

Inclusive Cities - South Africa



Photo: inclusivecities.ning.com - The Challenge

Through the South African national government's subsidized housing delivery program, roughly 2.3 million households have been accommodated since 1994. Under the auspices of the Financial Sector Charter, the four major banks invested R44.8 billion in providing more affordable housing. However, despite these achievements, the total housing deficit has not improved significantly, and an estimated 2.1 million households in South Africa live in shacks, either in informal settlements or in the backyards of formal housing.

In 2004 the then Minister of Housing, Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, introduced two significant policy initiatives. The first, *Breaking New Ground* is a '[national] comprehensive plan for the development of sustainable human settlements', known as The Comprehensive Plan. A key element of the plan is a commitment to have tackled the question of informal settlement upgrading by 2014. Within the framework of this comprehensive national plan the government also finalized the second significant policy initiative, a thorough and wide-ranging policy on the 'upgrading of informal settlements'.

Read more: <http://inclusivecities.ning.com/page/south-africa>

Zeynep Gunduz & Marjan

Delzenne - Budget Monitoring And Citizen Participation In The Netherlands



Indische Buurt - Amsterdam Photo:
Zeynep Gunduz

This paper describes the methodology of budget monitoring and its operationalization via the project in the Indische Neighborhood. The 12-month pilot project was realized by The Centre for Budget Monitoring and Citizen Participation, in collaboration with E-motive, University of Applied Science in Amsterdam (HvA), MOVISIE and members of local communities in the neighborhood.

The launch of the Center for Budget Monitoring and Citizen Participation in the Netherlands

The idea to implement budget monitoring in the Netherlands was initiated by E-Motive of Oxfam-Novib. E-Motive connects knowledge and expertise from developing countries to Dutch professionals. In 2010, E-Motive introduced a group of social professionals in the Netherlands to INESC (Institute of Socioeconomic Studies), *the* expert on budget monitoring in Brazil. A year-long intense co-operation between active citizens and social workers from the Netherlands and INESC led to the launch of the Center for Budget Monitoring and Citizen Participation (Stichting Centrum voor Budgetmonitoring en Burgerparticipatie) in Amsterdam in December 2011.

The collaboration with INESC has played a significant role in developing the method of budget monitoring for the Netherlands. INESC has more than three decades of activism and research in Brazil and worldwide and believes that social participation is crucial in making governments accountable and promoting social justice. Since 1991, INESC has chosen public budget as a strategic tool to increase social participation in policy and in controlling the spending of budgets. INESC is specifically concerned with the allocation of public budget to promote social justice and human rights. They have developed their own methodology entitled Budget and Human Rights with the aim to verify the realization of human rights and their sustainability. Relying on education as a strategy, INESC targets schools located in poor urban neighborhoods (favelas) where they teach students the method of budget monitoring, the fundamental importance of active citizenship and influencing government policy.

INESC has achieved many positive results with this approach. One example is the ONDA project. Students participating in the project monitored the budget of their local government. They found out that two million *reales* was assigned for the renovation of their school. But the school never received the money. So the students attended a public hearing and managed to get an amendment for all public schools in the federal republic. Examples like this underline the strong impact that budget monitoring and civic participation can have on the allocation of public budgets.

INESC's method was created for the context of Brazil and needed to be adjusted to the Dutch context. In comparison to INESC's method, which focuses on human rights, our emphasis lies on social justice and civic participation. In addition, within the context of the Netherlands, the method of budget monitoring seems to fit active neighborhood organizations best as well as those communities that want to get a grip on the utilization of available resources in their neighborhoods.

Read more: <http://rozenbergquarterly.com/?p=4991>

The Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI)

www.seri-sa.org. The Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) is a non-profit organisation providing professional and dedicated socio-economic rights assistance to individuals, communities and social movements in South Africa.

SERI conducts applied research, engages with government, advocates for policy and legal reform, facilitates civil society coordination and mobilisation, conducts popular education and training, and litigates in the public interest (the SERI Law Clinic is registered as a public interest law centre).

Our thematic areas are:

- housing and evictions;
- access to basic services; and
- political space.

Housing and Evictions

Of all socio-economic rights, the right of access to adequate housing has been the most developed through Constitutional Court cases, many of which have been actively participated in by SERI's co-founders. This means that there is a body of work to use as a basis of advocacy and litigation.

