"No Good Story To Tell"-Informal Settlements Still as Big as 1994. A Case of Midvaal Municipality in Sedibeng District

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Keywords: informal, informal settlements, sustainability, livelihood, vulnerability.

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I. Introduction

Post apartheid South Africa is confronted by a number of challenges, informal settlement is no exception of the challenges currently facing the government. The government in 2004 pledged with all confidence to eradicate informal settlements by the year 2014 [1]. Generally speaking the opposite have happened, informal settlements burgeoning and remaining eyesores in cities, towns and metropolitans. Informal settlements vary ranging from slums, favelas (Brazil), aashwa'i (Egypt) and ciudades perdidas (Spanish, "lost cities") and mukhukhu (South Africa) [2]. These consist of non-conventional housing built without compliance of legal building modus operandi. For that reason, [3] purports that informal settlements as 'a rule' (not in classical sense) are built at the edge of cities where land is cheap and neglected.

Informal settlements are characterized mainly by poor urban dwellers therefore their shelters shacks are built with salvaged materials (including but not limited to wood and iron sheets). In furtherance, most of these lacks infrastructure including electricity, piped water, toilets and so on. Informal settlements act as a haven of contagious disease and HIV/AIDS is likely to be rife as a result of dwellers relying on commercial sex as a livelihood. Without doubt many governments in sub Saharan Africa including South Africa has failed to cope with the ever increasing urbanization rate. The actuality is that informal settlements in South Africa are here to stay as poor urban dwellers solve their housing problems.

There is a discernible link between housing and environmental conditions in informal settlements which reproduce poverty, vulnerability, social stress and informality. Caincross et al [4] argues that "linking basic services such as water to health is viewed as a false separation as these services are intimately related to housing". In general, it is a housing issue if dwellers contract diarrhea and typhoid through pathogens from fecal matter. It is important to debunk from the notion of seeing housing problems as not married to low income housing. Informal settlement eradication is one of the priorities set by the government in deracialising household delivery and the zoning system created by the apartheid regime [5]. Legislations, such as the Housing White Paper of 1994, Constitution of 1996, Housing Act of 1997, BNG of 2004 are a true reflection of governments move towards providing housing, enacted largely to redress apartheid inequalities. Nonetheless, as a result cities are experiencing high population growth, densities and congestion. Obliteration of informal settlements and relocation represent a critical challenge to the government, these include site improvement charges, bureaucracy and of paramount importance is the political corruption divorcing the majority from not 'only' getting adequate but safe housing [6]. It is against this background that this paper seeks to examine the vulnerability of informal settlement residents in Midavaal Municipality through pursuing a case study of Sicelo Shiceka an informal settlement near Meyerton. This paper is important for a number of reasons it fills the empirical gap on informal settlement based studies and generates fresh literature on informal settlements. This is significant given that South Africa is one of the middle income countries but inequality continue to shape, reshape and at most reinforced twenty years after advent of democracy.

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II. Understanding Housing, Informal Settlements in South Africa

The Reconstruction Development Programme met its demise before actually reaching all the well deserving beneficiaries in as far as provision of the so called 'RDP houses' which are low cost houses. Low cost housing in South Africa falls far below acceptable quality and standards. Not only are the houses small (which minimizes privacy within households) but also the housing structures are of poor quality and unlikely to withstand adverse weather conditions; in fact, a significant number did not survive the first few years of their existence. The quality of low cost houses (RDP) in South Africa has become news headlines in local media and the media abroad. The approval of the neo-liberal policy Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) in 1996 saved no good but worsened poverty of the already urban poor households. This kind of macroeconomic strategy is questionable with regard to its repercussions for social sustainability. The shift to GEAR therefore limited "policy maneuverability" and resulted in the "consequent neo-conservative straight jacketing of development policy deliberations" [7] Under the neo-liberal orthodoxy of GEAR, urban housing was commodified and resultantly impacting on housing service delivery, in part government was to spend less on public services while putting forward cost recovery measures. In other words market oriented housing was established in South Africa. Furthermore with the much proposed market driven housing delivery based on neoliberalism (profit driven), underdeveloped countries are even moving apart from ensuring sustainable housing.

South Africa is one of the most urbanized countries sub Saharan Africa and broadly in Africa. It is a mission impossible to talk of reliable figures, mostly approximates have been documented in literature. Statistics South Africa [8] points that in the year 2007, there were approximately 1.2 million people dwelling in informal settlements in South Africa on one hand. While at the other hand Stats SA [9] forcibly argue that households living in informal settlements have decreased from 16.4% to 14.4% in the year 2001. Through disaggregating provincial figures, Stats SA [9] points to the fact that 3 out of 9 South African provinces have higher figures of households living informal settlements. Cases in point are Free State (18.4%), Gauteng (22.7%), North West (23.8%), Limpopo (5.6%), Eastern Cape (8%) and KwaZulu-Natal (8.6%). Genuinely speaking, relying on such approximates does not point to realism. Unreliability of such figures can be seen in the contestation between Stats SA which guessed that there were 65113 families in informal settlements in Cape Town in 2004 while the City of Cape Town argues that the actual figure is 94972 families [10]. It is most probable that illegal immigrants are not counted because of their fear to be expatriated.

