

**SOUTH AFRICA**

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## **Profiles of the Informal Settlements within Johannesburg Metropole**

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### **Introduction**

Take a look at the official map of any city in Africa. It can be Dakar or Cairo, Nairobi or Harare-even Johannesburg. You won't notice it, but these maps do not give you the whole picture. They leave out the neighborhoods that house at least 35% of the

city's population- in some cases as much as 70%. Official maps eradicate with efficiency that (for totally different reasons) slum clearance boards and the architects of the Millennium Development Goals can only envy.

The map-makers of Nairobi, for example, have





been able to make Kibera disappear. The largest slum in Africa and the streets and houses that cater for over 750,000 people appear as a black hole on the edges of adequately detailed layouts of Nairobi's formal suburbs. The same applies to Kisenyi in Kampala, Mbayani in Blantyre, Old Fadama in Accra, Cambamba in Luanda. The list of urban black holes in Africa is impressive.

This document and the work that has gone into its compilation represent an attempt to fill the gaps that pothole the formal maps of the city of Johannesburg- to make visible that which society has tried to hide.

This applies as much to the physical space of the 130 plus settlements profiled in this report, as it does to the people who live in them, whose families' long histories of dispossession and oppression have brought them to inhabit these invisible spaces.

From its cooperation with the South African Homeless People's Federation and its links with Shack Dwellers International, the Community Organization Urban Resource Center (COURC) has learnt to assist urban poor communities in the gathering and management

of survey information and related socio-economic data. The processing of this information has academic research is a by-product rather than an end in itself. This research has little value if it does not contribute tangibly and directly to a material improvement in the lives of the people whose hidden settlements are profiled here.

It always helps to walk into the future looking backwards. Fifteen years ago this report would never have seen the light of day, and the people-driven surveys that lie at its very heart would have resulted in persecution, harassment and imprisonment. We





have an incredibly long way to go, but it is important to register the distance already covered. Fifteen years ago a report such as this would have led to vehement denial by the racist authorities, to confrontation and to conflict. Today it opens space for dialogue and helps the state to develop responses that are humane, participatory and inclusive. This report makes visible the invisible. Those shack dwellers and committed professionals who have made it see the light of day, hope that, by starting a process that puts Johannesburg's informal settlements on the map, they will have made a small contribution to a process that seeks to upgrade and relocate the homes of the people who live in them, instead of seeking to either deny or eliminate them. No small part of the endeavor to create this body of knowledge has been to assist the resident communities by sharing the gathered information with them, so that they are able to use it as a lobbying and advocacy tool to ensure participatory planning of the upgrading and relocation interventions that are already in the pipeline.

As a social movement the South African Homeless Federation with its NGO allies, COURC, and uTshani, has established itself as an international pioneer in the field of tenure security and people's housing since 1991. It is the country's largest people's housing process CBO.

The Federation is a network of community-based savings schemes, with membership drawn from informal settlements, backyard

shacks, hostels, or rented accommodation in township areas. The role of the federation is to mobilize communities; to develop its agenda around social and housing development; to initiate development processes and to tailor its leadership role according to its capacity. The federations have been proactively implementing a system of self-enumeration and self-surveying. This empowerment strategy embraces teaching members how to amass and complete data about households and families in their own communities, via a process that facilitates lateral learning and in essence creating a

new governmentality from the bottom up. Over and above enabling the uncounted poor to be statistically visible enumerations and surveying are a powerful means of community mobilization, creating the space for initiating new savings schemes as well as reviving existing ones.

The knowledge and data gathered serves as a powerful lever for the federations in their transactions with formal establishments. It is hoped that the data of this profiling exercise will be utilized to constructively engage with the government for the benefit of the most marginalized and poorest of the poor.

### **Some Characteristics of the Profiles**

The approach of this informal settlement profiling has been geared to gathering information about these settlements with the intent of utilizing it as a resource and advocacy tool to support the poor, homeless communities in their quest to secure tenure and improve socio-economic conditions, be it by way of in situ upgrading or appropriate relocation.





The primary actors and data collectors in this project have been the communities themselves. A team of four grassroots enumerators, belonging to the federation spent six months traveling the length and breadth of the city. They were provided technical back up by researchers from COURC.

The enumeration featured the following:

- All settlements were categorized within regions
- Community leaders were asked to provide settlement.
- Completed profiles and reports were presented to the communities at the reporting sessions.
- Where possible savings schemes were established in the settlement were established in the settlement.

The survey covered 9 regions that yielded a combined total of 131 informal settlements. This inventory incorporates over 97% of all informal settlements in the Johannesburg Metropole.

Data was collected on each of the following aspects:

- Settlement locality and description.

- A count of all the structures in the settlement.

- Land tenure status.
- Settlement size
- Basic amenities
- Establishment of the available services including transport, education, health, and social and public services.
- People's involvement in development activities.
- Interviews on settlement history.

The report is available in the COURC office.

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