

HOUSING NEEDS: THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF HOUSING PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE POOR IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Tatenda Manomano, Pius T. Tanga

---

The article is based on a study of the implementation of housing programmes in the Amathole District of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. A sample of 250 residents took part in a survey and housing officials, representatives of political parties, municipal managers, councillors and social workers were interviewed. The findings revealed that most of the houses had been constructed from substandard materials and evinced poor workmanship, such as poorly fitting doors and windows, cracked walls and weak roofs and floors. The numbers of housing units and the number of rooms in them were inadequate in terms of both demand and construction targets. Although houses are being provided, their quality poses a threat to the health, safety and human dignity of the intended beneficiaries.

Tatenda Manomano <ManomanoT@ufs.ac.za>

# **HOUSING NEEDS: THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF HOUSING PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE POOR IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**Tatenda Manomano, Pius T. Tanga**

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the fundamental basic human needs, along with food and water, is shelter or housing. Throughout the world it has been reported that a billion new houses will be needed by 2025 in order to accommodate new urban dwellers, while it is estimated that the meagre resources of 330 million people are likely to be stretched and strained by their housing needs, accompanied by intense emotional distress (UN Habitat, 2015). The providing and granting of access to housing constitutes an essential component of the bedrock endeavours of social work, which include the providing of foster care, the providing of homes to homeless people or refugees, and the providing of treatment centres, all with the common goal of promoting the normal social functioning of individual people, families and communities (Social Work Policy Institute, 2006).

Access to housing contributes to a sense of belonging, ownership, identity, citizenship and a sense of self-sufficiency (Social Work Policy Institute, 2006). The provision of housing fits perfectly into the ambit of providing adequate social services; it helps to meet the needs of people for housing on both the micro and the macro levels (Social Work Policy Institute, 2006), and contributes a vital component to social development (Patel, 2015). Either a lack of adequate housing or housing which is of poor quality will inevitably reflect adversely on the extent of social development of a particular community and the economic environment within which its individual members live (Social Work Policy Institute, 2006). Although this study acknowledges various constraints to the effective implementation of housing programmes, it also gives significant attention to challenging the hegemonic forces that militate against ensuring that the needy and vulnerable have equitable access to housing which is of adequate quality.

For Ionakimidis and Dominelli (2016: 437), a key concern for promoting the dignity and worth of people requires social workers not only to have “rigorous analytical and methodological tools”. They maintain that it is also imperative for the profession to understand completely and to challenge “the political nature of the concept of human dignity”. The new thinking, which has dominated many spaces of discourse in South Africa on the need for radical change and transformation, points to a people which has become both worn down and weary as a result of decades of unfulfilled promises and pledges regarding their own fundamental human rights and needs, particularly with respect to housing. This radical change in thinking stems partly from the recognition of the fact that without housing which is of sufficient quality, there is an ever-increasing probability of rendering vast segments of previously disadvantaged population groups completely powerless and incapable of participating in decision making. Rather than finally taking their rightful place in a liberated society after the privations which they had endured under a dispensation which is now internationally recognised as having been a criminal one, these

citizens stand to be subjected to further humiliation and loss of dignity (Young, 2004). Dlamini and Sewpaul (2015) maintain that the procedures which limit social workers to working in the domain of social relief and preclude them from attending to the real needs of disadvantaged people effectively restrict their capacity for advocacy. A critical approach, from a social work perspective, which advocates for the effective meeting of housing needs is essential. As Sewpaul and Larsen (2014) point out, raising critical consciousness can actually provide a platform for emancipation and transformation. This study has been conducted not as a passive exercise, but rather in order to challenge the status quo to change the circumstances of homeless people of South Africa.

As a social development initiative for improving the lives of the vulnerable and needy, the government of South Africa introduced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994, which is now known as the Breaking Ground Initiative. This programme was introduced with the express purpose of providing for those who had been denied housing in the past with access to good quality, adequate housing (Republic of South Africa, 1994), in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of South Africa (1996). The right to housing is clearly enshrined in Section 26 (1) of the Constitution of 1996. The section stipulates that access to housing is a basic human right and that the government is obligated to ensure a progressive realisation of that human right (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

Numerous pieces of legislation and programmes have been introduced to reinforce and support the original programme, such as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR) (Mafukidze & Hoosen, 2009) and the National Housing Code of 2009 (National Housing Code, 2009). The post-apartheid Reconstruction and Development Housing Programme (or RDP) (1994) was intended to remediate the housing backlog, which was becoming increasingly evident from the rapid growth of high-density informal settlements and 'squatter camps' in and around urban centres (McGaffin, Cirolia & Massyn, 2015:61). Another programme which targeted needy and vulnerable people who were without housing was the Upgrade of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) (National Housing Code, 2009). It was introduced in 2009 as a renewal programme for the shacks and squatter settlements in order to ensure that the houses were of good quality and that they accommodated those who resided in them adequately. It appears that this programme did not cover all of South Africa, although it had purported to do so. The Emergency Housing Programme (EHP) is another significant measure which has been taken by the government of South Africa to enable it to fulfil its constitutional mandate to ensure access to adequate shelter to its citizens.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The study endeavours to achieve the following objectives:

- To assess the extent to which the government has provided housing in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa;
- To assess and evaluate the houses specifically in relation to the quality of their windows, roofs, doors, walls and floors, and also with respect to their size, spacing and the number of rooms which they contain.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework which underpins this paper is the social developmental approach. This approach was adopted by the government of South Africa to guide the implementation of most of its social development programmes since the attaining of democracy in 1994. The social developmental approach was preceded by the residual model of welfare which had been used by the apartheid government (Patel, 2015). The approach was intended to inform programmes that sought to redress imbalances, discrimination and exploitation, one of which was the RDP for housing. However, it is also evident that the programmes were implemented without adequately applying the social developmental approach, which has five core principles (Patel, 2015). First, it requires the harmonising of economic growth with social development in order to ensure that the needy and vulnerable population groups benefit from all of the policies and programmes (Patel, 2015:88). A significant concern is that, while the economy of the country may be growing and huge budgets are allocated to social services, corrupt tendencies have been exerting an adverse influence on the quality and size of the houses being provided. Midgley and Tang (2001: 246) maintain that there is a need for purposeful intervention between state and non-state actors and also for organisational and institutional arrangements which are committed to people-centred development. This stipulation entails action by the government through policies and legislation of a protective and regulatory nature, with an emphasis on the removal of barriers to attaining equity and social advancement for disadvantaged people (Patel, 2015: 30). Monyai (2013) points out that the paradox of social policy is that the majority of those who are marginalised at present are those who were excluded by apartheid policies, although present social development policies and programmes claim to target them as beneficiaries.

Secondly, the approach stresses the importance of partnerships in the implementation of programmes (Department of Social Development [DoSD], 2013; Patel, 2015:93). For example, in order for the implementation of housing programmes to produce fruitful results, there is a need to integrate their implementation among all government and non-government stakeholders. This precondition fosters transparency and commitment to beneficial implementation and also ensures that housing needs are adequately met. Monyai (2013) asserts that as poverty and social inequality are growing problems in developing countries, it is of crucial importance that these problems should be prioritised as political imperatives and that, to date, the provision of housing has made a limited contribution to social upliftment.

The third principle emphasises sustainability, social justice and human capabilities. The delivery of housing to the needy should not be carried out from a sense of duty or as an end in itself, but it should also ensure the wellbeing of future generations (Patel, 2015: 87) by ensuring that the houses are durable and able to withstand strains and stresses and break-ins. A reminder was provided by Ioakimidis and Dominelli (2016: 435) that social workers should be mindful of the “structural and colossal contradictions that hinder the prospect of sustainable and socially just global development”. Fourthly, the approach also aims to ensure that the targeted beneficiaries are empowered in the process of

receiving homes by enabling them to make their own decisions concerning the ways in which projects are implemented. The last crucial principle stresses that all programmes which are implemented on behalf of needy and vulnerable people should be rooted in human rights (Midgely, 1995; Patel, 2015: 82). As the ways in which housing programmes are implemented in South Africa are ostensibly influenced by legislation that makes access to adequate housing a basic human right for all South Africans, the programmes should be accountable to the same Constitution, which protects the rights of all citizens (Republic of South Africa 1996).

## **RESEARCH MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research site**

This paper draws its data from a study conducted in the Amathole district of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. This is one of seven districts that make up the Eastern Cape province. It has a population of 892 637 people, of which those below the age of 15 years is estimated to constitute 33.40% and those between the ages of 15 and 64 years 57.60%, while residents over the age of 65 years are estimated to constitute only 8.90%. Statistics indicate that females constitute 52.92% while males constitute 47.08% of the population, which indicates that the female population is significantly larger than the male one. The official statistics for unemployment show that it is soaring at 42.90 %, while unemployment among youths, who are classified as being between the ages of 15 and 34 years, stands at 53.40%. The average household size is between 3 and 4 members, while those households which have access to water constitute 12.10% (Statistics South Africa, 2015 as cited in *The Local Government Handbook*: online). Although the district has eight municipalities, this study focused on only the four in which the housing programmes which have been discussed are being implemented.

### **Approach to the research and research design**

A combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods was employed, with the quantitative approach being the dominant one. A qualitative approach enables events, occurrences and phenomena to be assessed from a diversity of perspectives, in terms of the meanings which are assigned to them by the participants in a particular research study (Flick, 2006), while quantitative research endeavours to divine the truth through predictions which are made on the basis of quantified measurements and operates in accordance with the laws of cause and effect (Neuman, 2011). The decision to employ the two approaches was made in order to corroborate the findings and to confirm and increase the reliability and validity of the results (De Vos, 2005). Using the two separate categories of research methods in tandem enabled the study to achieve a holistic and contextual evaluation of the implementation of housing programmes in the Amathole district of the Eastern Cape province. The broader study employed a case study and a survey research design, with the case being the Amathole district and two housing projects, namely, the RDP and the UISP housing programmes, while the survey enabled many respondents to be included in the research sample. A survey was chosen because it enabled many participants to be interviewed and many variables to be measured (Neuman, 2011). A case study research design is suitable for conducting

research which entails making evaluations, and it enables researchers to develop an in-depth analysis of a particular case, which may refer to a programme, an event, an activity, a process or an individual person or a collection of individual people, and data are collected through the use of various appropriate procedures and techniques (Yin, 2009, 2012, cited by Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2013).