Despite the dreadful conditions attributed to informal settlements in Africa and particularly in South Africa, they (informal settlements) act as a pool of cheap labour thereby contributing to economic growth. In that light, urban poor households endorse the formal economy because of the fact that they require fewer amounts of capital for housing and other related basic amenities. In South Africa, rural-urban migration has necessitated the increase in informal settlements, particularly people coming from former homelands where there is a dearth of opportunities. Migrants are mainly attracted to cities by socio-economic conditions such as better living standards. Ironically, these migrants lack the necessary skills to scope better paying jobs which are a way to decent housing compromising their livelihoods. Atuahene [11] rightfully claim that "they become victims of the city's wrath and they pose a daunting problem to policymakers in the developing world". In addition, they lack of security of tenure which is significant for achieving sustainable human settlements which automatically leads to adequate accommodation, fruitful livelihoods and good infrastructure.

The government has established site and services housing schemes as an approach to solve low-income housing problems. Srinivas [12] describes the sites-and-services schemes as the provision of plots of land, either on ownership or land lease tenure on top of a bare minimum of infrastructure appropriate for human settlements. The site and services schemes are chiefly aimed at i) housing the urban poor ii) increasing the stock of permanent household's iii) reducing public expenses iv) replacing informal settlements and tax implications v) developing a reliable construction sectors for job opportunities vi) empowering the emerging small businesses and accelerating capital development by low income households [13]. All this has partly transformed into reality as informal settlements remains as big as before 1994. One question forces itself on us, shortage of housing amount to violation of human rights. The Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution ensures economic, social and cultural rights such as the access to housing, the right to live in an unharmful environment, access to health, property rights and so on.

Section 26 of the Constitution identifies the right to basic needs, including protecting, fulfilling, promoting and respecting the right to housing by the urban poor. The Constitution elaborates: (1) 'Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing; (2) The State must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realization of this right; and (3) No one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without

an order of court made after considering all of the relevant circumstances. No legislation may permit arbitrary evictions' [14]. Section 27 (1) (a) (b) and (c) endorses that each citizen has the right to access proper services and infrastructure such as health care services, water and social security. It is quite disturbing as such sections are not abided to, people in the informal settlements continue to leave in fear of their shelter bulldozed and torched, put it another way bulldozers and police have been turned into an instrument of governance. While at the same time preventing the emergence of informal settlements is a violation of the human rights to housing because the urban poor are left homeless thereby leading to discrimination and social exclusion. Such actions only save to exacerbate the vulnerability of the people dwelling in the informal settlements. To date the apartheid characteristics continue to be reproduced albeit in new forms, for instance the urban poor in the informal settlements occupy the periphery of the areas historically reserved for Africans. On the whole, the urban poor's ambition of owning, building a safe and sustainable house remains, for the most, a distant dream.

a) *Theorising Housing and Livelihoods*

The analytical framework that informs this study is located within the social sustainability with a broad context of sustainable human settlements development. Housing is a fundamental element of human settlement which gratifies basic needs and has an impact on welfare, quality of life, health and human development. A sizeable number of people in the developing countries particularly in Africa do not have access to dignified houses and live under agonizing conditions. Despite the move by governments especially in developing countries to ensure sustainable housing, policies, legislatures and projects that entirely contain all facets of human settlement remains an obstacle [15]. Given the rate of urbanization in the developing countries compounded by the lack of accountability, corruption and the much talked neo-liberalism leaving conditions will worsen and probably will lead to what Davies [16] called 'planet of slums'. Housing is the central constituent of the built urban environment and plays a pivotal role in all dimensions of sustainable human settlements. These dimensions are social, economic and environmental [17].

Generally social-sustainability indicators have been put forward in the literature. WACOSS for example provides five social-sustainable community indicators. These are equity (when a community offers equitable opportunities and results for all specifically vulnerable groups); diversity (when a community supports and encourages diversity of social groups and cultures); interconnectedness (when a community offers structures, systems and processes which encourage connectedness outside and within the community at the institutional, formal and informal levels); quality of life (when a community makes sure that basic needs are fulfilled and promotes a good quality of life for all its citizens at the individual, group and community level); and democracy and governance (when a community promotes democracy and open and accountable governance). Littig and Griebler [18] offer three core social sustainability indicators. The first set of indicators deals with quality of life and satisfaction of basic needs. This includes the subjective satisfaction of housing quality, health, environment, income and education. The second set of indicators deals with equal access to opportunities in relation to similar issues. The third group of indicators deals with social coherence, and this suggests measurements for instance of solidarity, social networks, community interaction, participation in activities and tolerant attitudes (for example towards the unemployed and migrants).