However, while jurisprudence has established, for example, that poor people should not be evicted without the government providing adequate alternative accommodation, a number of crucial gaps remain. One of these is that there is insufficient research on the nature and attributes of alternative accommodation required by people under threat of eviction. Another is the need to combat state efforts to exclude classes of people from the provision of alternative accommodation as a means of narrowing the scope of their obligations to provide housing. Yet another is the lack of a co-ordinated civil society sector response to deficiencies in the implementation of housing policies. Agendas remain to be developed, and community-based organisations do not receive the necessary expert assistance from lawyers and policy specialists to properly develop and

implement the agendas that they have identified without assistance. Too many community-based organisations (CBOs) lack the resources necessary to resist forced evictions and engage critically with pre-determined upgrading and relocation plans, which are often presented to them as faits-accomplis.

Read more: <http://www.seri-sa.org/>

Zolani Moya - Minister Sexwale Launches Affordable Housing Scheme



Photo - Shack Dwellers International
- nextcity.org

Sabc.co.za. May, 9, 2013

The latest housing project by the department of Human Settlements aims to give low income earners an opportunity to own their houses.

This project targets people earning between R3500 and R15 000 per month for a housing subsidy of up to R87 000 and they can apply for finance for houses up to R300 000.

The first phase of the projects includes 430 units worth nearly R15 million in Port Elizabeth.

Thembinkosi Peter is the first South African to benefit from this housing project, he works for the South African Police force's support services.

This project has enabled him to buy the two bedroomed house after struggling for years to acquire a bond. Peter lives with his wife and young daughter. *"It's a life changing experience and I am very happy about this thing that government has done, we have been renting, struggling getting places but it's much better, I am going to have my own house with family"*, says an ecstatic Peter.

The project targets people earning between R3500 and R15 000 per month for a housing subsidy of up to R87 000.

The subsidies for the beneficiaries is provided through the Finance Linked Individual Subsidy programme.

Read

more:

<http://www.sabc.co.za/Minister-Sexwale-launches-affordable-housing-scheme>

Anywhere But Here: Deserted Banking Empire Turned Skyscraper Slum



messynessychic.com

messynessychic.com. May, 7, 2013. It was built for stockbrokers and bankers in their thousand dollar suits to make million dollar deals, but for nearly two decades it has held the less impressive title of the world's tallest squat. Welcome to the Centro Financiero Confinanzas, more commonly known as the Torre David (the Tower of David) in Caracas, Venezuela, an unfinished skyscraper which has now been colonised by an ad hoc community of over 700 families.

Read

and

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more: <http://www.messynessyctic.com/banking-empire-turned-skyscraper-slum/>

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar - The World Needs More Slums

nextcity.org - May, 7, 2013 - In a guest blog post, Indian journalist Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar argues that, contrary to their reputation for squalor and crime, slums provide a critical low-cost way for the rural poor to access a better life in cities.

What constitutes the perfect city? It's easy to make a list of utopian must-haves: Electricity and water round the clock; unpolluted air; plentiful road space for cars, bicycles and pedestrians; good educational and health facilities; lots of parks and museums. Those with an institutional mindset will argue for elected mayors with strong tax and administrative powers, giving them independence from callous state capitals.



Photo - Shack Dwellers International
- nextcity.org

No matter how desirable, such utopian longings fail to place cities in the context of a poor, rural society. Cities must not be elite islands in a rural sea of despond[ency]. They must provide income and social ladders for the poor and unskilled to climb up. Cities must be havens of opportunity for those without opportunity in rural and tribal settings.

This has an implication that will make many blanch — we must have more slums. These are the entry points of the poor into urban havens of opportunity. When urban land costs crores (millions) per plot, the poor can't dream of buying land. Cities lack the funds for even basic facilities, let alone massive public housing. So rural migrants encroach on public land, creating shanty towns. These slums are

eyesores — just looking at them makes urban folk shudder. Yet this should drive home to the elite how truly wretched rural India must be if poor people see more hope in filthy urban shanties than in the countryside.

Read more: <http://nextcity.org/informalcity/entry/we-need-more-slums>