### **The selection of participants**

The target population of the study included all of the social workers who were employed by the Department of Social Development in the four municipalities and also all of the municipal managers, political party officials, municipal housing officials, councillors, provincial housing officials from the provincial office of the Department of Human Settlements in the Eastern Cape province and all of the beneficiaries of housing programmes in the four municipalities. The research sample of participants for the one-on-one in-depth interviews was selected through the use of purposive sampling. Table 1 shows the populations from which the participants were drawn.

**TABLE 1  
INTERVIEW SAMPLE**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Interview sample</b>	<b>Total sample interviewed</b>
Provincial	5 housing officials at provincial level	5
District	1 social worker from each of the 4 municipalities	4
Municipal	1 municipal manager from each of the 4 municipalities, 5 members of political parties (2 from the ANC, 1 from the DA, 1 from COPE, 1 from the UDM)	9
Municipal	1 councillor from each of the 4 selected municipalities	4
<b>Total</b>		<b>22</b>

**TABLE 2  
QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Questionnaire sample</b>	<b>Total sample interviewed</b>
Municipal	1 municipal housing official from each of the 4 selected municipalities	4
Municipal	150 beneficiaries of the RDP housing programme from Nkonkobe (60), Mbashe (30), Mnquma (40), Nxuba (20) and 100 of the UISP programme from Nkonkobe (8), Mbashe (12), Mnquma (65) Nxuba (15) from the 4 selected municipalities.	250
<b>Total</b>		<b>254</b>

Use was made of multi-stage and simple random sampling to select the respondents for the survey questionnaire. The total numbers of RDP houses and UISP houses were 13 073 and 8 325 respectively, as is shown in Table 3. Simple random sampling entails each unit of a particular target population having an equal likelihood of being selected. In some instances numbers are assigned to units of a population, a set of random numbers is produced and units with those numbers are selected (Babbie, 2010). Multi-stage sampling refers to procedures in which the sampling of a target population is performed in a number of different stages (Rao, 2008). These two sampling methods

were used to select the research sample of respondents for the questionnaire, while purposive sampling was used to select the sample for the one-on-one in-depth interviews (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The total sample for the study comprised 276 participants. Three sets of samples were used, with the first consisting of 250 beneficiaries of the RDP and UISP housing programmes, and the second of four municipal housing officials, to whom survey questionnaires were administered. The third sample was made up of 22 participants, who comprised four municipal managers, four social workers, four ward councillors, five provincial housing officials and five representatives of political parties, who participated in one-on-one in-depth interviews. One social worker, one municipal manager and one ward councillor per municipality were purposively selected, while the provincial housing officials were selected from the Eastern Cape provincial office.

**TABLE 3**  
**HOUSING PROJECTS IN THE MUNICIPALITIES**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of RDP houses</b>	<b>Number of RDP housing projects</b>	<b>Number of UISP houses</b>	<b>Number of UISP housing projects</b>
Nkonkobe	7268	20	249	10
Mbashe	1989	6	393	3
Mnquma	2147	6	7131	4
Nxuba	1669	7	552	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 073</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>8325</b>	<b>22</b>

***Research instruments employed to collect data***

In order to generate data from the interviews, an interview guide with open-ended and demographic questions was compiled to guide the questions put to the participants. The interviews began with biographical questions that included gender, age and levels of education. These questions were followed by opening questions which pertained to the research topic, but with a specific emphasis on the reasons for the great need for houses. These questions were followed by key questions which were guided by the objectives of the study and designed to answer the research questions. A questionnaire which made use of a 4-point Likert scale was used to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire had five sections, designated A, B, C, D and E, which sought to generate the information which was required in order to meet the objectives of the study. Section A concerned specific biographical information, while section B sought to assess the perceptions of the respondents of the standards of the houses that were provided by the programmes in terms of both quality and quantity. Section C endeavoured to elicit information on whether or not the houses met the expectations of the beneficiaries and Section D was intended to obtain information on whether or not the housing programmes accorded with the theoretical frameworks on which they had been based. Section E attempted to elicit suggestions in the form of recommendations for the improving of the housing programmes. The research instruments were pilot tested in order to ensure their reliability and validity. An audio recorder was used, with the consent of the participants, to collect the data from the one-on-one in-depth interviews.

## **Analysis of the data**

The quantitative data were analysed through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The process involved coding the questionnaires and capturing the data into Excel, before using the SPSS software to analyse the captured data. The qualitative data were analysed thematically (Creswell, 2014), by organising, re-arranging and ordering the data into themes, according to the perceptions, beliefs and opinions of the participants that emerged as a result of using thematic analysis.

## **Ethical considerations**

The researchers obtained ethical clearance (REC-270710-028-RA, Level 01) from the University of Fort Hare to embark on this research study. All of the participants took part voluntarily in the study and their right to withdraw from it at any time which they deemed appropriate was explained to them and respected at all times. All of the participants fully understood the nature of the study and their participation in it, and they completed informed consent forms in writing to confirm their willingness to participate. All of the identities of the participants were kept private in order to preserve their anonymity, and their perceptions, beliefs and opinions were treated as strictly confidential in order to ensure and maintain their privacy, despite the fact that an audio recorder had been used to record all of the interviews.