The human settlement and sustainability are very crucial to this paper particularly because the democratic South African state boast as pursuing the sustainable urban settlements. South Africa under apartheid (particularly racial capitalism) was characterized by the social socio-spatial separation of different legally-defined races under different systems of central and local state administration. The poor black working class resided far-away from the employment opportunities and major facilities as such they experienced tremendous difficulties in sustaining a decent and dignified quality of life. It is against such a background that urban spaces under the agonizing apartheid were marked with socio-economic discrimination which weakened prospects for sustainability for the black majority. Overall, the framework is an analytical structure for coming to grips with the complexity of housing. But it is not beyond criticism. Of specific relevance to this study is the framework's marked blindness on how to survive and the need to bolster the framework through the incorporation of sustainable livelihood framework (SLF), such an understanding is critical for this study-unpack and dissect analytically how informal dwellers construct their livelihoods. This was originally applied to rural areas but has been more recently applied to urban working people [19].

Livelihoods are particularly important in understanding how urban poor households earn their living on a day to day basis, how urban environment (situation) impact on their household well-being and their aptitude to cater for their households. Of utmost significance to note are assets such natural, social, physical, financial and human assets (capitals). One of the key strengths of the framework in the context of this thesis is that it places a strong focus on productive assets/capitals in supporting urban livelihoods.

Broadly, livelihoods areas are defined as assets, capabilities (encompassing of material and social resources) and activities needed for a living [20]. Furthermore, a livelihood becomes sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks both for now and in future. Of importance is to conceptualize the asset vulnerability which particularly relevant to informal settlements [21]. The sustainable livelihood framework (SLF) seeks to understand the livelihood alternatives of the urban poor. Growing evidence on livelihoods suggests that poor households juggle these assets in times of crisis to improve their livelihoods. This concurs with Ellis [20] who argues that SLA acknowledges that trends and processes in the broader national economy create general social conditions which may provoke or inhibit livelihood diversification. Of particular importance as well is the role of formal, informal, organizational and institutional factors which limit or enhance livelihood outcomes.

b) The Present Study

Almost twenty years after the dawn of independence in South Africa from the hands of the ruthless apartheid regime from 1948 under the National Party (NP) a majority of South Africans still live under unbearable conditions. Some areas (Midvaal a focus for this study) despite being transformed infrastructure wise, the majority of the black population are still bearing the agonizing brunt of the underdevelopment shortcomings. It is quite disturbing that the right to proper housing as enshrined in the Bill of Rights continues to be violated in this democratic society. Informal settlements literature is quite substantial in Africa and South Africa particularly but in Sicelo Shiceka no study is known to the researcher. Therefore this study seeks to close this lacuna by offering fresh and novel knowledge concerning the lived experiences of the informal settlement at question in the context of South Africa being a middle income country but with a lot of inequality (housing a focus of this study). The black majority continues to live under harsh conditions, the apartheid housing policies of blacks living in the indecent shelters in townships and informal settlements continue to shape and reshape the lives of the black majority. This study uses explorative research in order to understand the lives of the informal settlement dwellers through framing the study under social sustainability in order to understand the quality of life and satisfaction and dissatisfaction of basic needs. This paper seeks to do so through specifically focusing on Sicelo Shiceka an informal settlement in Midvaal Municipality.

III. Materials and Methods

The broad aim of this paper is to critically examine the lived experiences (vulnerability) of informal settlement dwellers in the Midvaal Municipality (in Gauteng Province-Sedibeng District) specifically Sicelo Shiceka (one of the informal settlements). The broad aim of the paper is backed up by subsidiary goals including: a) to ascertain the livelihood activities of informal dwellers and their implications for the survival of their household b) to understand the experiences and perceptions of informal dwellers in as far as living in 'shacks' is concerned. To attain the objectives of this study, the research is pursued under a genre of qualitative methodology.

a) Sampling strategy, data collection and analysis

The research is designed under a qualitative paradigm. Gibson and Brown [22] define qualitative research as an array of attitudes toward and strategies for conducting inquiry that are aimed at discerning how human beings understand, experience, interpret and produce the social world. According to Marshall and Rossman [23] qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretive and grounded in the living experiences of people. A qualitative paradigm suits the goals of this study which are to solicit the lived experiences of people living in the informal settlements of post apartheid democratic South Africa. It is consistent with the theoretical framework (social sustainability and sustainable livelihoods approach) which is primarily concerned with elucidating the processes by which people come to describe, explain and otherwise account for the world in which they live hence, it becomes important to listen to the participants own voices in studying the lived experiences of people in the informal settlements.

