

“Rather a Better Shack now than Wait Twenty Years for a Formal House” – Shack Dwellers International and Informal Settlement Upgrading in South Africa

Joel Bolnick and Benjamin Bradlow

“Lieber jetzt eine bessere Hütte als 20 Jahre Warten auf ein reguläres Haus” - informelle Maßnahmen zur Verbesserung von Siedlungen in Südafrika

Vor dem Hintergrund, dass staatliche Programme zur Wohnungsversorgung in Südafrika erstens weit davon entfernt sind, den Bedarf zu decken, und zweitens die Menschen zu Leistungsempfängern degradieren, versucht die südafrikanische Allianz des internationalen Netzwerks Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) Alternativen aufzuzeigen. Die Unterstützung des 'informellen' Wohnungsbaus und die Aktivierung der Bewohner sowie deren Selbsthilfepotenzials wird von den Mitgliedern des Netzwerks als aussichtsreichster Weg angesehen, um die Wohnverhältnisse der Menschen zeitnah und nachhaltig zu verbessern. SDI arbeitet in einem Umfeld, wo formelle staatliche Systeme mit dem – für die meisten uneingelösten – Versprechen eines geschenkten Einfachhauses die Kreativität und Produktivität des informellen Sektors vernichten. Trotzdem sucht die Allianz Verknüpfungspunkte zwischen der informellen Wirklichkeit der Armen und den formellen Institutionen. In diesem Sinne werden einfache Verbesserungen der informellen Hütten vorgenommen und die dazwischenliegenden Freiräume geordnet sowie neugestaltet - als modellhafte, kostengünstige und von den Bewohnern kontrollierte Maßnahmen zur Erneuerung der informellen Siedlungen in den Städten Südafrikas..

A substantial portion of the production of basic services and housing stock in the cities of the Global South lies in the realm of the “informal”. For it is a recognised fact that urban poor households are the largest suppliers of these amenities. Responses by the State and the market — the “formal” world — lag way behind. One billion people live in slums (UN Habitat, 2008). As an example, African cities, many of which are characterized by a proliferation of informal settlements, are set to triple in size (BBC News, 24.11.2010). The attendant challenges of informal settlements are likely to intensify without new approaches to urban policy and practice.

In most instances, the creative solutions provided by the urban poor themselves, are considered criminal or dangerous. Instead of an incremental continuum between informality and formality, an aggressive contrast is made between community-constructed shacks that need to be “eradicated”, and state or market-driven formal houses that need to be “delivered”. Once shack settlements are seen as a problem, it is an easy step to assign blame for the exclusion of the poor from their rights as citizens on the poor themselves.

Such an approach proliferates even in cities in middle-income countries where the relative robustness of the formal housing sector, state resources, and institutional capacities, make interventions in the low-income sector a realistic prospect. In fact, nowhere has this contrast between formal and informal housing delivery been more acute and more contradictory than in post-apartheid South Africa. Over two million state-subsidized formal housing opportunities have been overshadowed by the

construction of an even greater number of “illegal” shacks by the poor themselves. The housing backlog has not budged since 1994. Then, there were approximately 300 informal settlements. Official figures estimate that there are now over 2,600 (South African National Upgrading Support Program (NUSP), 2010). The pace of urbanization and other demographic trends only partially explain this fact.

This paper will introduce community organizations and support professionals affiliated to Shack Dwellers International (SDI). It will make three related arguments about the role of the alliance of these organizations, known as the South African SDI Alliance, in informal settlement upgrading in South Africa. Firstly, the Alliance has, for the vast

Table 1: Informally Settled Households by Province, 2007. Source: Statistics South Africa, Community Survey Key Municipal Data 2007 / NUSP 2010

