

Development Bank
of Southern Africa



Hostel initiatives:

An urban reconstruction and development perspective

Victoria Clarke



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Policy Working Paper 8

Discussion Paper

ISSN 0122-0127

ISBN 1-874878-10-2

IPD 0003

March 1994

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Development Bank of Southern Africa

Price R5

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The Development Bank of Southern Africa is a regional development institution whose primary aim is to facilitate socio-economic development and empower people economically in the region.

Acknowledgements

This working paper is a summary of a larger joint work by a DBSA team. The compiler of the paper wishes to record her appreciation to the other members of the DBSA assignment team:

Herbert C Atkins	Centre for Policy Analysis
Glynn B Davies	Centre for Policy Analysis
Piet du Plessis	Centre for Policy Analysis
Ken A Finlayson	Central & Western Region
Karin F Goldschmidt	Southern Region
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Susan Rubenstein	Consultant
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Tinka Wiswe	Legal Services

and to the team's advisers:

Chris S Heymans	Central & Western Region
Hugh S Jackson	Cliffe Dekker & Todd, Johannesburg
Alan Lipman	University of the Witwatersrand
Comfort Molokoane	National Housing Forum
André J ten Krooden	Walker, Maré & Partners.

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Preface

In 1994, the International Year of the Family, single sex hostels stand in many South African townships as unhappy monuments to the past systems of migrant labour and apartheid. Historically the source of many social problems, they remain a focus of conflict in South African society. Hostels have attracted considerable political attention and been the subject of much debate. In many cases, the resulting conclusions have erred on the side of polemic rather than practicality.

It is now necessary to move beyond the polemic, and to intervene in a practical way to help transform what is widely perceived as an abnormal situation into one which can more comfortably be accepted as part of a normal society.

This discussion paper aims to help that process. It was undertaken by the DBSA hostels assignment team and falls under DBSA's Urban policy programme. Their work was guided by the advisory panel of the Urban policy programme. The paper is the result of an intensive programme of work and consultation over the past two years designed to provide guidance to decision makers and stakeholders. It will, it is hoped, form the basis for further processes of consultation and decision making in an area of great sensitivity.

Some key points need to be made:

- Hostels can be an acceptable form of residence and accommodation in certain circumstances. Those circumstances need to be agreed upon.
- Existing hostels are a resource and need to be used. The parameters of that use need to be determined.
- Most important, this has to be done within a coherent framework of urban reconstruction and social policy.

The framework outlined in the paper aims to contribute to the reconstruction of South Africa's urban areas in a way which integrates artificially separated communities (including the communities of hostel residents), opens up economic opportunities through a greater mix of land uses, and achieves these through innovative tenurial forms and financing mechanisms.

The objective is to create a society which is economically and socially sustainable for all its members, in both its urban and rural components. The transformation of the hostels is only one small element in this process of reconstruction and development. What is critical is that the practical approaches to hostel transformation be informed by and support the broader objectives. It is hoped that this framework will contribute to this larger goal.

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Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
DLNH	Department of Local Government and National Housing
HWG	Hostels Working Group of the National Housing Forum
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
NHB	National Housing Board
NHCC	National Hostels Coordinating Committee
NHF	National Housing Forum
RHCC	Regional Hostels Coordinating Committee

1. Introduction

In early 1990 the issue of public sector hostels was brought into sharp national focus as a result of violence between hostel residents and the people living in the neighbouring communities. This led to emotive and vociferous calls for the wholesale demolition of hostel properties and the dispersal of the inhabitants. As with other issues in South Africa, the hostel issue soon became imbued with political overtones, primarily taking the form of ANC versus IFP, the former seemingly representing the neighbouring communities and the latter the hostel residents.

It became apparent that only a limited number of the 181 hostels owned by public authorities could be connected with violence and that supporters of a variety of mass-based political parties lived in these properties. Gradually, calls for demolition were replaced by those for the upgrading of hostels and their conversion to family use, but not before some hostels had been partially or entirely demolished. This represents a significant step in a country which has a severe housing crisis and where public sector hostels officially provide approximately 300 000 beds but actually house many more people, with substantial overcrowding.