Purposive non-random sampling was employed to select the in-depth interview participants. The sample units were chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable a detailed exploration and understanding of the lived experiences of the informal dwellers that the researchers are interested in. In-depth interviews were better suited to explore and study experiences and processes and provided informal dwellers the opportunity to be 'authors' of their experiences in their own words. This is constant with Seale [24] who argues that open-ended interviews are important because it ensures that the evidence collected is solidly grounded in research subjects' perspectives and interpretations without these being filtered and shaped by the researcher's pre-established constructs and categories.

Put it another way, the sampling technique utilized in this study enable the researchers to elicit sufficient data which best answers the objectives of the study. In-depth interviews were conducted with a purposively sampled unit of fourteen informal settlement dwellers (seven males and seven females). The essence of choosing such numbers was to elicit different data and get different lived experiences (since women and men derive sources of income and are subjected to different vulnerabilities). Having completed in-depth

interviews with the sampled unit, data was analyzed. The elicited qualitative data was rigorously scrutinized and sorted according to emerging themes.

b) Study site

Midvaal Local Municipality is in the Sedibeng District of Gauteng in South Africa. The name due to its geographical location Midvaal lies halfway between Johannesburg/East Rand and the Vaal/Vereeniging area. The municipality is 50% urbanised, with the rest made up of townships, farms, plots and informal settlements. Its economy is largely manufacturing but the agricultural sector also plays a critical role. Sicelo Shiceka informal settlement falls under the jurisdiction of Midvaal local municipality (other informal settlements include Khayelitsha and Boitemelo). Midvaal municipality has undergone radical change in as far infrastructure development is concerned and has turned into a tourist destination and industrial centre in southern Gauteng. However, despite the reforms under the municipality and the entire economic growth in South Africa after the agonizing apartheid regime, the lives of the majority in the informal settlement have not been transformed. It is no doubt that the Midvaal is one of the most noticeable in the informal settlement development. Amongst the informal settlements known to the researcher are Sicelo Shiceka which is an informal settlement located approximately five kilometers from the Meyerton town. The area is accessible through pathways and road.

In terms of other infrastructure, lesser households have disposable toilet facilities which are collected 'here and there' posing a danger of communicable diseases. Community tapes are located a strategic points while few lucky households have their personal tapped water however they also serve the entire community. Sicelo Shiceka is believed to be housing at least 2696 households in form of shacks and people feel neglected because they lack proper and safe housing and the informal settlement has earned a name called Silahliwe (a Zulu word meaning we are neglected). Being an informal settlement, the area had been hit several times with floods further subjecting families to vulnerability.

IV. Results and Discussion

South Africa despite being a medium income country inequality particularly housing has continued to shape the democratic era as was during the apartheid regime. Compounded by rapid urbanization, the government has failed to respond in an effective and efficient manner in providing decent housing, in case where houses have been provided- most of the houses have been low income houses such as the controversial 'RDP' houses. In response to the violation of the right to proper housing, poor urban citizens have resorted to building their own houses in form of shacks (locally known as mukhukhu). The following discussion profiles the inhabitants of Sicelo Shiceka.

a) Profiling the Sicelo Shiceka

The majority (64.2%) of the informal dwellers sampled in this study are between the ages of 25-40 years, while (35.7%) are between the ages of 41-50 years. The respondents between the ages 25-40 years reported they were attracted to informal settlement because they did not have enough income to rent houses or apartments in legal buildings. In terms of educational levels, the majority of respondents, (nine out fourteen sampled) reported that they did not complete a matric certificate. Hence, the results are consistent with the assertion that people in the informal settlements are highly illiterate posing a challenge of being employed in well remunerating formal jobs. A significant number of participants reported that they have dropped out of school because of the insufficient income to pay for educational expenses. In that light, most (100%) of the sampled respondents reported that they were not employed in the formal sector, because they did not have the required skills which most of the formal employers seek when they recruit employees. A significant amount of female (50.5%) reported that they were working in saloons in Meyerton town while some reported to be working as maids in the Henly on Clip (a low density suburb). Male respondents were particularly noticeable in construction part time jobs as well as security guarding. These part time jobs are notoriously known for being less remunerative.

Married respondents (males and females) constituted the highest proportion at 49.0% while the majority (50.5%) reported to be single, divorced and widowed. The number of household members (and hence the number of dependents) varied considerably with household sizes ranging from two to ten people. Given the household sizes it is disturbing that people are crowded in one or two rooms divided by a curtain to separate rooms. This poses a challenge to social reproduction particularly to children being exposed to sexual behaviors. One married respondent aged thirty years reported the following:

…its difficult to live under these conditions, my family is big and we have 1 big room which is divided into my bedroom and the kitchen where the children sleep. At times children they just come into the bedroom unexpectedly and to their shock they see something…[the respondent meant sex] which is not good at all to see parents doing such action.

