



## Upgrading South Africa's Housing Policy

Despite very significant progress in housing delivery since the historic 1994 elections, the South African government was confronted with the challenge of rapid growth of informal settlements throughout the country. While two million houses were produced, there are now 2,600 informal settlements across the country that are home to an estimated 1.4 million households.

Since 2005, the Cities Alliance has supported South Africa's National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) in developing its National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP). The Programme incorporates informal settlement upgrading into the country's national housing policy.

### Overcoming the Urban Divide

In 2008, the NDHS approached the Cities Alliance to help review its ambitious housing policy. Working through the World Bank, the Alliance advised that the housing programmes needed to move beyond the orthodox approach of large-scale housing construction and resettlement, and promote a more flexible approach to housing for the poor.

The result was the formation of the National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) to provide a policy framework, and facilitate the structured *in-situ* upgrading of informal settlements through the provision of basic infrastructure, services and land tenure for 400,000 informal settlement households by 2014.

**“The upgrading of informal settlements is high on our agenda because it is not possible to build houses for everyone at the same time... The demand for houses is very high and the resources are limited.”**

*Tokyo Sexwale, Minister of Human Settlements, South Africa*

**Project:** Strengthening the South African National Upgrading Support Programme

**Partners:** Cities Alliance, World Bank Institute, the World Bank, USAID, Department of Human Settlements

**Duration:** 2008 – 2011

**Cities Alliance Financing:** USD 675,000

Since 2008, the Cities Alliance has supported several initiatives towards the successful implementation of NUSP. These include consensus building on *in-situ* upgrading among policy makers at the national, provincial and municipality level. A series of upgrading forums have been held across the country to promote peer-to-peer learning.

Partnerships among various stakeholders including government authorities, private sector, civil society and residents of informal settlements are also being strengthened. Capacity building programmes are being developed along with learning resources such as an interactive [website](#) and a resource toolkit. The Alliance also provided assistance to NUSP in the areas of financial planning, project monitoring and evaluation.

### A Historic Commitment to Housing for the Poor

In April 2010, President Jacob Zuma and the Minister of Human Settlements, Tokyo Sexwale, signed an historic Presidential Delivery Agreement. For the first time, *in-situ* upgrading has the necessary political support for its inclusion at the centre of the national housing policy. It is backed by a financial allocation of ZAR 22 billion (approximately USD 3 billion) in the 2011-14 fiscal period. Significantly, through the Agreement the government also holds itself accountable for the implementation of NUSP.



Residents of Ruimsig participate in a workshop to upgrade their settlement, with students from the University of Johannesburg

In his 2011 Budget Speech, Minister Sexwale declared, “The upgrading of informal settlements is high on our agenda because it is not possible to build houses for everyone at the same time... The demand for houses is very high and the resources are limited.”

A unique feature of NUSP is that it promotes a truly participatory *in-situ* upgrading process. This is evident from efforts like *Informal Studio: Ruimsig*. With NUSP staff acting in an advisory role, this is the country’s first course on informal settlement upgrading offered by the University of Johannesburg (UJ), designed within the parameters of the Presidential Delivery Agreement.

Ruimsig is an informal settlement on the western periphery of Johannesburg supported by the Informal Settlement Network (ISN), a nation-wide network of informal settlements leadership. ISN, in turn, is supported by a local NGO, Community Organization Resource Centre (CORC), as well as Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI). These organisations have provided valuable networks to learn from similar experiences in South Africa and across the world. UJ’s architecture degree students collaborated with Ruimsig residents to design upgrading strategies for the settlement’s long-term improvement. Miguel Pinto, one of the 16 students who participated in the course shares his experience: “Initially, the residents were shy and wondered whether they could trust us but as the process evolved they realized every decision was made with their approval. By the end, it was a massive success and now, there is great enthusiasm for our

work.” Adds Ruimsig resident and ‘community architect’ Watson Sibara, “The students didn’t talk theory; it was a practical exercise and they are helping us improve Ruimsig’s roads, toilets, drainage and other facilities.”

## Lessons Learned from the NUSP Success Story

NUSP’s success demonstrates how a timely intervention in response to a Government request can lead to a more effective and sustainable pro-poor housing strategy. Initially, there was stiff political resistance to *in-situ* and incremental upgrading across South Africa. Yet, NUSP eventually received the highest political backing and informal settlement upgrading was included as a core component of the 2010 Presidential Delivery Agreement. NUSP Coordinator Steve Topham recalls, “Our biggest challenge was to change political attitudes to pro-poor development. NUSP is a complete departure from orthodoxy and takes a tailored approach to upgrading.”

In the case of NUSP, political support translated into financial support as well - an important factor in successful project implementation. Funding of USD 675,000 from the Cities Alliance and USAID, with technical support from the World Bank and WBI, was influential in leveraging public investment for upgrading and municipal services to the amount of ZAR 4.9 billion (approximately USD 650,000).

Finally, as demonstrated in the Ruimsig experience, NUSP underlines the importance of involving city residents in programme planning and implementation. By listening to the concerns of residents of informal settlements, city authorities were able to win their trust and draw up a successful upgrading plan. Such partnerships among decision makers and the residents create a sense of ownership for the programme among all stakeholders leading to more effective programme implementation.

### The NUSP project contributes to the long-term objectives of the Cities Alliance by:

- Promoting policies that focus on the whole city, and prioritise the poor
- Promoting partnerships to address difficult issues
- Leveraging significant budget allocation