Province	Total Households	% Households in informal settlements	Number of households in informal settlements
Eastern Cape	1,586,739	6.4 %	101,551
Free State	802,872	13.6%	109,191
Gauteng	3,175,579	14.3%	454,108
KwaZulu Natal	2,234,129	6.3%	140,750
Limpopo	1,215,935	3.6%	43,774
Mpumalanga	940,403	9.2%	86,517
Northern Cape	264,653	8.9%	23,554
North West	911,120	16.0%	145,779
Western Cape	1,360,180	8.0%	108,814
Total South Africa	12,500,610	9.7%	1,214,038

National and provincial calculations of number of households in informal settlements based on data from Community Survey Key Municipal Data 2007. Variation of 1,479 between provincial and national totals is due to rounding of figures in the provincial calculation, as well as the overall Community Survey methodology.

Primary actors in the South African SDI Alliance

The **Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP)**, a nationwide federation of slum dwellers who practice the rituals of all federations affiliated to SDI throughout the world. The core activities are women-led daily savings, enumeration, pragmatic partnerships with the State, and practical community-led housing development / land acquisition / incremental informal settlement upgrading.

The **Informal Settlement Network (ISN)**, a bottom-up agglomeration of settlement-level and national-level organizations of the poor at the city-wide scale in the municipalities of Cape Town, eThekweni (Durban), Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth), Mid-Vaal, and Tshwane (Pretoria).

The **Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC)** is an NGO that supports the social processes of community-based organizations that want to work for themselves, by facilitating engagements with formal actors like the State. It also supports the development of "social technologies," especially the SDI rituals of savings, enumeration, and community-led development strategies.

The **uTshani Fund** is a formal bridging finance institution of FEDUP, which provides loans for house construction, land acquisition, and incremental informal settlement upgrading.

iKhayalami's mission is to support FEDUP and ISN members who were not in line for state subsidies to begin to upgrade their existing dwellings and their existing informal settlements. It designs and manufactures cheap housing solutions that are easy to transport and erect as a response to emergencies.

1 Signatories included large and small contractors, labour unions, community organisations and financial institutions. FEDUP, then known as the South African Homeless People's Federation, was the community organization representative.

majority of its existence, operated in a context whereby formal systems of the State were designed to crush informal ingenuity and production of services. Secondly, despite the challenges, the Alliance has always sought to build connections between the informal practice of poor people and the formal institutions intended to improve the lot of the poor. Finally, as the formal ground shifts towards the long-standing incremental practices of the poor, the South African SDI Alliance has been intensifying its work with city governments to develop scalable, practice-based protocols for upgrading informal settlements. The extent of the proliferation of informal settlements has, for some, dampened the promise and exuberance of the early days of liberation in South Africa. It is with the practices of the very people who populate these informal settlements that the Alliance has begun to rekindle that potential.

A bridge waiting to be built

In 1994, the first post-apartheid Minister of Housing, Joe Slovo, succeeded in getting all major stakeholders in the housing sector to sign the "Botshabelo Accord."¹ The document committed all signatories to assist the State

in providing support to the urban poor in their efforts to house themselves. Building a bridge between the formal and informal sectors was the basic underlying principle of this agreement.

Since Slovo's untimely death in 1995, however, the State has aggressively pushed a housing delivery approach that has shut out virtually all stakeholders other than officials, local politicians and smaller private developers. These three groups have learned how to play the patronage system that now characterizes resource flows through all tiers of Government into tightly controlled, top-down projects. The urban poor have been reduced, in the eyes of the State, to little more than recipients of Government largesse. The function of NGOs in producing services has generally been restricted to the roles of legal "watchdog" and policy think tanks (notwithstanding the fact that these are the functions many of them prefer). Large construction companies and developers, after an initial period of enthusiasm, have walked away in droves. In spite of regular protestations to the contrary, the banking institutions have not made any meaningful contribution to this sector.

