

The scourge of post-apartheid housing in Umlazi.

Mthembu N. (2007)

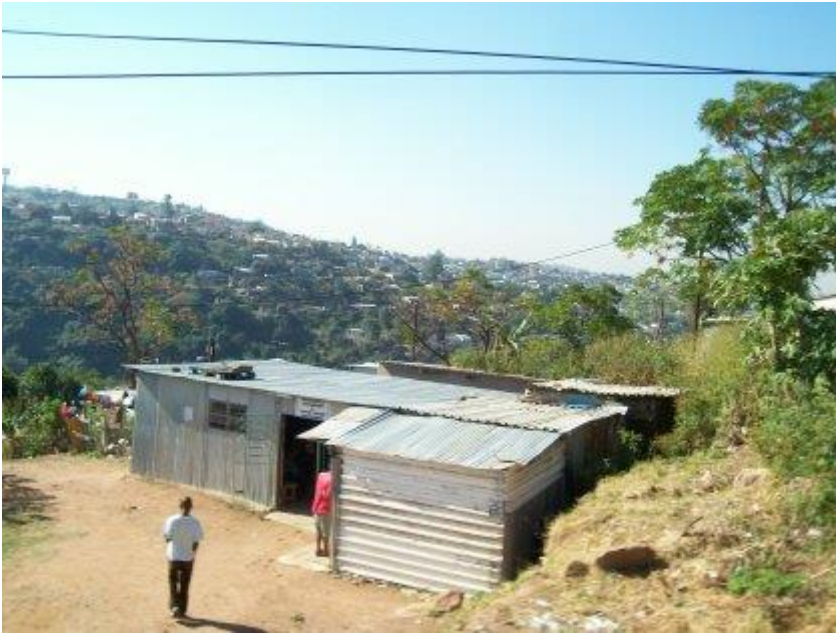
Abstract

Umlazi is part of the townships that form the new city demarcation of eThekweni Municipality (“eThekweni”) as they were redrawn after 2000 local government elections and implemented in terms of the Municipal Structures Act, when Durban Municipality started to unify different six local councils that were previously divided under apartheid state into administrative entities. A transformation of the administrative component of eThekweni Municipality was initiated in 2002, with a specific focus on improving service delivery, and driving economic growth and employment within the region (Joffe, 2006). eThekweni is surrounded by the iLembe to the north, the Indian ocean to the east, Ugu to south and UMgungundlovu to the west. Its population is estimated at over 2.5 million.



Umlazi township is the outcome of the 1845 British occupation of what was renamed Natal after land was stolen from the indigenous populace - Zulus. It is situated 17km south west of central Durban. The Umlazi Reserve was established in 1862 by the Church of England to provide for a progressive rural life for “natives” in pursuit of pastoral and agricultural occupation. It was proclaimed a township in 1962 to house residents of Cato Manor who were moved under the slums law. Today, Umlazi (situated 17km southwest of Durban) has a population of about 400 000. Some estimates indicate a higher population figure - up to 1 million people. There are shack settlements surrounding Umlazi as well as backyard shacks in the township (Mahomed, 2002).

When the ANC came to power in 1994, 'homes for all' was a key election promise. Several years later the housing crisis remains one of the government's biggest problems and millions of people still live in vast shack settlements. The adoption of neoliberal economic policies restricted the state budget and prevented access to basic services (Desai, 2002:37).



The eThekweni Municipal Council responded differently to communities according to their access to land, housing and basic services provision. For example, the Department of Housing proposed to transfer flats to the occupiers under the Policy on Rightsizing of Indigent Tenants in 2000 and the Discount Benefit Scheme that demanded all outstanding arrears to be settled prior sale arrangements or the household member faced the relocation to another area.

But poor people still face the same apartheid style treatment, including evictions from homes and disconnections of water and electricity (Desai, 2002). Informal settlements still experience fire, and communities argue that fires are a direct consequence of the eThekweni Municipality's infamous and unconstitutional 2001 decision to suspend the provision of electricity to informal settlements. The policy states that 'In past (1990s) electrification was rolled out to all and sundry... electrification of the informal settlements has now been discontinued'.

Since poor people could not afford the exorbitant prices, they faced the disconnection of water and electricity in their households as early as 1997. Some community members are said to owe the amount equals to more than R10, 000 of arrears. The new South Africa was started experiencing the re-emergence of protests marches against the Councils war's on water and electricity disconnections in various places in eThekweni surroundings such as Chatsworth, Wentworth, Umlazi and Mpumalanga in 2002 (Desai, 2002:90).



In closure, the state of housing in South Africa remain a challenging one to the government and the poor remain hoping and in some instances the signs of despair start to emerge in the form of protest and marches that normally ends up with handing of memorandum to government leaders. Government develop programmes to uplift the state poverty in the previously disadvantaged communities but these programmes tend to be highly infested with corrupt developers. The corruption that manifest in the form of poorly built houses (normally because of cheap material used as the means to save costs). Poverty is rife as the majority of people remain unemployed and they have no other alternative to deal with poverty by using land, as they remain alternated like before. On other hand government spend big sums of money to prepare the 2010 world tournaments and in return the vulnerable communities are affected badly, as government propose to do away with alternative accommodation- the informal settlements. The future of the vulnerable populace remain uncertain as possible as ever was before 1994.

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Playground of the Zulu Kingdom

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