## **RESULTS**

The quantitative and qualitative results will be presented simultaneously in order to ensure a logical flow of the perceptions of the various different professional stakeholders and those of the beneficiaries of the housing programmes. Although the quantitative results will be presented first, they will be presented in relation to the various different themes which emerged during the in-depth interviews and followed by the qualitative results to indicate whether they are either complementary or different. This section will provide all of the results which were generated by the study, beginning with the biographical information that was provided by the respondents in the questionnaire and followed by the different themes which were identified during the course of analysing the qualitative findings, which will be supported by the quantitative results.

### **Biographical information of participants**

It was found that 55.6% of the respondents to the questionnaires were females and 44.4% were males (N=250). Blacks represented a significant racial majority of 72.8%, while coloureds accounted for 27.2% (N=250). No whites or Indians were found to be occupying these houses. With respect to marital status, a majority of 51% were single and a small minority of 3% were cohabiting. Those who were married amounted to 17% of the sample, widows 11%, widowers 6%, those who were separated 4% and those who were divorced 8% (N=250). In terms of employment status, it was found that 49.2% were unemployed, while the smallest group of 0.8% of the sample consisted of those who had retired. Those who were employed constituted 15.6%, while casual labourers made up 12.8%. Those who were recipients of social grants comprised 16%, those who were self-employed constituted 4% and those who were students made up 1.6% (N=250).

## Evaluations of the respondents of the quality of the components of their houses

The information collected from the questionnaires on the perceptions of the respondents of the quality of the individual components of their houses is presented in Table 4.

**TABLE 4**  
**QUALITY OF COMPONENTS OF THE RDP AND UISP HOUSES**

<b>Roofing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fair	22	8.8
Poor	228	91.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Windows</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fair	17	6.8
Poor	233	93.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Doors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fair	16	6.4
Poor	234	93.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Walls</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fair	20	6.4
Poor	230	93.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Floors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fair	16	6.4
Poor	234	93.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

A very significant majority of 91.2% of the respondents rated the quality of the windows in their UISP and RDP houses as poor, while none rated it as being good. Of the participants who took part in the one-on-one in-depth interviews, most confirmed that they were dissatisfied with the poor quality of the windows, which, in most cases, exposed the residents to the risk of hazards such as burglary and theft. Excerpts from the responses of the participants in the interviews pertaining to this problem are provided below.

*“We are not happy with the windows of these RDP and UISP houses. Some break easily and some do not close and this is very risky for the beneficiaries of these houses. What if thieves break in or what if they contract diseases?”*  
(Municipal manager)

*“I visited some of the houses and noticed that most residents use wire and paper to hold the windows together. I think it also affects the human orientation of these programmes.”* (Ward councillor)

These findings show, that although the gesture of providing houses has been made through these housing programmes, the quality of the materials used to make the windows and the quality of the work to install them, fatally undermines the intentions of the policies, which had been formulated in order to implement the programmes. The perceptions which the excerpts reflect demonstrate quite clearly that the quality of the

windows leaves much to be desired, which is a direct result of the so-called low-cost housing, which results in the building of houses which are not fit for human habitation. The fact that some of the windows are broken and some do not close properly will inevitably result in stress, anxiety and insecurity and, also, in exposure to crimes such as burglary and undesirable incursions by insects.

### **LEAKING AND COLLAPSING ROOFS**

As can be seen in Table 3, an equally significant majority of 91.2% maintained that the roofs of their RDP and UISP houses were of poor quality, while 8.8% rated their quality as being fair. Once again, none rated it as being good. These findings were corroborated by the sentiments which were expressed in the interviews. Representative excerpts are provided below.

*“Some of the houses have stones on top of them to keep the roofs from falling down and may injure or kill if they fall on a person, while some roofs are leaking, allowing different things to fall into the houses.”* (Political party representative)

*“Roofs can collapse at any time and some are already collapsing. We do have a lot of roofs that need to be repaired. Unfortunately, some of the residents are needy and may not be able to improvise on their own.”* (Provincial housing official)

Both the qualitative and the quantitative findings support the contention that the quality of the roofs of the houses is unacceptably poor. As was explained by the interviewees, many of the roofs of the houses are in a very bad condition. Although the residents also have a duty to try to resolve their problems themselves, their financial circumstances preclude them from taking all but the most rudimentary and often dangerous measures to stop their houses from becoming completely uninhabitable. Although the government officials who were interviewed acknowledged that they need to take action on behalf of the recipients of the poorly constructed houses, the problems need to be resolved practically and quickly.

### **Weak and defective doors**

Table 3 shows 93.6% of the respondents believed that the doors of their houses were of poor quality, while 6.4% rated their quality as fair. The findings from the interviews confirmed that the materials which had been used to make the doors were proving to be weak and defective. The following two excerpts serve as evidence of this perception among the interviewees.

*“We have had instances of break-ins and our concern is mostly regarding the sexual abuse of women and children, because it has been happening here. This should send a critical message to the housing authorities about the need to improve these weak and defective doors, because they are a contributing factor to this problem.”* (Social worker)

*“It is very true that most of the houses have weak and wrong doors due to the way the implementation took place.”* (Ward councillor)

Other stakeholders who were interviewed confirmed and emphasised the problems which the poor quality of the doors had created and the risks this entailed for the recipients of the houses.