From such a sentiment it becomes very clear that households living in less spacious rooms expose children to behaviors which they later translate into their own as a result unwanted pregnancies become rife in the informal settlements.

b) *Vulnerability informal settlement people*

Twenty years after attaining freedom, many South Africans are still surviving under precarious conditions including living in mukhukhu (a focus of this paper). Respondents were asked questions relating to their overall feeling pertaining to their form of housing. Several concerns were raised; the following is the discussion of the data gathered through the in-depth interviews. The following themes emerged: water, ablation, crime, employment, HIV/AIDS and xenophobia.

i.   *Water*

Informal settlements are enduring shortcomings in as far as a basic amenity (water) is concerned. This is mainly because informal settlements are not site and service areas therefore it impacts on the provision of basic amenities in this regard water. The Midvaal municipality is obliged to provide water to all urban areas however; the informal settlement dwellers lack title deeds which is a provision to get safe and clean water. Data gathered through the in-depth interviews reports that clean, safe and reliable water supply was a long term problem in Sicelo Shiceka informal settlement. Day to day running of a household requires water therefore its availability is very important.

Water is used for many household chores including but not limited to washing dishes, bathing, and laundry and so on. Its unavailability is detrimental to humanity, particularly health. Lack of water causes life threatening diseases, respondents alluded that many dwellers have been treated of diarrhea particularly children at a nearby local hospital. Of importance is that when there is lack of water from the available community water source a number of people seeks refuge in the nearby water sources which are unsafe. In doing so, it becomes a coping strategy with the lack of the precious water resource. One female respondent reported the following

…what else can we do if there is no water, we end up fetching water from the nearby river to use in our houses…we cannot do anything without water. I remember there was an outbreak of diarrhea and mostly our children were affected. The municipality is doing nothing to give us water, political parties have promised us but after we vote nothing comes…we are tired

It is clear from that sentiment that the informal settlements suffer from the lack of clean and safe water and there is need for the city fathers to recognize their presence and provide them with clean and safer water irrespective of their informality because the problem is perennial.

ii.   *Ablation Facility*

The problem of ablation facility is persistent. Respondents reported that they relieve themselves in the nearby bushes particularly because the municipality through the department of waste management takes too long to collect the waste in the ad-hoc movable cabin toilets since Sicelo Shiceka is not a settlement designated area. As such the toilets omit a foul smell. Furthermore, women expressed their discomfort in using the bush for this purpose and advocated for early empting of the cabin toilets. In time of a 'crisis' women respondents reported that they used the bucket system (as their last resort) however this did not solve the dilemma especially when the waste takers spend more than a week without collecting the waste.

The bucket system is still a common practice in many marginalized urban areas including informal settlements. It dates back to the apartheid era where most of the black majority areas were not serviced with toilets therefore relied on the bucket system. It is disheartening given that South Africa has gained freedom twenty years ago and black urban dwellers continue to be bearing this underdevelopment shortcoming. This second round of exclusion is attributed to the failure of the African National Party in dealing with the increased urbanization of the cities and towns. The lack of ablation facilities in the informal settlement has increased the risk of diarrhea particularly because of the over-filled facilities which attract flies. Resultantly, flies carry diseases which strengthen health of many informal as well as well serviced areas, including the areas of Meyerton town and Henly on Klip (these two are surrounding site and service areas).

iii.   *Crime*

The issue of crime in South Africa is a complex one. South Africa is ranked first in terms of crime in the sub Sahara. The crime in South Africa ranges from murder, hi-jackings, rape cases, household break-ins and so on. Every day in the print media and visual media there are cases of crime in almost every part of South Africa particularly in the urban areas whereas the rural areas crime rate is limited (this is not to say-there is no crime). The high prevalence of crime in South Africa impacts on the tourist industry most as many tourists fear to come to the country as their destination. As well most investors are skeptical of their investment in a country where crime is rampant. Respondents from this study particularly women reported that they were more vulnerable to crime from youths who earned life through crime. They further elaborated that the crime ranged from house burglary and muggings. Respondents who have been victims of crime reported that they have suffered trauma and injury. One female respondent reported that:

We are tired of thieves here, everyday people scream after a thief has entered their house. Most of the thieves take radio, television sets and cell phones from houses. They mostly target houses which do not have male figures because they are afraid of males…we have reported these crimes but the youths always get away with their crime…the police is not doing their job

Another male respondent reiterated that

Youths have nothing to do…all they are here for is stealing and the police do nothing about that. Most of the stolen things are found in the second hand shop [televisions and radios]. That's how they earn their money because there is no employment…last time the other youth was stoned to death.