The intolerable living conditions generally prevailing in hostels have been publicised over the years but very little was done to improve the lot of the 'temporary sojourners'. The issue of violence in and around hostels has for the first time caused a major public outcry about the deplorable conditions under which hostel residents, including women and children, were forced to live; these were caused by the apartheid city and by the lack of proper management on the part of hostel owners, local and provincial authorities.

The hostel debate focused on the rapidly deteriorating situation and condition of public hostels. Privately owned hostels or hostels developed and managed by the private sector on publicly owned land were not ignored but the focus was on the effective and efficient deployment of public resources to enhance

the quality of life of some of South Africa's most disadvantaged communities.

DBSA's involvement arose out of its concern for the plight of the poor in both the hostels and the neighbouring communities, and after it was requested to assist with finding solutions to the problem of violence. As a consequence DBSA felt it imperative to bring the protagonists in the hostel debate together in order to work towards a mutually acceptable solution, and was assisted in this process by the Independent Development Trust (IDT). The significant dates in this process were the following:

1 August 1991 A representative forum of stakeholders in the hostel issue was brought together at DBSA in Midrand. The forum mandated DBSA and the IDT to work towards the establishment of a national forum for hostels and housing.

2 October 1991 The Government launches its Hostel Strategy, using R 31 million obtained from the sale of strategic oil reserves. This was increased to R 324,6 million as reported in the submission by the Department of Local Government and National Housing (DLNH) to the Goldstone Commission on 25 August 1992.

1 November 1991 At a follow-up national forum, a document entitled 'Short-term Guidelines for Hostel Initiatives' was adopted by a representative forum of national stakeholders. Proposals for the establishment of a national housing forum were considered, and a committee was mandated to attend to the implementation of the Short-term Guidelines.

25 January 1992 The Government decided to withdraw from the process of establishing a national housing forum.

June 1992 A report entitled 'Monitor of Hostel Initiatives: South Africa' was published by DBSA. It was found that the majority of participants in hostel initiatives were not aware of the Short-term Guidelines and that participation in the initiatives was not as broadly based as was recommended. The report led to the

realisation in government circles that cooperation with extra-governmental groups had to be pursued if progress with the hostel initiative programme was to be achieved.

31 August 1992 The National Housing Forum (NHF) was launched and henceforth pursued the hostels issue through its Hostels Working Group (HWG).

Mid 1993 Negotiations between the NHF and the Government resulted in an agreement entitled 'Joint Position between the NHF and the Department of Local Government and National Housing (DLNH) on the Current Hostels Redevelopment Programme'. The document recorded the basis for cooperation between the two parties with a view to giving effective momentum to the hostel initiative process.

6 August 1993 The National Hostels Coordinating Committee (NHCC) structure was created in terms of the Joint Position, formalising the relationship between the NHF and the DLNH. This superseded the Short-term Guidelines and provided for the development of a national hostels policy. This was to be formulated within the context of housing policy in general and with a greater understanding of the socio-economic issues necessary for healthy urban integration and reconstruction in the post-apartheid South Africa.

2. Framework

Through its ongoing support for the resolution of the public hostel challenge countrywide, DBSA became aware of many developmental issues which suggested that a practical framework was required to give expression to a holistic and people oriented approach.

Initially in 1992 this framework was intended to take the form of a 'manual' for use by grassroots communities at hostel complex level. The dynamics of the hostels negotiations clearly indicated, however, that before anything so specific could be developed there had to be agreement on direction and policy. In addition, the

discussions with the NHF Hostels Working Group identified the need for a 'library of alternatives' for people operating at grassroots level and for those further up the hierarchy. It was also clear that this 'library' had to be based not only on an agreed policy framework and broad operational guidelines, but also on a clear and succinct understanding of the implications of a process and product which had never been attempted before. Work was further complicated by political and criminal violence; uncertainty with regard to the consequences of the impending elections; an implementing bureaucracy which had embarked on a steep learning curve to acquire the developmental skills and expertise required to manage as complicated a process as the transformation of the apartheid-based hostel system; and a politically fragmented hostel community which lacked a unified national voice to speak on its behalf.

