

Case Study – Joe Slovo Survey 2009, Cape Town, South Africa

Policy and Community Context:

Joe Slovo is an informal settlement located less than 8 kilometres from the centre of the city of Cape Town, South Africa. It is situated along the N2 national freeway that links Cape Town to the International airport and to the rest of the country.. In September 2004, the National Department of Housing (renamed the Department of Human Settlements in 2009) launched a major development project called the 'N2 Gateway'. It was intended as a milestone housing project, to demonstrate a new approach to subsidy-driven housing delivery for low income families in South Africa. It also had a direct relationship to preparations that were being made for the 2010 FIFA World Cup, as the main settlements it covered were along transportation routes to be heavily trafficked during the Cup. The upgrading of the Joe Slovo informal settlement was one the first projects identified as part of the N2 Gateway development. Unfortunately, the N2 Gateway project was designed in such a way that it created no space at all for public consultation on the proposed, creating an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility between the government and community. The proposed development envisaged low density housing delivery, coupled with a significant segment for non-subsidy based, middle income housing. The result was that significant numbers of families ended up being relocated to transit camps and dormitory neighbourhoods about 20km away. Frequent floods and fires were used as opportunities to impose relocations on families who were generally very reluctant to leave. The residents who remained began to strongly resist relocation, resulting in a prolonged court battle with the National Department of Housing. While the court battle was in progress, some of the leaders in the community decided that they needed to enumerate themselves, to gather accurate and current data about their settlement. These leaders already had developed some relationships with community-based organizations like the Community Organization Resource Centre (CORC) and the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) and had been introduced to the idea of enumerations. Based on this information and support, they decided that this was an appropriate time to conduct a survey.

By 2009, the community in Joe Slovo was strong and organized enough to resist determined efforts to be removed and relocated on the periphery of the city.. The first residents of Joe Slovo had moved there in the 1990's. They were mainly the families of men who had formerly been migrant labourers in the city and had been housed in state and private hostels in the immediate vicinity of the open land that served as a buffer zone along the national highway. The collapse of apartheid resulted in a rapid acceleration of this urban in-migration and the number of shacks in Joe Slovo grew rapidly. (Enumerations Final Report). In the beginning

In January 2005 a major fire broke out, claiming 3,000 shelters and leaving 12,000 people homeless. As a result of this fire, the first contact was made between the community and iKhayalami, a community-based organization working on incremental housing that would later play a role in the enumeration. In October 2007, the first savings groups were started, linked to CORC and the Federation of the Urban Poor in South Africa (FEDUP) “However, due to general lack of understanding around FEDUPs operations, coupled with suspicions by leadership, opposition blocked FEDUPs activities by discouraging membership and meetings within the community.” (Joe Slovo Blocking Project) Federation savings schemes continued in a limited capacity until February 2008, when a second, smaller fire occurred, claiming 150 shelters. The second fire acted as a catalyst for the growth of the federation in Joe Slovo, hammering out some of the previous misunderstandings and crystalizing the rationale behind daily savings for community members.

“A vital dialogue began between the Joe Slovo leadership, the Federation members and iKhayalami. While the leadership were open to the offer of emergency assistance, they strongly opposed the idea of distributing shelters only to Federation members, a move they saw simply as dividing the community yet further. Existing Federation members however, felt it unfair that after being penalized for taking part in the saving schemes, they now had to share the “benefits” with the rest of the community. While iKhayalami had hoped this dispute would be resolved prior to arrival on site, the mediation soon turned out to be key in developing a relationship between the parties.....The real success of this period was that a relationship had developed between the leadership and iKhayalami and, as people now understood the Federation’s saving scheme, membership in Joe Slovo soared.” (Joe Slovo Blocking Project)

Another fire occurred in March 2009, during the same period that the community was fighting the N2 Gateway project in court. This fire claimed 513 shelters and left 1,500 people homeless, but it also opened a significant amount of space within the settlement, creating an opportunity to rebuild using ‘blocking’, to re-arrange space more effectively for in-situ upgrading. Blocking started the day after the fire. iKhayalami provided blocking and construction materials and the community worked together to guard the clear space until a new spatial arrangement for the houses could be determined and laid out.