In 2004, signs began to emerge that some people in Government were realizing that the State's housing policy was heading for disaster. Instead of stakeholder accord, the situation was characterized by a sharp polarization. On the one hand there were, and still are, government institutions at national, provincial, and local levels that insist on eradicating shacks by any means possible, including evictions. On the other hand, there is a largely disempowered citizenry whose primary tactic is to demand that State institutions solve their problems. This demand is made even when the State's solutions stifle the informal energy and innovation of the poor that have reached much greater scale in the absence of effective formal intervention.

Building a people's alliance in the midst of a dysfunctional framework

The South African Alliance of community-based groups and support professionals affiliated to Shack Dwellers International (SA SDI Alliance) has, since its inception in 1991, tried to moderate the damaging aspects of the current housing delivery system by piloting community-led informal settlement upgrading projects in partnership with the state. The main community partners in this alliance are the South African Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) and the Informal Settlement Network (ISN). FEDUP is a nationwide collective of primarily women-led daily savings schemes. ISN, which includes FEDUP, is an agglomeration of settlement-level and nationwide community-based leadership structures with a footprint in over 600 informal settlements in South Africa.

Since the leaders, primary actors and mass membership of this alliance, live in informal settlements, its practice-based methodologies are rooted in the daily, lived experience of slum dwellers. Without fanfare or public hysteria, the Alliance as a whole has been learning for almost twenty years from informal experience. This encompasses a range of social and technical practices: social organization, community information collection, community-driven standards, layout, land development and infrastructure provision by communities.

Figure 1: Joe Slovo settlement, Cape Town, prior to realignment. Photo: Klaus Teschner, Misereor, 2009



FEDUP and ISN remain committed to the vision of housing production that underpinned the "Botshabelo Accord," which was, in fact, signed by the Federation. The Alliance has been trying without interruption to develop this vision through practical action. Even during the late 1990s, when the Alliance built over 11,000 houses in every province in the country (an achievement not yet rivalled by any other civil society initiative), it focused on an incremental and in-situ housing approach to settlement upgrading. Their rationale was, and still remains, that if one wants cities with better design principles, with poor people participating in policy-making and implementation, then one needs to demonstrate practically how this can be done. Practical experience, as opposed to professionally driven policy documents and legal challenges, is the most sustainable contribution to the development of institutions capable of addressing urban poverty.

The South African SDI Alliance has always pursued this methodology at considerable risk. Over 80% of the houses constructed by the Alliance were built on land that was not formally titled but was close to transport nodes, public amenities and employment opportunities. The inhabitants themselves occupied and consolidated their residency informally. In many cases, house plans followed house construction, and were designed by community people themselves conforming to their standards, layout and design. In other instances, they delivered services incrementally, experimenting with innovations such as shallow sewers, solar water heating, and public toilets. Even when they were drawn into relocations and green-fields development, these were always on land that was closer to city centres.

However, officials at national, provincial and local levels generally disliked the Alliance for its approach. For the Alliance's approach was antithetical to the operations of these formal actors: Instead of seeking to eradicate informality and turn to formal institutions to start from scratch in the delivery of new housing, FEDUP and its allies celebrated informality and encouraged it to flourish, recognizing it as the basis for real delivery at scale. It is a bitter irony that the custodians of a housing approach that was richly resourced and institutionally enabled, criticized as ineffective the Federation's articulation of a people's process. This was in spite of the fact that formal housing delivery was failing to keep up with the people's own informal production of housing, a model underpinning the Federation's approach.

The mainstream subsidy juggernaut of formal developers working in concert with officials took off in the early 2000s. FEDUP and its allies found themselves being squeezed from all sides. The so-called "People's Housing Process" remained a side note in the implementation of housing delivery. Even when it was implemented, it rarely encouraged scalable approaches to people's empowerment through housing. Still, the Alliance was able to capitalize on the rhetoric of people's participation and score important political agreements with National Government.

By 2005, however, the Alliance saw that an alternative strategy was required. The State owed the Alliance R80 million (USD11.5 million) in subsidies for housing stock that the Alliance had pre-financed. Lack of finance capital, along with regulatory and political constraints, ham-

pered the Federation's ability to sustain the scale it had achieved.