In a sense this document is a retreat from the team's initial ambitions. This is not because a 'manual' or a 'library' was not required, but because of the need for an agreed policy framework and operational guidelines at national, regional and local level to set the parameters for possible options and alternatives. In the interim, and because of the availability of state funds, each hostel initiative has attempted to develop its own set of solutions for its unique range of problems and challenges. Although this has offered exciting and innovative solutions it has also resulted in a fragmented and uncoordinated process. Serious mistakes have been made, because of no or inappropriate guidance. This is being rectified by the NHCC and the up and coming Regional Hostel Coordinating Committees (RHCCs). This document aims to complement the work being done at national (NHCC) and regional (RHCC) level, by highlighting a range of developmental issues to be considered by those negotiating a hostel initiative. Although the range of issues is comprehensive, it is not by any means exhaustive.

It is suggested that priorities facing decision makers are: housing and hostel subsidies and their affordability both for the individual and the State; capacity building to enable the

beneficiaries to participate in decision making that affects them personally; and transforming the apartheid-based hostel system to provide a range of accommodation choices within an integrated and normalised urban environment. This paper attempts to contextualise the last two issues, with the understanding that subsidy parameters have recently been agreed to at national level.

The approach taken by the core assignment team was to broaden the input by inviting people with practical expertise in a specific developmental aspect, both inside and outside DBSA, to apply their knowledge to the hostel issue. These contributions are organised into chapters written by the various team members and contained in a larger document, of which this is the summary for general distribution.

The aim of the framework is fivefold:

- to place the hostel issue within a developmental framework for the benefit of the hostel residents and neighbouring communities;
- to highlight the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the issue of post-apartheid urban reconstruction;
- to provide input into policy and operational guidelines at NHCC, RHCC and local level;
- to stimulate debate within the wider urban reconstruction context so that the framework may be used to develop other more broadly applicable frameworks;
- finally, to stimulate further assimilation and analysis which will contribute to a better understanding of the complexity of the issue.

3. What is a hostel initiative?

Hostel initiatives, as an essential aspect of the broader process of housing provision, need to be addressed within the context of urban reconstruction. The aim of this reconstruction is to foster a more functionally integrated, efficient and equitable space economy, and a social environment which contributes to an

improved quality of life for the entire urban community.

A hostel initiative is frequently and incorrectly defined as a physical alteration to an existing hostel complex. It is argued here that a hostel initiative has an essential human element, in addition to the physical dimension, because it provides a wider range of development opportunities to a community. The hostel initiative refers to fundamental change within the community affecting both hostel and neighbouring residents. For this framework, a hostel initiative is defined as a people-centred process which aims to normalise the role of hostels in South Africa, as part of the provision of accommodation to the broader community, within the context of urban reconstruction and integration.

A hostel initiative is thus conceptualised as an exercise in community development and empowerment and often takes the form of physically upgrading a hostel. Physical changes to a hostel complex will, however, only result in community development if human resource aspects form an integral part of the overall hostel initiative from the outset.

The physical options include

- rehabilitation: maintaining present residential occupancy and use, principally for single-person households, by restoring the complex to its original condition but humanely so;
- upgrading: maintaining present residential occupancy and use largely for single occupancy, with substantial improvements in facilities;
- conversion: providing residential accommodation for single-person and multiperson households, and for juvenile centres, business premises and other related purposes;
- transformation: the creation of an integrated environment;
- demolition: partially or completely demolishing derelict premises to clear the ground for new, more suitable, forms of accommodation.

4. The international context

The origins of hostels, in one form or another, can be traced back to the multistorey apartment dwellings built for the artisans of ancient Rome. Today, hostel-type accommodation is to be found in the compounds of sub-Saharan Africa; Seamen's Centres in the UK; *ubernachtsheim* for *gastarbeiters* in Germany; *foyers* in France, which provide accommodation for young workers and help residents to find work; and many private sector and state-run dosshouses in urban areas the world over.

According to Ramphela (1993), hostels represent one of a range of institutionalised modes of accommodation. This necessitates some understanding of the relationship between types of structure and the 'fortresses of fear' that some hostels have been termed in South Africa. Internationally, however, progress has been made in moving away from hostel accommodation as structures which enforce the institutionalisation of their 'inmates', to ones which have an integrated community and facility focus, acting as social condensers.

