



This pamphlet summarises the outcomes of three sets of dialogues in Cape Town called by the Informal Settlements Network (ISN), supported by Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) and Isandla Institute, to have a conversation realising the Right to the City in South Africa. These outcomes and priorities were the result of free-flowing and wide-ranging debates about the most pressing needs of poor communities in Cape Town. The dialogues focused on what needs to change, how we get there and what this means in terms of the roles that the different stakeholders in society need to play. This dialogue series have been generously supported by the Foundation for Human Rights, the Department for Justice and Constitutional Development and the European Union.



ACCESS | OPPORTUNITY | CITY-MAKING

WE'VE GOT A RIGHT TO THE CITY

The Constitution is clear about the rights and opportunities that all South Africans should be able to claim. It is about transforming our society by addressing inequality in all of its forms and ensuring that we are all active and equal participants in the development of our cities. But for most of us poor people, these remain empty promises or distant dreams.

We are not treated as though we are important or that we have a role to play in the future of our cities. Instead we are kept on the edges of the cities, far away from the jobs, middle-class neighbourhoods and high quality services. When the government delivers services into our neighbourhoods, we are treated like objects or nuisances rather than as equal citizens and potential partners. We need a change in attitude and approach to make us all feel like we have a right to South African cities. We need to change it from 'A City That Works for You' to 'A City That Works with You'.

WHY DO WE NEED A RIGHT TO THE CITY?

Politicians and officials see us as numbers to be ticked off a list or as votes in elections but we are never given real control over what happens, how will it happen and ways to hold those responsible accountable. We hear a lot about consultation but when we speak, we feel like no one listens and nothing changes.

We are still being kept on the edges of our cities in areas that have poor services and are far away from jobs and other opportunities that are being created in the city centres and rich neighbourhoods. We see money being spent on building new stadiums or cutting grass in middle-class neighbourhoods, while we have to share broken toilets. We also aren't secure on the land that we have peacefully occupied – we can be thrown off our land or have our houses destroyed at any time. We are forced to spend a lot of time and money travelling in cramped and dangerous conditions to get to jobs or services in the city.



WHAT DO WE NEED MOST URGENTLY?

We need access to well located and serviced land. We believe that the government can do a lot more to make this happen.

- Communities should not be thrown off of land that they have peacefully occupied and lived on for many years.
- The government should be buying land and putting it aside so that it can partner with communities to determine how it should be used.
- We also need to change the rules about private property rights so that the government can support communities in upgrading private land that has been occupied by communities.

We need access to free basic services to improve our lives. But all services should be delivered with meaningful participation from communities to ensure that they are well-placed and accessible and that there is a clear plan to make sure they are maintained. We can also use these consultations between officials and community leaders to talk about how the settlement can be upgraded in the future.

We need access to jobs and training. We can't access jobs because

- our schools are bad, which either means that children drop out or that they get bad marks for matric;

- we don't know how to get into government-created opportunities for training;
- young people who have some qualifications can't find work because they can't find places to get practical experience;
- small businesses in our communities don't know how to access support to grow bigger;
- when work is done in our community it is usually done by outside contractors who hire people from outside of the settlement because we don't know how to compete for government tenders; and
- we are far away from the city centre and other places of work so it is very expensive and takes a lot of time to look for work.

We need to start bringing the government and the city closer to our settlements. Government offices and social facilities are still in the well-resourced parts of the city, while we get basic facilities and satellite offices like day clinics. People working in these facilities often can't give us good service because they don't have enough authority or are too busy and overworked.

We need the government to start taking action to make sure that there is a more equal distribution of resources and access to opportunities across the city. This is both about where the government spends its money and the role it can play in getting private businesses to invest more money in poorer communities.

HOW DOES THIS CHANGE THE ROLES OF GOVERNMENT, NGOS AND COMMUNITIES?

While many of these demands are aimed at the government, we want to be involved in the search for solutions.

Rejecting empty promises from politicians that inflate expectations and politicise service delivery. Instead, we must focus on remaining in control of the decision-making process, find new ways of working together and collecting information about our settlements and then invite officials to partner with us when we have clear needs.

Leaders who represent communities always need to be held accountable to those they serve. When they make decisions they must consult with the community in a democratic way and report back about progress. If they do not, then they will be replaced with more responsive representatives.

We need to better understand the processes of government so we can advocate for our own needs and rights (and so we can inform officials when they are unaware of policies or alternative practices).

We need increased access to officials, politicians and formal spaces so that we can be informed about planning and decision-making that is happening that will affect our settlements, and be active participants in these processes. We also want to better understand how decisions are made about how money is spent across the city and how we can be involved.

We need to build strong partnerships between communities, community organisations and NGOs to make sure that we strengthen ties and opportunities for learning from one another, speak with a clear voice to hold officials and politicians accountable and keep exploring community-driven solutions to our problems.