The Federation realized that as far as formal, subsidy driven housing was concerned it had to compete within the existing framework rather than continue to contest it through precedent-setting alternatives. In spite of the growing failure of the housing delivery process, policy makers and officials were generally not interested in alternatives. The communities were. The Federation and its allies were now faced with the reality that only those members who were on council waiting lists, or who lived on land already earmarked for development, were going to benefit from even the Federation's housing process. In line with overall national statistics the Federation found that, on an annual basis, only one out of thirty of its members was able to access a subsidy and become an owner of a formal house.

Small steps along a new path: unleashing informal potential

This was clearly an untenable situation. As a result, the SA SDI Alliance floated an affiliated organization called iKhayalami in 2005. iKhayalami's mission was to support Federation and ISN members who were not in line for state subsidies to begin to upgrade their existing dwellings and their existing informal settlements. Based on the successful "Hogar de Cristo" model in Chile that provided starter housing and basic services to hundreds of thousands of households in the 1990's, iKhayalami developed a practice that it encapsulated in its motto: "Rather a better shack now than wait twenty years for a formal house."

The South African housing policy had made a small provision, since 1994, for informal settlement upgrading. This space widened marginally with the National Department's adoption of the "Breaking New Ground" strategy in 2004. Still, iKhayalami, the Federation and its allies, found themselves excluded from the formal systems from the outset. Irrespective of changes at the policy level, the State's aggressive pursuit of a "city without slums" meant that the majority of the inhabitants of informal settlements for whom no alternative housing was being

Figure 2: Joe Slovo settlement, Cape Town, after slum fire in 2009. Photo: iKhayalami





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Figure 3: Pegging out sites: Quarry Road, Durban. Photo: Samke Phewa, CORC

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Figure 4: Realigning shacks - Quarry Road, Durban. Photo: Samke Phewa, CORC



developed, found themselves in extremely precarious situations. Well-resourced and institutionally protected anti-land invasion units employed by local Governments patrolled the informal settlements of all cities and towns, randomly pulling down any new structures (and all too often old established structures as well), even those that were improvements and extensions to existing dwellings. Aggressive relocation policies to grotesquely planned greenfields sites on the peripheries of cities and towns became increasingly common. All too frequently, those who "benefited" from a housing subsidy were as adversely affected as those who continued to be excluded.

The South African SDI Alliance consistently re-appraised its decision to struggle for transformation through building partnerships with state institutions. Some civil society groups who took the simpler route of confrontation and non-collaboration, accused the SDI Alliance of being "sell-outs" and legitimating the actions of an anti-poor state. In spite of these challenges, the SDI groups remained conscious of the everyday difficulties of their members, the urban poor themselves. They therefore chose to continue to engage seriously in both reforming existing government institutions and protocols for delivery as well as trying to build new ones. As far as the Alliance was concerned, demanding solutions from government, blaming them for failure and waiting for them to deliver, simply would not produce any benefit for the poor.

iKhayalami initially considered working with the Ethekwini and Cape Town municipalities on the construction of on-site transit housing as part of in-situ upgrading projects. When it became clear that most of these transit camps were being built a long distance away from existing settlements, often without any clear strategy for returning inhabitants to existing sites, iKhayalami changed its strategy. Weak community leadership, corroded by systems of patronage and hand-outs, made the Alliance go back to basics and focus on supporting community organizations to begin demonstrating practical alternatives.

The Alliance was in a better position than most to witness first-hand how the governance approach of a paternalistic state was turning the erstwhile back-bone of South Africa's liberation struggle — the urban poor — into entitlement-driven dependents, trapped in a dysfunctional system of bureaucratized delivery. Nothing reflected this more starkly than the steady decline in community savings, collective action and self-reliance. These are the three hallmarks of the SDI approach and were shining characteristics of FEDUP and its community allies during the first decade post-apartheid.