Given the seemingly entrenched existence of hostel-type accommodation worldwide, it seems that conventional, non apartheid-based hostels will continue to play a significant role in providing short-term, low-cost accommodation in South Africa. Whether they continue to offer an institutional type of accommodation is dependent on the philosophical outlook and management style of those that own or manage the property.

5. Empowerment, participation and capacity building

It is now widely accepted that communities benefiting from development initiatives should be enabled to participate in the shaping of these initiatives.

General acceptance of this premise does not mean that the facilitation of broad participation is without difficulties. Even in communities where endemic violence has not characterised the relationship between the hostel and the neighbouring community, many obstacles hinder attempts to facilitate effective participation. In addressing these obstacles it is important to recognise that there probably is no such entity as a single 'beneficiary community' with needs that can be represented by any single organisation. In contrast, the hostel contains a range of complex, and often competing, interest groups. Any attempt to facilitate participation needs to identify and address all of these interests.

Although the establishment of an inclusive structure accommodating all major interest groups is the ideal, it is likely that the only way this can be achieved is to make access to development resources contingent on the formation of a social compact.

Once such a structure is established, it is necessary to identify ways in which participants can be enabled to represent effectively the needs and interests of stakeholders or constituents. Interventions may vary from funding the transport costs of participants to facilitating access to office and organisational infrastructure in order to enhance the skills of participants.

A capacity-building intervention needs to see community organisations as consumers of services rather than as grateful recipients of development largesse. As 'customers' they have a right to make their needs known and a right to expect a quality of service that meets their needs within affordability constraints. Any resources expended on establishing inclusive structures will be wasted if the capacity of participants to represent their needs and interests is not adequately addressed.

6. Determining socio-economic characteristics and needs

A key element ensuring participation by beneficiary communities is the accurate identification of the needs and characteristics of each community. In gathering data, physical or technical information is often collected separately from social information, with the result that gathering technical information is often not conceived of as a social activity. It is becoming clear that the social context in which the entire professional team operates is more important than information in isolation on the nature of the community.

The methods used to gather this information may thus be critical in situations of intense competition between interest groups. Attempts may be made by some interest groups to use rather blunt information-gathering instruments such as mass meetings; however, a comprehensive, neutral social survey may constitute a more reliable mechanism. It is important to note that principles of participation apply equally to the process by which a survey is implemented. The power of information should never be underestimated and ensuring the participation of all interest groups in design and implementation is the key to a successful outcome.

7. Deciding on the best option

Embarking on a hostel initiative is a very complex process; it is therefore necessary to outline the various issues and the key considerations involved. The main aim is to guide the beneficiaries through the major issues, thereby informing them and contributing to their empowerment. This approach, referred to as 'Key considerations for a public sector hostel initiative', proposes eight major steps, which are dependent on the gathering of a substantial amount of information about the environment and the internal social complexities of the hostel itself. These are outlined below.

Key consideration #1 Are all public sector hostels to benefit from the hostel redevelopment programme and what are the policy parameters and operational guidelines which need to be taken into account by those undertaking a hostel initiative?

Key consideration #2 Is a local HNG in place? It should consist of representatives of parties that are directly affected (hostel residents, hostel owners and administrators, and the neighbouring community if applicable). What resources are required to build the capacity of the HNG as a forerunner of the post-implementation management of the property?

Key consideration #3 The HNG needs to develop an understanding of the characteristics of the local area; of the hostel property; and of the needs of the hostel residents.

To achieve this, certain questions need to be asked in terms of these three aspects.

Local area:

- Is there a positive relationship between the hostel residents and the neighbouring community?
- Is the local area stable or not; in other words are people moving in and out in large numbers and why?
- Does the local area suffer from overcrowding; is there a high density of backyard shacks and few accommodation alternatives?
- What is the respective demand for short-term and long-term accommodation in the local area?
- Do large numbers of migrant workers reside in the local area?

Hostel property:

- What is the current state of repair of the hostel premises (and consequently is there a need for funds from the NHCC's Emergency Programme)?
- What is the nature of the existing structure; is it a single-storey or multistorey building?
- What use options are possible?

Hostel residents:

- What is the demographic profile of the hostel residents?
- What are their accommodation and other needs?

Key consideration #4 In order to ensure that the process is manageable, the HNG needs to separate the issues that relate to the hostel complex itself from the overall urban developmental issues which have been dealt with in a broader forum for the area.