### **Weak, cracking and collapsing walls**

Similar findings were generated concerning the quality of the walls of the houses, with 93.6% of the respondents rating it as poor and 6.4% as fair. The qualitative findings corroborated the quantitative ones and it was explained that the walls were not suitable and poorly erected. The interviewees maintained that most of the houses had walls which were cracking and so weak that the residents suffered during cold weather, particularly during the coldest months of winter. The following excerpts from the interviews provide eloquent testimony to this finding.

*“I am so dismayed with the walls of those houses. Some of the residents are suffering from cold, especially during winter, because those walls permit a lot of wind through them.”* (Municipal housing official)

*“The walls are very poor. We receive complaints that some of them are cracking. As a result, the danger of diseases is much more likely.”* (Provincial housing official)

It is quite evident that for one or more reasons, acceptable standards for constructing the walls of the houses are not being met. The materials which are used to construct the walls may be of questionable quality, those who are tasked with constructing them may not be sufficiently well trained, or the problems may result from a combination of both of these factors. The perception that the quality of the walls was inadequate was shared by both the stakeholders who were interviewed as well as the recipients of the houses. The fact that the walls are not able to provide adequate cover and protect the residents from rain and wind poses immense health hazards, as living in these conditions exposes them to contracting lung infections and other debilitating ailments.

### **Weak and cracking floors**

Table 3 shows that 93.6% of the respondents believed that the floors of their houses were of poor quality. Although 6.4% rated the quality as fair, none believed that the quality was good. The possibility that a small minority could have refrained from giving an outright rating of poor could have resulted from a fear of having their houses taken away from them cannot be completely discounted. All of the participants in the interviews expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the floors, as the following excerpts will readily attest:

*“What is frustrating is that people are given houses that have floors that are cracking, which can hurt the occupants. The cracking problem is primarily attributed to the poor strength of the floors. You wonder whether the constructors also contributed to this, besides the government.”* (Political party representative)

*“We, as social workers, are concerned with the wellbeing of the citizens and the fact that they also mentioned the cracked condition of the floors to us is a matter*

*of concern, as we know that this also affects their children and may lead to poor health.” (Social worker)*

The poor quality of these houses is an affront to the dignity of those whose lives they had been intended to improve. The dignity of people is always associated with the quality of their housing, even if it has a low market value, but when their houses are not built in a manner which makes them sustainable, their wellbeing will inevitably be adversely affected (Govender, Barnes & Pieper, 2011). In the case of the poor flooring in the RDP and UISP houses, it was found that in some cases the residents had been obliged to wear strong shoes while they were in their houses in order to avoid being hurt or injured by the cracks in the floors.

### **Size, spacing and number of rooms in the houses**

As is shown in Table 5, only 1.2% of the respondents indicated that they lived in houses which had more than two rooms, while 11.6% indicated that they lived in two-roomed houses, and a majority of 87.2% that they had one-roomed houses. In the same table it can be seen that only 0.4% of the respondents felt that their houses were large, while 10.4% felt that they were small and a very significant majority of 89.2% believed that the houses were very small. None felt that the houses were adequate, while 8.4% maintained that they were inadequate and 91.6% that they were very inadequate. The following excerpts from the interviews support these perceptions.

*“These houses are of very small size and complicate the lives of families staying with their children or other relatives in the same houses. There is no privacy and no confidentiality and this is a serious problem.” (Social worker)*

*“These houses are too small and we do not know what will happen if this is not addressed. Already some people are using shacks for their families too, because they cannot all stay in a one-roomed house.” (Ward councillor)*

**TABLE 5  
NUMBERS OF ROOMS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE SPACING AND  
SIZE OF HOUSES**

<b>Number of rooms</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
One	218	87.2
Two	29	11.6
More than 2	3	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Spacing of houses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Inadequate	21	8.4
Very inadequate	229	91.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Size of the house</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Large	1	.4
Small	26	10.4
Very small	223	89.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The findings confirm that the houses are small, inadequate and in many cases consist of only a single room. The fact that these perceptions were shared by both the recipients of the houses and by representatives of organisations which purport to attend to their wellbeing confirms conclusively that the housing programmes have failed those whose living conditions they had been intended to improve. However, it has also been suggested that those residents who had not been eligible for being allocated these houses and had obtained them by other means may not be likely to share the assessments of those who had received them through the official channels. A grave concern which was raised by one of the social workers was the fact that the residents lacked privacy, which could encourage children to roam and play in the streets and other places in which they were vulnerable to abuse.

## **DISCUSSION**

Although South Africa may be commended for initiating programmes such as the RDP and the UISP, Black Economic Empowerment, youth empowerment programmes and social grants, the success of these programmes has been questionable (Mitlin & Mogaladi, 2013). It was established in this study that unemployment is very widely prevalent among the needy and vulnerable people whom the housing programmes are intended to benefit. Although the country has great potential to overcome unemployment and to promote economic growth and development, those who implement the housing programmes need to consider how people will survive in living conditions such as these in order to avoid creating another social problem while endeavouring to overcome an existing one.

