoods.

- Power struggles that emerge because of gender dynamics amongst stakeholders delay the upgrading process.
- Demographics such as age, marital status and income similarly add a layer of complexity. These can elevate some voices and stifle others.
- Practice should try to create a status quo where women must lead but men can join. Informal settlement upgrading should support the voices and agency of women.
- There is a need for national policy that recognises and incorporates the role of gender in developing human settlements.
- Informal settlement upgrading is already long and drawn out, but a gendered focus is as a necessary complexity to integrate into the process.
- There is some gender awareness in upgrading practice, but the extent of this awareness differs. There needs to be more of a willingness to change practices.
- There is a need to include the voices of minority gender identities, especially around safety concerns.
- We need to establish a vision for what a gender-transformed informal settlement upgrading space looks like.
- We need to transform spaces for men and women to share together, listen to one another and are encouraged to take on responsibilities. Empathy is key.
- When insights from female practitioners get discriminatorily dismissed, male practitioners need to use their power bias to amplify marginalised voices.
- Local organisations also need to review the gender relations that are reinforced in their internal practices. Transforming gender relations through informal settlement upgrading necessitates organisational transformations.



CONCLUSION

Gender relations influence people's ability to participate in upgrading projects – from decision-making powers to inputs in settlement design to address gender-specific needs.

Giving attention to the way that men and women participate in informal settlement upgrading ensures that participatory processes are inclusive and representative. This involves understanding any existing challenges to equal participation, such as limited access to resources, and addressing these. A participatory and incremental approach to informal settlement upgrading ensures that the involvement of men, women and minority gender identities is truly substantive – that inputs from all are equally heard and considered. This aims to not only produce an integrated settlement design that responds to the everyday experiences of residents, but it also supports their agency by addressing gender-related deprivations which may disempower one group of people – typically women and minority gender identities.

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