Key consideration #5 Once an understanding of the people and property issues has been achieved, the HNG should be in a position to decide on the type of hostel initiative to be pursued and its various phases. The following would specifically have to be addressed:

- What would be the use or combination of uses of the physical structure after the completion of the hostel initiative?
- Is it necessary to reduce the population of the hostel and to what extent? How is it to be achieved? Where will the people be accommodated and at what cost?
- Should the ownership of the resultant property remain within the public sector or should it be transferred to a housing association, a section 21 company, a trust, or sold as a business concern? How would the changes be achieved?
- What are the estimated operating expenditure and rental income? If it is to be sold, what is the estimated purchase price and what is the transfer cost?

Key consideration #6 The HNG then briefs the professional team, through the hostel owner or administrator, on construction options (rehabilitation, upgrading, conversion, transformation or demolition) according to the financial guidelines, taking into account design and planning which can maximise labour-intensive construction and small (sub)contractor involvement.

Key consideration #7 The owner of the property then calls for tenders on behalf of the HNG and recommends the award of the tender to the organisations best able to provide the benefits at an appropriate cost.

Key consideration #8 The HNG establishes a post-implementation management structure for the complex.

8. Ownership and tenure options

The acquisition of tradeable assets is regarded as one of the most effective ways to empower individuals economically and stimulate the formal housing market in the lower income sectors of society. The acquisition of rights to a hostel complex is limited to the physical structure of the building and by the laws applicable to the premises on which the building is situated. Careful consideration should be given to the different legal options for transferring property rights to individuals or communities, such as creating sectional title and shareblock schemes. At no time must the rights of the existing occupants be compromised. Other forms of secure rights of tenure must be considered where a migratory lifestyle or access to a place of employment creates the need for temporary accommodation.

In addition, other low-cost housing schemes, such as housing associations, cooperative housing and other forms of collective housing, will need to be developed. In assisting communities to make the appropriate choices, the impact of the concomitant rights and duties of any scheme has to be taken into account.

9. Implications for displaced people

Given that many hostels are extensively overcrowded and that hostel redevelopment will substantially reduce densities, it is urgent that alternative housing possibilities for those displaced by the initiative should be developed.

The success of a strategy aimed at creating acceptable off-site residential options for displaced people does not depend on the provision of residential alternatives alone but on an integrated developmental approach.

Off-site residential options can be delivered either by a market-driven housing delivery process or through state or parastatal interventions in the housing market. The wide range of spatial and economic inequity in South Africa calls for a combination of the two. Strategic decisions concerning a new, sustainable and equitable housing policy will determine the type of housing delivery process and its variety of systems and subsystems. The tension between the need for an efficient housing delivery market and initiatives aimed at reducing and hopefully eliminating inequities will need to be carefully managed to ensure success.

Whatever the policy framework and the resulting delivery systems, each set of residential options will affect its urban context to a lesser or greater degree. How these implications are managed and addressed will influence the wider success of such a strategy. This emphasises the necessity for each hostel initiative to be framed within a broadly based urban reconstruction programme. Only in this way will both the displaced person and the community into which he or she locates regard this development initiative as beneficial.

10. Costs

The hostel initiative costs currently being mooted generally relate to construction costs although some social survey costs are included. Unfortunately this represents a very limited view of the kind of cost-benefit information that those negotiating a hostel initiative require to make appropriate decisions regarding needs and affordability.

The following points are a first step towards achieving a holistic view of the costs of a hostel initiative within an urban reconstruction perspective.

Firstly, residents need to be empowered to participate effectively in the hostel initiative process through training and counselling; setting up and maintaining a representative hostel structure (which may be the forerunner

of the post-implementation management of the property); and providing communication and administrative facilities. The funding for this is to be sourced from the national hostels budget. In addition, provision needs to be made for subsistence and travel to allow participation in broader forums.

Secondly, financial provision needs to be made for a socioeconomic survey, to ensure a people-centred planning process.

Thirdly, physical planning needs to be done and the costs of the various construction options determined, so that the hostel residents are in a position to choose affordable options.