These two sentiments are reflective of the fact that unemployment in the informal settlement contributes to the high rate of crimes. Apart from that South African Police Services (SAPs) has a bad reputation to act in efficient and effective manner when crime is reported. Informal settlements have become breeding grounds for crime and if it remains unchecked a number of people will lose their lives as a result of crime (murder) as well as dwellers taking law in their hands in-case of a thief being caught.

iv. *Employment*

The issue of unemployment in South Africa is highly contentious with academia and politics. It is prevalent in both developed and developing countries. But for developing countries, this problem brings more challenges (including increased poverty) and complications (including political and social instability). South Africa is certainly no exception. High unemployment rates has become a major political campaigning agenda for most oppositions parties in the country including Economic Freedom Front led by former president of African National Congress Youth League Julius Malema and Democratic Alliance under the directorship of Helen Zille ahead of the elections on the 7th of May 2014. Unemployment has become a familiar misery of this democratic South Africa, its natures, causes and solutions remain a matter of disputes. Data collected shows that there was a unanimous conformity among the respondents that unemployment is a long term challenge in the informal settlements. One male respondent who do piece jobs like gardening and removing rubbles in nearby suburbs reported the following

… when the apartheid was abolished in 1994, we were happy that job discrimination was gone and we will have well paying jobs but the situation has become worse as we are unable to pay for education of our children and buying food for the house. The small jobs that we always get do not yield much money. At times you get R50 and it is not enough to buy food for the whole house…life is very difficult for us. Most people now survive through unscrupulous means like crime.

The above sentiment from the male respondent reflects that unemployment and crime are heavily linked together. The results of this study corroborates with Barker [25] "unemployment is probably the most severe problem South African society is experiencing and it is conceivably the root cause of many other problems, such as high crime rates, violence, abject poverty.... Prominent leaders in and outside government have also

stated that no government will be able to govern South Africa ...if this problem is not addressed effectively".

The respondents especially the married men interviewed reported that a stable income earned per month was what they desired through formal employment. However, because of the absence of employment opportunities most respondents reported that they were satisfied their party time work saved them with some sort of financial certainty.

v. *HIV/AIDS in the Informal Settlements*

Informal settlements have become undying features of the urban landscape in democratic South Africa, in actual fact these settlements have risen to be enclaves of social and economic problems including the deadly HIV/AIDS pandemic. This study reveals that the pandemic is so rife in the Sicelo, respondents were quick to point that the pandemic is robbing them of their friends and relatives in the settlement. One of the respondents who have recently lost a cousin reported the following:

last year I lost my brother because of this disease, youths and adults people in our community are highly active in sexual activities because there is nothing to occupy them…no work no nothing so they concentrate on sexual activities…some women offer sexual favours to get a beer, some offer sex to get money…and what makes is worse is they change these ladies and gentlemen between themselves. If one person is infected then everyone dies. It's a problem in this area

From the above sentiment, it is quite revealing that unemployment is a major influence into social vices like sexual activities in the informal settlement. As well in absence of the formal employment people engage into risk behaviours such as commercial sex to earn income. The results of this study are constant with a study by Ambert [26] which revealed that 16.2% of the residents of the informal settlements suffer from the disease. HIV/AIDS becomes so rife in the informal settlements because of the sexual networking as well as the partner change rates. It became clear in the in-depth interviews that alcohol abuse and sexual activities were everyday realities in the informal settlements particularly during month ends when people have received social grants from the government. Although HIV/AIDS is gender neutral, most women interviewed reported that women remain the worst affected.

The socio-economic status of the residents derives sexual behaviours. Through much probing one divorced women explained how she earned her income through commercial sex. She further explained how her household condition has forced her teenage daughter to engage into commercial sex with older men to supplement income for both household consumption and her fees. Unwittingly, girl child future is compromised as a result of the lack of income in

informal settlement households, exemplified through engaging in commercial sex.

vi. *Xenophobic violence*

The increase in xenophobia in South Africa has increased particularly in recent years despite the lack of direct comparable data. Despite the efforts by government in cubing racism and discrimination instigated by the apartheid government to disadvantage the black majority. Violence against foreign national has become very common and communities are divided by hostility and suspicion. There is a high perception that illegal immigrants are more involved in crime despite there being no statistical evidence to substantiate the perception as such foreign national are vulnerable to violence. According to a study by Human Rights Watch in 1998 immigrants from Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique living in the Alexandra township were "physically assaulted over a period of several weeks in January 1995, as armed gangs identified suspected undocumented migrants and marched them to the police station in an attempt to 'clean' the township of foreigners. The campaign, known as "Buyelekhaya" (go back home), blamed foreigners for crime, unemployment, sexual attacks and spreading AIDS.

One foreign national who owned a tuck-shop in the informal settlement explained how the service delivery protests are closely linked to xenophobic violence. He said the following:

It difficult to stay in this area, whenever there is service delivery, they always loot my shop…I do not know either I am responsible for providing service to them. I am not government. I do not even rely on the police because they mistreat us, even 'stealing'[they do not pay for what they take like cigarettes] from us and making unfounded allegations that we are responsible for selling drugs…it's so hard

Further probing into the xenophobic attacks unfolded that the South African's were angry of the fact that foreign nationals posed competition on available jobs, housing and commodities and the exceptionalism that comes from the fact that they are superior in relation to other Africans. It is apparent that informal settlements are havens of social ills and if it remains unchecked violence will continue to displace the already vulnerable foreign national.

vii. *Towards an understanding of living in a 'ramshackle'*

Meanings derived by informal dwellers about their household are different from those who live in well designated places. As such it raises questions about household satisfaction. In this section I reveal different perceptions from the different respondents in relation to their current household satisfaction.

