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HOUSING FOR BLACK PEOPLE IN  
GREATER DURBAN: PRESENT NEEDS  
AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Lawrence Schlemmer  
Valerie Møller  
Clarissa Fourie

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CASS/housing

# HOUSING FOR BLACK PEOPLE IN GREATER DURBAN : PRESENT NEEDS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

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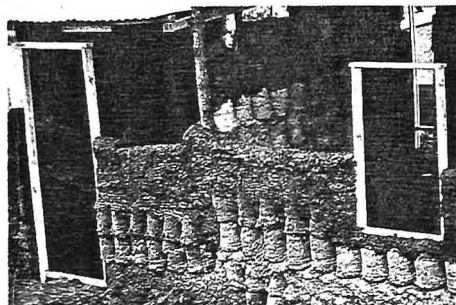
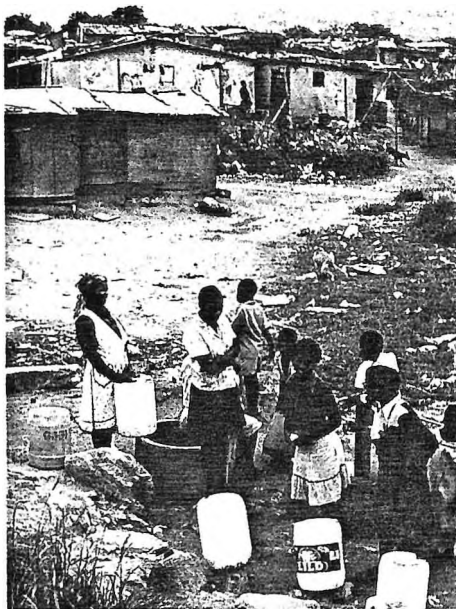
Centre for Applied Social Sciences  
Durban

**HOUSING and shelter is commonly assumed to be a fundamental component of the quality of life. It certainly ranks with health, education and family income as part of the crucial set of determinants of well-being of black urban dwellers in South Africa.**

In a recent HSRC investigation into the quality of life (Moller, Schlemmer, Strijdom et al., 1984), disturbing evidence in regard to housing satisfaction

in South Africa's major urban areas was found. Levels of dissatisfaction with housing in the townships were generally exceeded only by financial dissatisfaction notably in regard to income, prices and costs of services, and by problems in regard to the availability of jobs. More than 50 percent of the 3 276 respondents expressed dissatisfaction in regard to the size of houses in relation to occupancy and the availability of housing. Among an additional sample of 138 peri-urban

residents in informal housing a higher level of dissatisfaction with existing housing prevailed, with an average of over 60 percent expressing discontent with a parcel of issues including housing availability, size of house, choice of housing areas and privacy within the home. It should be added immediately, however, that residents in informal areas do not in the main wish to move into formal townships at current rental and purchase costs. Their desire is generally for more adequate



housing provision, housing upgrading and appropriate services in the areas where they currently reside.

Balanced development in KwaZulu cannot ignore the important issues in perceived quality of life. Housing, education and training and employment creation are the practical issues of keynote significance. All of them represent daunting challenges, not the least of these in housing.

### HOUSING NEEDS IN THE GREATER DURBAN-PINETOWN REGION

In the whole of the greater Durban region, including all Black areas both inside and outside the KwaZulu boundary, we estimate there are presently some 74 000 formally approved houses. These include the regular township housing, privately-built approved housing and approved self-help housing. This represents the current formal housing stock.

These 74 000 houses accommodate roughly 797 000 people, an average of 10,8 people per house. Some areas, like Chesterville for example, accommodate closer to 14 people per house.

Occupancy rates such as those given above are quite obviously critically high. The vast bulk of the houses are four-roomed with two bedrooms, a lounge and a kitchen. Even assuming the use of the lounge for sleeping, we get 3,5 people per bedroom. This does not allow anywhere near adequate sex-separation and nor does it allow adults and growing children any private space whatsoever. The stress of overcrowding must be very severe.

A figure of eight people per house is still too high, but in the light of practicalities, it is probably the best to hope for. A figure of eight per household implies a current theoretical need for 25 600 additional houses to accommodate the lodgers and married children who currently place such a strain on current housing stock.

Outside of the formal housing areas, however, the Inkatha Institute, the Department of Land Surveyal and the University of Natal have established that there are 115 000 shacks and homesteads in the functional area of Durban, accommodating nearly 1,3 million people. Included in these figures, in the indentifiable informal communities on the outskirts of the formal townships which are generally as urban as the townships themselves, there are roughly 75 000 informal dwellings, accommodating some 800 000 people.

In the urban settlements of the greater city, therefore, there are as many people in informal housing as there are people in approved dwellings. All the shack-areas in the identifiable communities closer to the townships require upgrading of the housing structures and the provision of services like water, rudimentary sewerage systems, clinics, schools, roads able to take bus transport, and commercial outlets, and the lifting of influx control restrictions on the freedom to seek work in Durban. The shacks and homesteads further out are in areas of a peri-urban character and because of lower densities the need for upgrading is not immediately critical.