Instead of collective action in partnership with Government, iKhayalami turned to individualized responses in which it helped the Federation and its allies upgrade the shacks of individual members whose living conditions were particularly bad. For almost two years, iKhayalami upgraded the shacks of HIV/AIDS orphans, overcrowded households, and families who had experienced fire, flooding or forced eviction.

Gradually, iKhayalami and its allies in FEDUP and ISN added other dimensions to their work. They developed a small factory for the production of modular units that were cheap, fire resistant and easy to manufacture and transport. They also began installing small drainage and sanitation systems in a few informal settlements in the Western Cape. Since they were not successful in securing state support, they cross-subsidized this work by building community centres, clinics and crèches for NGOs working in informal settlements.

The informal alternative shows potential for scale

SDI has a reputation globally for its pragmatism and its patience, hallmarks of informal practice. Opportunities for a small scaling-up of service production came when one of its larger affiliated communities in the city of Cape Town, the famous Joe Slovo settlement on the N2 highway, experienced a major fire in March 2009. iKhayalami and the ISN responded by facilitating a reblocking and shack reconstruction process. Within 3 weeks, the Alliance had assisted the community in rebuilding 120 dwellings in accordance with a reconfigured layout that opened lanes for emergency vehicles and for drainage, and created small pockets of public space for the residents.

SDI's established rituals for community mobilization, organization, and upgrading – community savings, community information gathering and negotiations with state authorities — were shared with the Joe Slovo community. By the time the 120 dwellings had been reconstructed these rituals had been up-scaled into protocols for com-

munity participation in informal settlement upgrading. It was not long before they caught the attention of the City and National Government.

Unlike before, all tiers of government were now coming around to the realization that the incremental upgrading of informal settlements was a desirable option. Little experience in that regard had survived 15 years of top-down, "one-size-fits-all", capital subsidy driven housing delivery. The SDI Alliance quickly formalized its relationship with the City of Cape Town and began to re-align its relationship with other cities and towns so that informal settlement upgrading, rather than house construction, formed the basis of the engagement. In the course of 2009 and 2010 agreements were reached with the cities of Ethekwini, Ekurhuleni, Johannesburg and Stellenbosch. Precedent-setting pilot projects were identified, university institutions were approached for technical capacity and the Joe Slovo learning was refined and scaled up. In mid-2010 the Chair of the ISN, Patrick Magebhula, was appointed as the only community-based actor on a new five-person panel to advise Minister Sexwale on human settlements policy and practice. A formal dialogue was started with the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) of the national Department of Housing. The Alliance's capacity and experience was once again made available to all actors in the sector who were seriously interested in tangible outcomes that could be taken to scale.

A set of precedents nation-wide

There are many interesting results of these efforts.

In Durban, the Federation and its allies responded to a fire at Quarry Road informal settlement. Shack dwellers from Cape Town who had participated in pilots in their home town came to Durban and assisted the affected community in a blocking out exercise that resulted in 85 shacks having been rehabilitated, improved, rebuilt and reconfigured according to a community designed layout. At the same time, medium density housing units are being planned in Cato Crest and are constructed in Piesang River, Inanda, as demonstrations of how community-based initiatives can address issues of density as an alternative to relocation.

In Johannesburg in the communities of Slovo Park, Ruimsig and Kliptown, SDI have achieved the following: 1050 individual household connections to water mains have been installed, paid for and maintained by the communities; a community hall has been completed; a community library has been set up; a settlement is being re-blocked in order to move densely placed shacks further apart in order to minimize the risk of shack fires; blocked drains were cleaned by the communities; settlement enumerations are taking place. Fellow shack dwellers under threat of eviction have been negotiating to be incorporated into an 'established' settlement, while formerly indifferent or hostile politicians and officials are getting to engage with the Alliance and contribute towards and learn from the process.