Creating sustainable housing includes building houses which are durable and quality. However, in the case of Sicelo Shiceka, the shacks are substandard and normally are one roomed and they are less durable arising from the fact that they are built with less durable and material, more so they are not able to withstand adverse weather conditions or survive for a long time. In large part most of the informal houses are built with mud and have been exposed to harsh weathering including the recent floods that have occurred resultantly weakening the already fragile houses. Respondents reported that some of the houses have partially collapsed particularly the ones made out of mud and plastics however they expressed that those made out of sheet metal were also affected but not greater than the mud houses.

Bearing in mind that these houses (shacks) are build on convenience due to lack of adequate capital either to buy or rent proper housing, most of the informal houses do not corroborate with the standardized houses. Further probing, revealed that most if the houses had leaking roofs making the household dwellers to susceptible to health hazards and this reduced available funds when people seek medication. Moreover, the roof leaks did not have adverse effects on the humans only but it also affected the household furniture and other household items. One divorced woman living with three of her children reported the following:

I am not employed on full time and most of the money that I get is for food and school fees of my children. My house leaks water every time it rains I have tried to fix it but the problem continues, during the night when it is raining you have to changes from one spot to another…I remember at one time I went to my Johannesburg and it rained all my wood furniture and my radio was soaked in water…I struggled to get such property…my daughter suffered from pneumonia for a long time.

As I have outlined earlier, roof leaks have affects human health particularly children because of their weak immune system. Female respondents with children reported that they have been (once or twice) forced seek medical attention because of disease like cold flu, pneumonia and asthma.

The Sicelo Shiceka informal settlement does not have electricity hence the majority of the houses do not have electiricity. Data collected revealed that most of the houses used wood for heating the water and food processing. Mostly, women have been noticeable in collecting the firewood for the day to day running of the household. This posed a challenge and reduced time in engaging into other income generating livelihood activities. Food processing was mainly done inside the house or outside, nonetheless the houses have no adequate ventilation thereby causing another health hazard including bronchitis as revealed by one respondent whose child died due to smoke continued smoke emitted by the fuel wood. Overall, through

observation most of the houses did not have air vents and the walls have turned black due to smoke.

By and large, the respondents expressed disgruntlement over their satisfaction in relation to the structures of their household. The entire majority among the sampled people reflected that they were extremely dissatisfied with their current conditions but however they were hanging in through agency given that the government through the Midvaal municipality is adamant to regularize the informal settlement. Evictions do not yield anything other than more vulnerability and destitution as the informal settlement is always in constant threatening.

viii. *Livelihoods of the Sicelo Shiceka informal settlement*

Informal houses are cheap to build but their proximity to jobs is compromised. With the high unemployment levels in South Africa particularly because of high levels of illiteracy most of the informal settlements people form high levels of uneducated people making it different to be in cooperated into formal employment. Through agency and ingenuity these people are not victims of circumstance hence they have employed and devised methods of acquiring income through responding to the market laws of supply and demand. The following themes came out: domestic work, commercial sex, manual labour and stokvels.

a. A significant number of females in the sample reported that they managed to provide for their family through engaging into domestic housework. They reported that they worked at household in the nearby low density surburb where they did chores like doing laundry, nurturing toddlers, washing dishes, household cleaning and other chores as instructed by their employer. However, they expressed concerns on the salary they were receiving. The income was mainly to cater for household immediate consumption while making it difficult to do savings for the future. However, women utilized the little they received to maintain household economic wellbeing. Domestic work is one of the many ways women earn their leaving although it is notoriously known to be not well remunerative. In relation to the remuneration, it differed from one house to another or from one low density suburb to another. An estimated amount of R1500-R2000 was paid every month for domestic workers. Most of this money was paid in cash because the domestic workers were not bank account holders making it difficult to save the little they received.

b. Apart from domestic work, commercial sex was very rife as a faster means to get little amount of money. Younger female respondents reported that the lack of stable income forces them to look for income through commercializing sex. Commercial sex was not only offered to the local people in the informal settlement but was also extended to outsiders (particularly truck drivers). Younger women are particularly noticeable during the day and night standing under highway bridges wearing attractive mini-skirts to lure men. They expressed that truck drivers were better paying than the local people in the informal settlement. They further unearthed that they have encountered contracts with some truck drivers, whenever they were passing through they communicated to meet. This brings a point of how stable income was earned especially on contract basis. In furtherance, commercial sex workers revealed that people working in the industries also were customers mainly during lunch hours. Income earned was precarious despite the contract based; one respondent aged twenty-six said the following

…the money that you get is very little, if you want to have more money it means you should be very attractive and attract a lot of customers because this game is like gambling sometimes you get a lot and at times you get nothing…sometimes men do not want to pay and they run away. I charge per round R50 per round and if you want more then you have to pay more.