“The first batch of iKhayalami material was delivered at noon, just enough for four shelters, but enough to show the community what was involved and what the upgraded areas might look like. The arrival of this material proved to be a key turning point as people now had a clear understanding of what iKhayalami, and the leadership, were describing. Support for the project soared, as residents began to approach iKhayalami directly with requests to support ‘blocking’ in their areas. In many instances people were willing to even dismantle their shacks and relocate in-line, in expectation that they would

receive building material at a later stage which speeded up the process considerably. This process led to greater community participation and negotiating patiently with the community speeded up the process considerably. While all decisions as to the relocation of sites, and the allocation of materials, was handled by the Joe Slovo leadership, the Ikhayalami team assisted families in construction the panels. By 20:00 that night, 15 families had shelters in various stages of completion. The community, now more mobilised, also organised nightly patrols, aimed both at guarding the building materials from theft and to keep order in Joe Slovo while people slept in tents. This resulted in almost no material going missing, even when considering the high degree of hands-on involvement by the community” (Joe Slovo Blocking Project)

By the end of March, 120 new shelters had been built, in new ‘blocked’ arrangements. The fire also gave an immediate context and impetus for the enumeration which the community wanted to conduct to help with their case against the N2 Gateway development. The enumeration was conducted in conjunction with the blocking project, with the support of CORC, FEDUP and the Poor People’s Movement (PPM), beginning on May 6th, 2009. The Kenyan Federation, Muungano Wa Wanvijiji , also provided support during this process and in particular in preparation for the data analysis and mapping of the community. (Joe Slovo Enumerations Final Report 2009)

Before the 2009 enumeration, the community of Joe Slovo had never been surveyed. A shack counting exercise had been conducted by the City Council, to estimate the population, but nothing specific or comprehensive had ever been attempted. *“There are no official statistics for the settlement’s current population, and of late there have been thick migrations into and out of the community. From the old city census records, Joe Slovo had a population of 20,000+ people. This figure is sometimes used without specification of whether the figure includes the large group of people who were relocated earlier to Delft or not.” (Enumeration Final Report)*

It was hoped that the enumeration would provide the community with data to inform their negotiations with government regarding the N2 Gateway proposal and a tool to help shape a more inclusive outcome in terms of planning and decision making. The enumeration was also envisioned as a part of the process of community-building in Joe Slovo, another step in their growth process as a community and as individuals.

The Survey:

To plan the enumeration, CORC began holding mass community meetings in April 2009, to develop a broad agreement on the meaning, purpose and objectives of the enumeration. The logistical aspects and distribution of tasks was also agreed upon. A survey questionnaire was revised and adopted, based on a framework developed by CORC in Cloeteville in 2008. It was adapted by the community to be more comprehensive and relevant to the situation at hand. An enumeration team was selected and divided into groups, to administer the mapping, shack numbering and data collection parts of the surveying process. The community itself was also divided into 24 sections and numbered alphabetically, for clarity and organizational simplicity. Each house was numbered according to an enumeration code, identifying its section and

number. The enumeration teams were given training, to make sure they understood how to administer their tasks.

Enumerators were instructed to collect information from people in their structures, which were numbered and measured only by the enumeration team, in order to avoid confusion. Enumerators were instructed to speak personally to a member of every household. For this reason, the Joe Slovo Enumeration leaders built up three teams made up of Joe Slovo community volunteers who had some knowledge about the community and all its sections. This increased the level of accuracy in the survey and helped ensure general community support and ownership of the process. This was in sharp contradistinction to other information gathering efforts in the settlement, where external actors, linked and sponsored by the state were suspected of hidden agendas. (These efforts notwithstanding, there was a small section of the community that withheld information on the grounds that, even in this case, the information may be used to facilitate eviction. Whilst these doubts have now disappeared and the few score outstanding families are in the process of being surveyed, this reaction underscores the suspicion and hostility that an upgrading and relocation process tends to generate.)” (Joe Slovo Enumerations Final Report 2009)

The enumeration unfolded over a period of 3 weeks. In addition to collecting the data, it was also verified and entered using Microsoft Excel.

Results of the Survey:

In addition to producing a comprehensive set of socio-economic and demographic information about the settlement, the Joe Slovo enumeration also shed some light on the economic contributions of this community and the possible impacts of resettlement. In terms of basic demographic and infrastructure data, the population of Joe Slovo was found to be about 7,950 individuals staying in 2,748 shacks. 64% of the population are adults of working age and 35% of which are children or teenagers. 62% of the households in Joe Slovo are led by a man. There are 896 toilets, of which 706 are functional; this means that every toilet is shared by at least 9-11 people. There are 38 water taps, all of which are functional. Everyone in Joe Slovo lives in a shack, there are no formal houses or backyarders.

Of those residents who are migrants to Cape Town, most are economic migrants from other parts of the Eastern Cape Province. Few residents migrated to Cape Town more than 16 years ago, but since the fall of the Apartheid government there has been a steady stream of in-migrants. Economic activity seems to determine a large amount of life in Joe Slovo. Not only are there a great variety of businesses within the slum, but the households derive their livelihoods for a diverse set of activities, with the majority working outside the slum in service jobs, government employment, construction or factory work. A minority of the population works within the settlement, operating corner shops, small bars or as traditional healers. Only about 10% of the community depends on government grants for their livelihood. More than 60% of the adult population is unemployed. With all of this economic activity and the varied

forms of occupation, it is perhaps not surprising that Joe Slovo has a fairly high local economic impact, estimated by CORC to be around 2.7 million rand per month.