In Stellenbosch three pilot sites have identified and joint working groups of city officials and communities are planning for the first interventions to take place in 2011.



In Ekurhuleni, five pilot projects have been identified. In one of these, Thinasonke, land tenure challenges have been resolved and a modular community hall has been constructed and transported to the site. It only awaits council approval before it is erected.

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Figure 5: Sheffield Road, Cape Town – inner space before upgrading. Photo: Aditya Kumar, CORC

In Cape Town, the partnership between the city authorities and the Alliance is well established. With support from the University of Cape Town, communal toilets are being constructed in Barcelona informal settlement, Gugulethu. Enumerations, GIS mapping and profiles are being conducted in TT Section, Khayelitsha, and in Europe informal settlement, Gugulethu.

The flagship project is an upgrading initiative on a road reserve on Sheffield Road in Philippi. Whilst this is a temporary upgrading until people are provided with suitable and acceptable alternative land, the capacities built and the lessons learnt are certain to be long lasting and have already been exported to the other pilots throughout the country. This is increasing the prospects for a genuine people's process to be at the heart of the Minister's undertaking to upgrade 400,000 informal households by the year 2014.

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Figure 6: Sheffield Road, Cape Town – new public space after upgrading claimed by women and their children for domestic chores and play. Photo: Aditya Kumar, CORC
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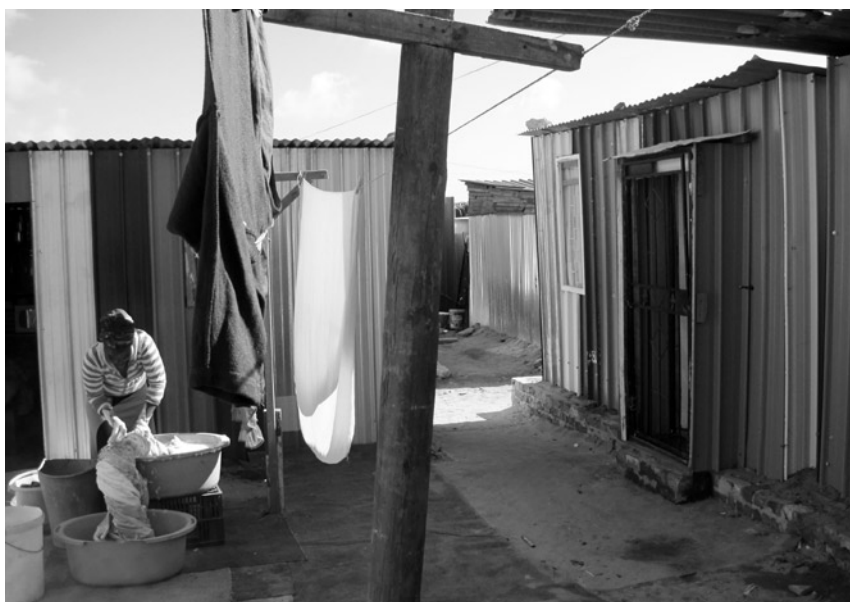




Figure 7: Enumeration - "Europe" Informal Settlement, Cape Town. Photo: Aditya Kumar, CORC

▲ *The case of Sheffield Road*

It is useful to examine the Sheffield Road experience in some detail, given its important role as the first centre for learning about community-based informal settlement upgrading in the country. Sheffield Road informal settlement was identified in mid 2009 as a settlement to be upgraded in conjunction with ISN and the City of Cape Town. A community-based shack-count was used to ascertain the number of shacks in the settlement. A final count determined that 167 families lived on the road reserve and would benefit from the upgrading process. This enumeration formed the basis for an unconventional program in which a poor, landless community developed their own upgrading plans in close collaboration with local government, social movements, professionals and academics.

