

Julia Pollak - Community-Driven Development: How the Poor Can Take Charge To Improve Their Housing



Photo: www.rand.org

Public housing projects have been controversial for decades in countries around the world. They have been seen as a potential remedy to housing inequality, providing a guaranteed minimum standard of living. While some developments have achieved a degree of success, others have earned bad reputations for worsening segregation, social tension, unemployment, violence, and drug use. A common complaint against even the more successful projects is that residents get little effective say about their design.

A close look at an informal settlement in Cape Town, South Africa, could serve as a guide for other countries experimenting with community-driven development, an alternative approach to public housing.

[Community-driven development](#) (PDF), which has gained traction since the 1990s, has largely abandoned the housing aims of equality and standardization. Under this approach, control over development decisions and resources goes directly to the people who potentially will be living in the housing. These citizens identify community priorities. They organize to address local problems as partners with local governments and other organizations. Such projects are emerging in Cape Verde, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Brazil, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Benin, and Morocco. The result is considerable variety, as community-driven housing

becomes as diverse as the personalities of those driving them. The hope, of course, is that the best developments will be scaled up and their recipes for success will be shared, serving as useful guides for other communities.

Read more: <http://www.rand.org/community-driven-development>