Fourthly, all property operating costs (monthly, recurrent and annual property asset management costs) and income (both rental and subsidy income) requirements have to be calculated and provided to the HNG. One of the critical issues that has led to rent and service payment boycotts has been the practice of global charging, which does not reflect the consumption of individuals and households. This problem needs to be minimised by proper and transparent budgeting and accounting practices and by disaggregating the metering of services by block, floor or individual residence.

Fifthly, even in their current state hostels are publicly owned immovable assets and their financial value would increase with redevelopment. This property value needs to be determined by an independent valuer, and the valuation would serve as a basis for

- negotiating a selling price if applicable;
- determining an insured amount;
- securing loans in respect of the property itself or the local authority as a whole (if in local authority ownership).

Finally, current thinking is that provision needs to be made for those people that have to move to give others more space and better accommodation. How this is to be achieved fairly with regard to other similarly disadvantaged people forms part of the national debate.

11. Subsidies

Before a subsidy policy for the hostels can be designed, the following questions need to be answered:

- Are the hostel initiatives to be treated as special cases calling for special subsidies or should they be treated in the same way as other types of housing?
- Should hostels be approached in terms of the existing subsidy regime or in terms of what a future subsidy regime is likely to look like?

There are no straightforward answers in designing a hostel subsidy policy. It is suggested that the following scenarios be referred to and discussed by the appropriate decision makers:

Scenario 1: the evenhanded application of existing housing subsidy schemes to hostels;

Scenario 2: specially designed subsidies for hostels (some stipulations in the Short-term Guidelines do, however, caution against special treatment for hostels);

Scenario 3: the evenhanded application of possible future housing subsidies to hostels.

The Joint Position gives the following guidelines to assist with determining how, when and to what extent subsidies should be applied. These refer to gearing, transparency, sustainability, replicability, flexibility, attachment to individuals, and tenure considerations.

Two aspects of subsidies are applicable to capital costs and to recurrent costs. The recovery of these costs can be dealt with in different ways. In the case of capital costs for example

- expenditure could be treated as a non-repayable grant;
- the full cost of the capital expenditure could be made repayable over a specific period of time at a specific rate of interest comparable to a commercial transaction;

— variations of the above could be applied.

Another important consideration is affordability of capital and operating costs both for the state and the individual.

Eligibility must be determined by establishing who will constitute bona fide hostel residents with a claim to state assistance on the basis of current or past migrant labour contracts.

12. Skills development and employment opportunities

An appropriately structured hostel initiative offers considerable opportunities for the creation of employment. More significantly, it offers longer-term opportunities for entrepreneurial development. These consist in creating and formalising new businesses and small industrial enterprises within or directly adjacent to the hostels, thus serving the needs of both the hostel and the neighbouring community and having a social condenser effect.

Entrepreneurial development includes the possibility of formalising existing trade into designated trading areas, and if this is successful it presents the further possibility of contributing, by way of rental income, to the cost of upgrading a portion of the complex. Its implementation is dependent on the prior support of the community and the subsequent institution of an authority able to deliver a balanced set of support services to entrepreneurs.

13. Integrating hostels into communities

The Short-term Guidelines and the Joint Position state that the hostel initiative process should constitute part of the socio-economic and physical reconstruction of South Africa's cities and towns. In this context it is necessary to provide an understanding of integration, its impacts, and how to achieve it.

Integration occurs at different levels. On the macro-level an integrated hostel initiative involves the process of hostel upgrading as an inseparable part of urban or rural development and specifically of housing development. On the micro-level, by contrast, integration involves a particular hostel initiative. The hostel problem is unlikely to be solved through physical upgrading alone and it is the complex of complementary interventions that is most likely to be successful.

Success requires insight into and an understanding of a range of issues that affect or influence a hostel initiative and in particular the nature of the relationships between the hostel and surrounding community. These include

- the physical isolation of the hostel complex, reinforced by physical barriers and separate facilities;
- competition for scarce resources in the context of land for housing, commercial activity, and social and recreational facilities;
- the complexities of ongoing violence;
- the differing perception of town and hostel residents.

Given the above, the following principles are suggested for promoting integrated development:

Spatial and Technical

- integrated and integrating land uses;
- maximised individual choice;
- a mix of accommodation types to meet the needs of hostel residents;
- alternative land and housing options for people wishing to leave the hostel;
- social, recreational and commercial facilities as an integral part of the upgrading. Shared facilities serve to link hostels with surrounding communities.