Figure 8: "Rather a better shack now than wait twenty years for a formal house." Quarry Road, Durban. Photo: Samke Phewa, CORC



Though policies and laws always exist on the books, it is the practical lessons learnt through this partnership that are bearing the most fruit in affecting the City's practice. Initially the City was reluctant to talk of partnership, especially for a settlement built on a road reserve. But, in large part because of what is happening at Sheffield Road, the SDI Alliance now has regular interactions with the Informal Settlements Department of the City of Cape Town.

The SDI team and the City hold monthly Strategic Partnership Planning meetings at management level. At this meeting a select number of ISN, Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) and iKhayalami representatives discuss strategy with the Heads of Departments at City level and monitor the learning to emerge from a proposed 21 pilot projects in 21 different informal settlements. Work has already started in three of these settlements, including Sheffield Road. There are also monthly meetings with City officials at settlement level to discuss the issues related to specific settlements and find ways to address pressing issues. A key component of the partnership is to aid communities in their engagements with the City to improve basic service provision such as water, sanitation, drainage, waste removal and electricity.

In the three settlements where the pilots have already started direct channels of communication between community leadership and city authorities ensure that agreements translate into delivery. For example, in Sheffield Road, the City has funded and started to install additional 15 water borne toilets and 3 communal water points. They have also connected drainage from the water outlets to storm-water drains, thereby reducing the risk of flooding.

The most challenging aspect of the partnership with the City of Cape Town to date has been getting them to sanction and support SDI and the community's blocking-out agenda. The City made it clear at the onset of the partnership that they would not support the improvement of shelters and the reconfiguration of the settlement into a better layout. After three months of negotiations, the South African SDI Alliance was able to demonstrate the overall benefits of such an activity: better use of space, better drainage, public open space for women and children, greater safety and security. The City of Cape Town agreed in July 2010 that their partnership with the Alliance would include matters related to blocking-out, beginning with the blocking out of Sheffield Road.

The building of technical capacity at community level and in the ISN has been ongoing. iKhayalami has trained the leaders from Sheffield Road to draw maps to scale. Now there is an ISN mapping team that does the mapping of settlements that are part of the pilot projects. This team constantly trains other community members as they progress from one settlement to the next. The skill of drawing a map to scale is a crucial step in understanding a settlement and beginning to envisage a new layout plan.

The ISN has also set up a pilot project team made up of members who are part of the executive structure of ISN. The pilot project team has been involved in all aspects of engagement with communities who are part of the pilot projects. This team has been working closely with technical support professionals on the ground. Weekly meetings are held between the pilot project team and the technical

professionals to plan the week ahead and to capacitate the team where needed. They are learning a great deal by doing and it is envisaged that in future it will be they who will be leading technical aspects in the communities with professional support where needed.

At the street or cluster level, iKhayalami and ISN have conducted participatory planning workshops. The reconfiguration of two clusters, involving 28 families, has already been designed and implemented. The design has included a rudimentary drainage system that takes storm water out the settlement and minimizes the risk of flooding. The reconfiguration has also created space for additional standpipes and toilets. In addition to iKhayalami, the community has received technical support from academics and students in the Department of Architecture at the University of Cape Town.

The final element of the upgrading is the construction of basic, affordable but highly functional informal housing units, designed and manufactured by the South African SDI Alliance, at a materials costs of R3,500 per unit. Households interested in these units have been required to make a R350 contribution. For those who are most vulnerable and financially insecure, payment takes the form of a 50% deposit prior to construction with the balance payable within three months.