A further need for housing emanates from workers currently living in hostels. Of the 58 000 men living in hostels a proportion would like to acquire township housing so that they could live in family circumstances. One study we have conducted recently in a private company hostel showed that over 70 percent would like family accommodation, and nearly 50 percent would be willing to pay more for such housing. Only about one-third to one-half of these people would qualify for urban housing rights in terms of Regulation R293 of 1962.

Even if one assumed that a third of hostel-dwellers would qualify, and assuming that the findings on residential preferences quoted above are typical, it would mean that some 15 to 20 percent of hostel dwellers could be se-

rious applicants for housing; i.e., some 10 000 to 12 000 people. Anything which reduces the number of people living unnaturally as single men in hostels would create a more settled urban environment and facilitate the agricultural development of rural areas by allowing non-active dependants of migrants to urbanise.

Taking all these estimates together means that over 110 000 housing units need to be built, provided or upgraded and serviced right now in order to meet the immediate need in greater Durban.

What of the future? Most experts assume that the black population of greater Durban will be growing by between 6 and 7 percent per annum up to the year 2000. Taking the conservative figure of 6 percent per annum, and applying it only to the urban population and excluding the peri-urban population outside of the dense settlements, gives the following picture of black population growth:

Estimated 1985 black population, including townships, urban shack settlements, hostels and domestics	1 700 000
Estimated population in 2000 (a 6 percent per annum growth)	4 074 000

A population of 4 074 000 in 2000, at 8 persons per house, implies a housing stock of slightly over 509 000 units. Comparing this with the formal housing stock in 1985 of 74 000 units means that 435 000 units have to be built or upgraded and serviced in the next 15 years: an average of 29 000 per annum. To eliminate the backlog a much higher rate of progress will be necessary in the next few years. We are in reality looking at a need to produce or upgrade over 40 000 units per annum for the next few years.

The current increase in approved housing is very much less than one-tenth of what is required. Can this challenge be met?

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE

We believe that the combined efforts of the KwaZulu Government, the central government, the KwaZulu Finance and Investment Corporation (KFC), the private sector and, most importantly, the people themselves will be able to meet the challenge, but it will require courageous decisions.

The central government has a particular responsibility. A study recently undertaken by the Inkatha Institute with financial assistance from the Urban Foundation has shown that at least 50 percent of the people in the urban shack settlements originate from outside KwaZulu, mainly from white agricultural areas, but also including resettlement areas, the Transkei and small towns in Natal and other provinces. KwaZulu will ultimately be responsible for all the Black areas around Durban, but it cannot shoulder its part of the burden without additional central government finance. Once the economy recovers this must be a major budgetary priority for the South African Government.

Land for the allocation of sites is another major problem. At present most of the available land for expansion is in tribal authority areas. A method must be found to incorporate tribal authority into planned urban housing extensions so that they can participate in the administration of the areas and benefit from the release of land for denser settlement. The planning and negotiation involved in this will be very complex but cannot be delayed.

Existing shack areas must be upgraded by the provision of essential services and the provision, through the KFC and the private sector, of small loans to householders to effect the improvements necessary to their structures. The success achieved in this regard at Woody Glen, near Mpumalanga, is a model of procedures which could be followed, and in some cases are already being followed. The barest minimum of shacks should be moved for the purposes of providing roads and services. Planning officials should work with

community leaders to gain maximum co-operation, as has been the case in Woody Glen.

Employers must be encouraged to realise more keenly than hitherto that the provision of assistance to their employees to acquire housing is a primary social responsibility. The KFC, which has now acquired prescribed status, can be a vehicle for the investment of funds at preferential rates of interest for housing purposes.

(See separate report in this issue for further details on a KFC subsidiary's efforts in the field of housing)

We would also suggest that the KwaZulu Department of Works, once financial assistance from the central government is available, approaches the provision of roads and services as a job-creation programme, involving the local unemployed in teams to work on the upgrading process.

Local Black builders should be encouraged and the type of building standards insisted on hitherto must be judiciously lowered and replaced, instead, by ones recommended by advice teams from the KwaZulu Government to assist the builders in improving the standard of their product.

Woody Glen and other areas are an example of how readily the shack dwellers themselves will improve their dwellings once they are given security of tenure. The KwaZulu Government, together with the tribal authorities, might embark on a programme of inspecting all areas of shack housing with a view to issuing certificates of tenure to as many people as possible. The planning and implementation of freehold and leasehold tenure has not yet been completed, but temporary certificates ensuring security on the site could be issued on an interim basis. Even before this, the statement of a policy to provide shack dwellers with security, well advertised, will have a dramatic effect in mobilising interest in the improvement of housing.

Schemes to increase the density of units per hectare in parts of the established townships should also be launched, including the legalisation of accommodation in additional structures on existing sites. Particularly in the areas closest to the city provision should be made for increasing working class accommodation in the townships. Existing site-holders should be compensated in such a way as to enable them to move to larger sites elsewhere if they wish. It should be on a voluntary basis, obviously.

Generally the planning should aim at a mix of provision, from contractor-built middle class housing assisted by building society and KFC loans, through to shack upgrading, with emphasis on the least expensive options.

We have no doubt that the authorities and organisations involved and the people themselves have the orientation and the capacity to rise to the challenge of housing. As this challenge is met it will not only have a dramatic impact on the quality of life and the stability of this area, but it will also stimulate employment and economic growth. ■



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