The social developmental approach holds that apart from social security and other forms of aid, social support should be sufficiently holistic to develop human capital in a manner which will also benefit the economic and social environment (Patel, 2015). A significant problem which has been identified is the inability to reconcile these programmes with the actual needs of their intended beneficiaries. This is a crucial concern which has been largely ignored and the incorrect assumptions which have riddled these programmes have resulted in the further impoverishment of the needy (Peters, 2013). An adequate reconciliation of the programmes with the needs of the most needy and vulnerable segments of South African society would improve their standing in an uncertain economic environment, which is accompanied by low confidence among investors. A catalyst for boosting confidence among investors develops from the relationship between socio-economic policies or programmes and their ability to transform the livelihoods of the needy and vulnerable (Peters, 2013). In addition, although the informal sector has shown credible signs of enabling people to survive in South Africa, the problems which impede the development of the sector pertain to abuses and undesirable practices which result from a lack of adequate oversight on the part of the state. Appropriate oversight by the state is a precondition whose importance cannot be over-emphasised if informal trade is to be promoted and enabled to thrive in these segments of society (Rodgerson, 2016).

The main findings of this study revealed very low-quality houses with substandard windows, doors, roofs and floors. These findings have been widely confirmed by the residents of houses in other RDP housing programmes throughout the country. The relevant

literature has identified the risks and vulnerabilities that are associated with houses which are of such low quality, including burglary and theft, the contracting of diseases, a lack of privacy and other related problems (Nabudere, 2014; Govender, Barnes & Pieper, 2011). The descriptions which were provided by the interviewees of the state of the houses reveal the undignified circumstances to which the recipients of the houses have been subjected, which place them at the risk of losing their own sense of humanity, worth and dignity. Stigmatisation and discrimination are among the commonly displayed negative attitudes towards those who are obliged to live in these low-cost government houses, particularly in the urban areas, where there are wealthy neighbours. In the rural areas it is still often regarded as a privilege to live in and own a house which has been provided by the government. In addition, the fact that the low quality of the houses exposes their recipients to health risks effectively undermines and defeats the intention of the government to provide decent and adequate housing to its most needy citizens. Decent and adequate housing is intended to promote the health of people and not threaten it. Under the conditions revealed by this study, it may not be possible to improve the economic circumstances of the country's most needy and deserving citizens and to create socially viable communities.

As has been pointed out, the quality of housing is indicative of the economic environment in which people are obliged to live (Social Work Policy Institute, 2006). The quality of the houses which are provided by the housing programmes constitutes a significant factor in communities becoming run down and resulting in a wide range of socially undesirable consequences, such as widespread unemployment and rising levels of social ills such as drug abuse. Gray and Fook (2002) rightly maintain that social workers need to become more accountable and responsive to the various different contexts in which they provide their services to communities. It is for this reason that the researchers do not wish to lay blame, but rather to advocate for rebuilding of the houses in a manner which enables them to meet the actual housing needs of the targeted beneficiaries of the housing programmes. The fifth principle of the social developmental approach states that any programme which is implemented in the interests of the people should be rooted in human rights (Midgeley, 1995; Patel, 2015: 82). Accordingly, advocacy and lobbying by social workers and other relevant bodies serves to remind the stakeholders who are tasked with the implementation of the housing projects of the human rights which stand to be violated if the quality of the houses is poor. In addition, the rights of the intended beneficiaries of the projects stand to be further infringed upon if problems result from the poor quality of houses. The third principle emphasises sustainability, social justice and human capabilities (Patel, 2015: 87). The poor quality of the materials which have been used to construct houses in the housing projects inevitably raises questions concerning both sustainability and the likely development of human capabilities under conditions such as these. The present impasse is likely to perpetuate the housing problems which continue to marginalise the most needy and vulnerable segments of the population indefinitely, unless a profoundly radical change of direction, which is informed by an absolute commitment to social justice, is embarked upon.

Low-quality houses automatically condemn their residents to living in poverty, as poverty does not only stem from a lack of income, but it is also based on determinants of wellbeing,

of which the quality of housing is a very significant one (Peters, 2013). Consequently, it may be concluded that the nature and the ambit of the housing programmes are questionable at present, in the light of their ostensible intention to provide housing which is both adequate and of sufficient quality to the needy. The low quality of the houses reveals that there is no harmonisation of economic growth with social development and that there is also a lack of a partnership between the beneficiaries and the other stakeholders, which signifies that two of the five principles of the social developmental approach are being ignored or neglected at present (Patel, 2015). It is the considered opinion of the researchers that the present implementation of the housing programmes does not take into account the need to help the beneficiaries to develop a feeling of self-worth, dignity, self-sufficiency and pride in their citizenship. In addition, the social developmental approach insists that the houses which are provided are sustainable, which is not the case with the houses which are being constructed and delivered to the beneficiaries of the programmes at present. While it needs to be acknowledged that the intentions of the government are laudable, it has been established quite conclusively that corrupt officials, who are tasked with overseeing the implementation of the projects, connive with contractors to construct substandard houses for needy people (Ngoepe, 2015; Makatile, 2015). Consequently, the eagerly anticipated eventual redressing of the discriminatory living conditions to which the majority of South Africans had been subjected through the provision of decent and adequate housing has become a counter-productive exercise. The quality of the houses which have been provided fails to satisfy the benchmarks which have been set by the United Nations, which insist upon houses which ensure that the people who live in them do so in safety and in healthy conditions (UN Habitat, 2009).