Protocols for informal settlement upgrading at scale

There have been numerous quantitative and qualitative outcomes of this project, along with the rest of the Alliance's informal settlement upgrading experience in the last half decade, that now constitute elements of the SDI Alliance's protocols for upgrading informal settlements. They are:

1. Community members are organized through planning committees and are actively involved in all aspects of the development from conceptualizing, designing, making financial contributions and implementation;
2. Local government is fully committed and provides basic services at no cost, and as prioritised with the community.
3. As a result of the partnership, the City of Cape Town and the ISN are challenging elements of existing regulatory frameworks in urban development,² such as recognition of reconfiguration or re-blocking as part of informal settlement upgrading;
4. The strategy of ISN is to network informal settlement communities at the city-wide scale precisely in order to facilitate people-led development strategies with city-wide reach; ISN's grassroots networking capacity means that the learning in this project has been made available to over 120 communities in the Western Cape and hundreds more throughout the country.
5. Community contribution is seen not only as a definite possibility, even for the very poor, but as a powerful mobilizing and accountability mechanism and as a means of leveraging external resources, especially from the State.

Different typologies for upgrading and associated costs have begun to emerge and get standardized. Minimum (and maximum) plot and shack sizes are being established, with no one getting less than their previous footprint.³ Even settlements with very high densities can be re-configured in such a way that communal open space is made available. These are indeed small beginnings, but within them, almost completely formed, can be found the configuration required for scaling up. Experience shows that solutions will not emerge overnight, but that their emergence and their escalation, once it starts, will be exponential. Unlike subsidy-based housing delivery, informal settlement upgrading cannot succeed even in one community, let alone at scale, without the active participation of those households who constitute it.

Conclusion: A participatory framework for realizing inclusive cities in South Africa

Even if it is just physical upgrading that needs to be done, it is highly unlikely that the Minister's target to upgrade 400,000 households in four years is going to be met without active community participation. This is not just about sending in consultants and contractors to do the job. That is not upgrading. Upgrading the lives of the people requires mobilization and consultation around the needs for upgrading that people identify. It is a permutation of that old rallying cry of the South African liberation struggle: "Nothing for us without us." For this is not about bricks, land, and services alone. This is about realizing real democratic, developmental citizenship.

Professional interventions can certainly add value, but they cannot change people's informal financial management systems or their complex and intricate inter-relationships. Bring in the consultants and the contractors and continue to treat the urban poor as children, or at best as beneficiaries, and four years down the line we will have improved informal settlements, but they will still house poor, vulnerable, unorganized and very angry citizens.

The South African government has seen informality as a threat. Its institutions have kept the informal world at arm's length from the production of services and housing. The poor have therefore bore painful witness to the attendant dysfunction of such a strategy. But the things that appear as failures of informal practice — haphazard density, lack of regulated services, etc. — are a result of the State's inability to harness the positive aspects. Survival and innovation have been the hallmarks of systems that the urban poor develop to produce services and shelter in the absence of effective state intervention.

As the South African government makes a political and potentially bureaucratic shift towards incremental upgrading, the formal framework moves closer to a facilitating synergy with longstanding informal practice. When the poor and the State work together to "co-produce" developmental outcomes, the results will begin to yield the kind of sustainability and scalability necessary to address the challenges that have not abated in South Africa's cities since 1994. The development of mechanisms and institutions for this "co-production" is the strategy — and outcome — of the South African SDI Alliance's practice-based approach.

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For example in Sheffield Road they are finding ways in which to approve the electrification of informal settlements that are located on a road reserves.

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For example: following numerous engagements and meetings, the Sheffield Road community decided that in the re-blocking, households should be apportioned at least the same footprint as they had had previously. Also materials are provided on the basis of plot size and level of household contribution. Despite the fact that the re-blocking activity took place in a settlement with a high density of shacks, the community was able to open up public space that women and their children claimed as a space for domestic chores and play.



Benjamin Bradlow

Research and Documentation Officer in the Secretariat of Shack/Slum Dwellers International. He has also worked as a journalist in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Philadelphia, United States, with a particular interest in urban community development and governance. Contact: <ben@sdinet.org>



Joel Bolnick

Manager of the secretariat of Shack/Slum Dwellers International, and founder of the Community Organisation Resource Centre, a South African consortium of shack dwellers associations and development professionals. Contact: <joel@sdinet.org>