Economic

- maximum local employment opportunities through the upgrading and ongoing management and maintenance of the complex;

- maximum entrepreneurial opportunities for trading and small construction contractors, for both hostel residents and surrounding communities;
- provision of commercial facilities as an integral part of the hostel initiative, facilities which are also accessible to the wider community.

Financial

- equitable cost recovery strategy for the total urban environment;
- a range of tenure options for rental and purchase;
- sustainability both at hostel and wider urban environmental level.

Social

- promotion of community control over the upgrading process;
- improved channels of communication between hostel residents and surrounding communities (Joint Negotiating Forums);
- provision of social and recreational facilities as an integral part of the hostel initiative, with facilities shared as far as possible with residents of neighbouring communities;
- addressing the plight of women, children, handicapped people and older people in hostels;
- focus on the specific needs of displaced people (displacement refers to those people previously displaced as a result of hostel-related violence, as well as those people who may be displaced as a direct result of the redevelopment programme).

Institutional

- establishment of a single urban management authority, one which views hostels as an integral part of the urban environment;
- representation of hostel residents in normal urban management affairs;
- development of sound property management and administration structures which are based in the hostel community;
- provision of a range of tenancy options.

14. Management of hostel properties

One of the major factors contributing to the hostel crisis in many places has been the collapse of the management of hostels owned by the public sector and their neglect and virtual abandonment by their owners, whether local authorities or provincial administrations. This has resulted in serious fabric degradation, unauthorised occupation of premises, unsafe and unhygienic living conditions, and rent boycotts to name just a few of the ills. Reasons for this collapse include the lack of legitimacy of the hostel owners; the inability of owners or landlords, or their lack of resources to carry out their responsibilities; civil disobedience; and anarchic, often politically motivated, violence. In addition, the design of some of the properties (notably multistorey buildings) promotes an institutionalised mode of living which may exacerbate the situation.

A major concern for those who have been part of a hostel initiative is to prevent a return to such earlier chaos by establishing a property and community management system. The type of system would depend on

- the future use of the property, as a residential complex, community and care centre, business property, or any combination of these;
- the future ownership of the property, whether public sector, private community-type ownership (section 21 company, trust, housing association or shareblock), private individual, or corporate ownership for gain.

Three further aspects of property and community management need to be considered.

Firstly, although the hostel redevelopment programme may reduce the population density, many of the properties will remain hostel accommodation housing many thousands of people. The programme will, however, contribute to human empowerment and should be continued and enhanced through various training programmes (adult education and skills transfer amongst others)

as well as through support groups (for single parents, the disabled and so on).

Secondly, an administrative and governing system that promotes sound business principles, fairness, accountability and transparency will be respected by the tenants, owners and landlords alike. More importantly, it will provide a stable, secure living environment for the residents as unauthorised occupation and illegal or inconsiderate activities would be precluded.

Thirdly, the property should be seen as an asset for both the occupants (whether tenants or owners) and the neighbouring community. Given that the replacement value of most of the complexes would be many millions of rands, the value of the property needs to be maintained and increased through the implementation of appropriate alterations and additions, such as recreational and shopping facilities.

The key to all of the above is a clearly thought out approach that involves substantial training for those involved. For example, if the property is to be sold under sectional title then appropriate training has to be available to enable all residents to make informed decisions. Should the property remain under public sector ownership and continue to be used as a hostel then ongoing training in all three aspects of the property and community management system outlined above must be put in place by the public sector.

It is suggested that the income of each hostel or accommodation complex should at least cover its running costs.

15. Conclusion

This summary of the major issues seeks to give readers an understanding of the complexity of the problem that needs to be addressed. This perhaps serves to highlight the enormous load vested in both NHCC and RHCC structures. Our concern and admiration must also extend to the hostel residents and representatives of the neighbouring communities who are intent upon bringing a semblance of order into their lives as a result of the focus on hostel redevelopment.

The issues raised here, together with the work being undertaken at NHCC level, represent a first attempt at developing a reliable perspective of the current situation and potential opportunities for peace and harmony. This is clearly not the last word on the subject, which needs to be extensively explored and debated. To this end it is suggested that this document serve as input to a national workshop.

16. References

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