As it has been noted, most of the houses had either only one or two rooms, while the spacing between them was small and inadequate. The small size of these houses has attracted criticism of the government and resulted in great dissatisfaction among many of the beneficiaries of the programmes (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2011; Nabudere, 2013; Faulkner, 2015). Patel (2009) explains that the social developmental approach is rooted in the rights approach, which constitutionally guarantees social development and provides a benchmark to measure the achievements of social development programmes. From this perspective, it may be maintained that the rhetoric of the government with respect to the provision of housing and the meeting of housing needs is bereft of the actual possibility of realising the human right to adequate housing, as the grim reality of sub-standard small-sized houses belies the government's commitment to social justice. At present the houses deny their recipients the basic right to privacy, particularly with respect to adult sexual relations. The conditions in which the recipients are required to live inevitably threaten marital relationships and the healthy family relationships which should flow from them. The fourth principle of the social developmental approach stipulates that there is a need to create an enabling environment which empowers people (Midgely, 1995; Patel, 2015: 82). In the context of this study, the principle requires the beneficiaries and other stakeholders to be given the right to participate actively in the projects and to decide upon the form which they should take in order to meet their specific needs. As the small sizes of the houses did not accord with the desires of the beneficiaries, it is abundantly evident that the

implementation of the housing programmes was carried out without consulting the intended beneficiaries. The defective quality of the houses indicates that the principle was not applied in the implementation of the housing programmes and possibly not even known. Both the findings of this study as well as the foundational principles of the social developmental approach, to which a great deal of lip service is paid in post-apartheid South Africa, make it imperative for future housing projects to ensure that their intended beneficiaries are sufficiently empowered to participate actively in them and to play a significant role in decision-making processes.

In addition, the nature and the quality of the houses also encourage the uncontrolled roaming of children in the streets, as there is no place to find comfort and entertainment in their homes. The fact that the members of the families who live in these houses are obliged to live in such close proximity to one another could explain the many attachments which are added to many of them. While some residents actually personally make use of the attachments, some are obliged to rent them out in order to earn an income. The principles of social development as they are propounded by Midgley (2015), which include the harmonisation of economic growth with social development, partnerships between different stakeholders, sustainability and human rights, appear not to have been applied in the implementation of housing programmes in South Africa. As an example, the principle which requires the programmes to be rooted in human rights (Midgely, 1995; Patel, 2015: 82) implies that rights pertaining to having access to decent housing are not to be viewed in isolation as merely involving housing rights, but also with respect to other basic human rights, such as those which guarantee the welfare and protection of children and their right to primary and secondary education.

## **CONCLUSION**

The quality and the quantity of the housing which the government has provided for the poor in the Amathole District in the province of the Eastern Cape in South Africa is a matter of national concern. Inadequate space and poor-quality houses have extremely adverse implications for the health, the self-esteem, the sense of identity and belonging, the participation in citizenship and the economic development of the beneficiaries. The failure to meet housing needs adequately may be diagnosed as a moral failure to uphold the principles of the social developmental approach. The unsatisfactory implementation of the programmes is particularly evident from the lack of involvement of other actors in the processes, which ultimately results in the failure of the projects to meet the needs of their intended beneficiaries. The lack of the active participation in the projects by their targeted beneficiaries may have contributed significantly towards the proliferation of substandard houses which people are occupying in the name of housing which is provided by the government. It is of crucial importance that priority should be given to granting access to adequate housing that is of sufficiently high quality by both local governments and the national government. Regional and international organisations need to continue to exert pressure on national governments to adhere to the guidelines which are prescribed by UN Habitat. Further research which also includes interviews with the recipients of the houses provided by the housing programmes is recommended, as this study obtained information from the beneficiaries through the administration of questionnaires only. The clearly

articulated perceptions and experiences of the beneficiaries could greatly expand the existing body of knowledge pertaining to the realities with which they are required to cope.

### **Acknowledgements**

Special thanks go to all who participated in the study, who shall continue to remain anonymous. Special thanks also go to all of the research assistants who participated in the collection and interpretation of the data. In addition, the researchers wish to acknowledge the work of the language editor, Mr David Masters, and the reviewers of this paper, without whose genuine scrutiny and criticism this paper would not have been published. Finally, the funding which was obtained from the GMRDC at the University of Fort Hare should not go unacknowledged: we say thank you very much.

### **REFERENCES**

- AIGBAVBOA, C. & THWALA, W.D. 2011. Housing Experience of South African Low-Income Beneficiaries. **The Built & Human Environmental Review**, (4)1-13.
- BABBIE, E.R. 2010. **The practice of social research**. (12<sup>th</sup> ed.). Wadsworth Cengage: Belmont California.
- CRESWELL, J.W. 2014. **Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches**. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). United States of America: Sage Publications.
- DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT [DOSD] 2013. **Framework for social welfare services**. Pretoria: Republic of South Africa.
- DLAMINI, T-L. & SEWPAUL, V. 2015. Rhetoric versus reality in social work practice: political, neoliberal and new managerial influences. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**. 50(4):467-481.
- DE VOS, A.S. 2005. Scientific Theory and Professional **In: DE VOS, A.S., STRYDOM, H., FOUCHE, C.B. & DELPORT, C.S.L (eds) (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Research at Grassroots for the social sciences and human service professions**. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- FAULKNER, C. 2015. Women's experiences of principalship in two South African high schools in multiply deprived rural areas: A life history approach. **Educational Management Administration & Leadership**, 43(3):418-432.
- FLICK, U. 2006. **An introduction to qualitative research**. Sage Publications: London.
- GOVENDER, T., BARNES, J.M. & PIEPER. C.H. 2011. The impact of densification by means of informal shacks in the backyards of low-cost houses on the environment and service delivery in Cape Town, South Africa. **Environ Health Insights**, 5:23-52.
- GOVENDER, T., BARNES, J.M. & PIEPER, C.H. 2011. Contribution of water pollution from inadequate sanitation and housing quality to diarrheal disease in low-cost housing settlements of Cape Town, South Africa. **American Journal of Public Health**, 101 (7):e5 – e9.
- GRAY, M. & FOOK, J. 2002. Issues in defining “universal social work”: comparing social work in South Africa and Australia. **Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk**, 38(4):363–376.