In terms of income and expenses, currently nobody in Joe Slovo has to pay for water or sanitation; their monthly income is almost entirely taken up by the costs of food, electricity, school fees and transportation. The average monthly income in Joe Slovo ranges from R800 to R1500. *“Most of the employed household heads currently find their workplaces adjacent to their community. Thanks to the proximity to the train station, about 57% of the households can benefit from relatively cheap train services. If the Joe Slovo residents had to devote a bigger portion of their income to transport the poverty cycle would worsen. Only 10.7% is spending more than R200 on transport at the moment. This already equates to a staggering 20% of the average household income. This will dramatically increase if and when people are relocated 20kms away.” (Enumeration Final Report)*

One of the most important themes to emerge from the Joe Slovo enumeration was about the acute vulnerability of women and children in the settlement, particularly woman-headed households. *“Every woman in Joe Slovo who is responsible for a household has to provide for 3.2 people. Most are unemployed and depend on Government grants for survival.” (Enumeration Final Report)*

Another important theme was the vulnerability to natural disasters:

“Like any other slums in the world, the settlement is also vulnerable to different disasters. In its history, this settlement has experienced some devastating fires and floods. Almost one thousand residents have experienced both disasters. However, the most dominant disaster is flooding, which is an annual winter experience in the community. From 2748 families surveyed in the enumeration, 1747 have had a fire experience, and among these 1209 (69.2%) have also experienced flooding (more than once). 1708 households have experienced flooding. In this situation, there is clearly a great need for disaster preparation and mitigation rather than emergency interventions like the ones carried out so far.” (Joe Slovo Enumerations Final Report 2009).

In addition to highlighting the possible negative impact of resettlement, the enumeration also revealed that since the population was so much less than previously estimated, that in-situ redevelopment might be feasible. *“The power of community-driven enumerations was highlighted in an account from Mzwanele Zulu, a community leader from Joe Slovo. He explained to the group how their particular enumeration proved that there were less people than originally thought within the settlement. This meant that upgrading could be done in situ without having to relocate people to the periphery.” (Reflecting on the Enumeration Process in Cape Town)*

Current Situation:

The immediate outcome of the court hearings was an immediate moratorium on all relocations. A subsequent decision to revisit the development plan for Joe Slovo settlement was influenced significantly by the findings of the 2009 enumeration. Political changes at local and Provincial Government level and the emergence of a new parastatal, the Housing Development Agency (HDA) to deal (inter-alia) with urban land opened some space for government/community consultation.

These consultations had disappointing outcomes even though they were extensive and detailed. They were underscored, like so many other engagements around development in South Africa, by the paternalism of a developmental state and the short-term activism of a community organized to resist an external threat but not to contribute actively to tangible alternatives. The leadership tended to regard long term solutions as nothing more than entitlements that state institutions were obliged to deliver. Opportunities to invest time and energy in community action planning and grassroots layout design, house plans and increased densities were undermined by divisions in the leadership and by a complacent expectations that government appointed professionals were going to deliver acceptable solutions.

When the planning process yielded a solution that was based on further relocations to the city's periphery the leadership began to react. The enumeration data was revisited, this time with a community-driven focus that was erratic at best in the past.

Joe Slovo is a high profile case. Just about everyone in the urban development sector has tried to get their hands on it for years, and the SDI link remains rather weak. This new threat provides CORC and FEDUP with an opportunity to really engage other civil society actors in the city. Now is the time to build these wider platforms rooted in a very real and practical struggle.

When we talk about "inclusive cities," this can sound very touchy-feely and meaningless without proper explanation. What we mean is that urban poverty is due to exclusion — exclusion from formal markets and finance, beginning with formal land markets. Yet the dominant usage of the term "poverty" tends to describe some kind of technical problem, not a situation that has actively been caused by exclusionary forces — such as a capital-driven, corrupt, "developmental" state combined with the market itself, both woven into the tapestry of a long history of colonial/racial oppression.

An opportunity is unfolding in Joe Slovo where accountability for urban exclusion from these forces mentioned above is coupled and in fact gets driven by people's own actions and choices; where the upgrading of Joe Slovo shifts from being the sole responsibility of the representatives of power to being a physical expression of the real power of the urban poor — the power to define, design and develop their own built environment.

The 2009 enumeration contributed to putting the State on the hook for Apartheid-type spatial exclusion, and an inability to address exclusion from the market. The community's decision to revisit its capacities to gather and manage its own information in 2011 will hopefully contribute towards an inclusive planning process that prioritizes the decision-making authority of those who will have to live with the consequences of those decisions.