From the above sentiment it is clear that commercial sex is associated with risk (particularly men not wanting to pay) and very little is yielded given risks associated with sexual activities especially with a multitude of men.

c. Apart from the commercial sex which is mainly associated with women, men engaged into day to day manual labour work. Men were noticeable at all corners streets waiting for an employer to come and pick them for a part time job. The part time jobs that were mainly reported by the men included but not limited to the following painting, cutting trees, offloading haulage trucks, digging trenches and demolishing structures amongst others. The money that was gained from these jobs was not transferred into meaningful usage such as that of women in catering for household needs. Men used their money for buying alcohol and cigarettes. This reveals that the priorities of men and women differed greatly. As such this has increased domestic violence as men only think of themselves than household economic well being. A lot of married and unmarried women expressed that domestic violence was rampant in the informal settlement and it was mainly fueled by the income issues. Women have been able to transfer their financial capital to physical capital through acquiring assets as gas stoves, radios for entertainment and so on while men's money has perished in night clubs and women.

d. Women often engaged into stokvels (saving groups). These groups saved as a way of increasing ones income. These rotational groups

were reported to be very much significant in as far as maintaining and increasing household income. The groups mainly comprised of five people and they contributed groceries for the first half of the year and also cash for the second half of the year. An agreed R500.00 was contributed by each member. Also besides the stokvels women relied on the child support grant though it was reported to be a meager income, it has helped beneficiaries to hang on during difficult times.

V. Conclusion

As its main objective this paper has critically examined the lived experiences (vulnerability) of informal settlement dwellers in the Midvaal Municipality (in Gauteng Province-Sedibeng District) specifically Sicelo Shiceka (one of the informal settlements). The broad aim of the paper was backed up by subsidiary goals including:

1. to ascertain the livelihood activities of informal dwellers and their implications for the survival of a household
2. to understand the experiences and perceptions of informal dwellers in as far as living in 'shacks' is concerned.

Informal dwellers of Sicelo lived in abject poverty given that poverty can be conceptualized as "the state of lacking adequate means to live comfortably and the want of things or needs indispensable to life" [27]. Informal settlements lack meaningful employment opportunities therefore households and individuals engage into a range of livelihood activities so as to sustain their lives. As highlighted a number of livelihoods included domestic work, commercial sex, manual labour by men and stovkels. These are well known to be less paying but the study revealed that despite being less remunerative, households and individuals have rose above their expectation. There is a discernible link between housing and poverty as exemplified by residents of Sicelo Shiceka, their lived experiences compounded by underdevelopment shortcomings of water, poor ablation and other essential services. Poverty is not only restricted to materials conditions but it also reveals human conditions. In that light, informal dwellers revealed their indecencies which they bear daily. Their daily experiences have been exacerbated by the deadly mixture of neo-liberal policies which have cut social expenditures as unproductive and wasteful. In return this has affected the black majority including the failure to secure or own a proper housing.

Social sustainability have been pervaded in Sicelo given that residents do not take pride in their place of residence given the challenges such as leaking roofs and lack of ventilation and lack of basic amenities (as discussed under vulnerability section). In general, such indicators limit the social sustainability of housing

as indicated earlier. The housing in form of shacks is of poor quality and extends to creation of contagious diseases as highlighted earlier. Overall, this paper unearthed that informal settlements are a haven of many social ills ranging from violence, crime, xenophobia, commercial sex and so on and these are greatly linked with housing. The fight against violence and crime and HIV/AIDS is a mission impossible if informal settlements are not factored in particularly because they are the breeding grounds for all these activities. Put it in another way the above discussed are indicators of poverty and doing away with informal settlements will automatically lessen poverty. This argument, I would suggest is the chief contribution made by this paper to the existing knowledge. Poverty indicators are mutually linked to informal settlements in a dependent and fluid manner, however they might have disconnected analytical facets but on realism they interlink and give shape to each other.

The findings of this study have implications for urban development policy. That is to ameliorate urban poverty (informal settlement poverty) city fathers and other concerned stakeholders have to should ensure that informal settlements are regularized in as far as provision of basic amenities (water, sanitation and toilets) and employment. This can be done through donating frequently emptied toilet cabins, establishment of water tapes than relying on a few. Establishing vocational training is a significant move towards enhancing sustainable income and a move away from charity model or social protection model to a more sustainable way of living thereby uplifting living standards. In general, informal settlements have institutionalized themselves so authorities should initiate participatory approaches that will ensure the needs of the people affected. Ignorance towards the informal settlement will only intensify their existing conditions that are urban suffering and vulnerability.

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