- IOAKIMIDIS, V. & DOMINELLI, L. 2016. The challenges of dignity and worth for all: Social Work perspectives. **International Social Work**, 59(4):435-437.
- MAFUKIDZE, J. & HOOSEN, F. 2009. Housing shortages in South Africa: A discussion of the after effects of community participation in housing provision in Diepkloof. **Urban Forum**, 20: 379-396.
- MAKATILE, D. 2015. **Poor workmanship halts housing delivery**. [Online] Available: [www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za). [Accessed: 3/1/2016].
- MCGAFFIN, R., CIROLIA, L. R. & MASSYN, M. 2015. Overcoming the challenge of vertical consolidation in South Africa's low-income settlements: a case study of Du Noon. **Urban Forum**, 26:59–75. doi: 10.1007/s12132-014-9232-6
- MIDGLEY, J. 1995. **The developmental perspective in social welfare**. California: Sage Publications.
- MIDGLEY, J. & TANG, K. 2001. Introduction: social policy, economic growth and developmental welfare. **International Journal of Social Welfare**, 10(4):244–252.
- MITLIN, D. & MOGALADI, J. 2013. Social movements and the struggle for shelter: a case study of Durban. **Progress in Planning**, 84:1–39.
- MONYAI, P.B. 2013. Social policy and the State in South Africa: pathways for human capability development. PhD thesis University of Fort Hare.
- NABUDERE, W. 2013. **Afrikology and transdisciplinarity: A restorative epistemology**. Pretoria: Institute of South Africa.
- NATIONAL HOUSING CODE 2009. **Simplified and policy context**. Pretoria: Department of Human Settlements.
- NEUMAN, W. L. 2011. **Basics of social research: qualitative and quantitative approaches**. United States of America: Pearson Education Limited.
- NGOEPE, K. 2015. **Don't wait for free houses**. [Online] Available: [www.news24.com](http://www.news24.com). [Accessed: 1/3/2016].
- PATEL L 2009. **Developmental Social Work in South Africa: Lessons from the South**. In: Homfledt, H. G and Schneider, M. (Hsrg.) *Soziale Arbeit and Soziale Entwicklung*.
- PATEL, L. 2015. **Social Welfare and Social Development in South Africa** (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- PETERS PE. 2013. Conflicts over land and threats to customary tenure in Africa. **African Affairs**, (449):543-562.
- RAO, A. B. 2008. **Research methodology for management and social sciences**. New Delhi: Excel Books.
- REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA 1994. **White Paper on Reconstruction and Development**. Cape Town: Government Gazette.
- REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA 1996. **Constitution of the Republic of South Africa No. 108 of 1996**. Cape Town: Government Gazette.

- ROGERSON, C. M. 2016. South Africa's informal economy: reframing debates in national policy. **Local Economy**, 31(1–2):172–186.
- STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA [STATS SA] 2015. **Mid-year population estimates 2015**. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. [Online]. Available: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022015.pdf>. [Accessed: 23/01/2016].
- SEWPAUL, V. & LARSEN, A.K. 2014. **Community development: towards an integrated emancipatory framework**. In: LARSEN, A.K., SEWPAUL, V. & OLIVE, G. (eds). *Participation in community work: international perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- SOCIAL WORK POLICY INSTITUTE 2006. *Housing*. [Online] Available: <http://www.socialworkpolicy.org/research/housing.html>. [Accessed: 1/2/2018].
- TEDDLIE, CH. & TASHAKKORI, A. 2009. **Foundations of mixed methods research: integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- UN HABITAT 2015. **Habitat III issue papers**. New York: UN Habitat. [Online] Available: <http://unhabitat.org>. [Accessed: 1/3/2016].
- YOUNG, I. 2004. Five faces of oppression. In: Heldke, L. & O'Conner, P. (eds). **Oppression, privilege and resistance**. Boston: McGraw Hill.
- WERTMAN, C. A. 2015. There is no place like home: Access to housing for all South Africans. **Brooklyn Journal of International Law**, 40(2):719–747.
- WILLIAMS, G., METH, P. & WILLIS, K. 2014. **Geographies of Developing Areas: The Global South in a changing world**. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge.
- YIN, R. K. 2013. **Case study research: design and methods** (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

*Dr Tatenda Manomano, Department of Social Work, Humanities Faculty, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein; Prof. Pius T. Tanga, Department of Social Work and Social Development, University of Fort Hare, Alice, South Africa.*