

Chapter 8

Informal Settlements: A Manifestation of Internal and Cross-Border Migration



Anna Oksiutycz and Caroline Muyaluka Azionya

8.1 Introduction

Informal settlements are perceptible material expressions of internal and cross-border migration in South Africa. New arrivals, drawn to urban centres in search of economic opportunities, find a residence in one of the high-density informal settlements dotted around the economic hub of South Africa, the Gauteng province. It is projected that an estimated 1.6 million migrants,¹ including 48% of all immigrants in South Africa, will make Gauteng province their home by 2021 (Stats SA, 2018a). However, instead of better conditions, rural-urban and urban-urban migrants as well as undocumented and documented immigrants experience a lack of service delivery in health, education, road infrastructure, security, electricity, water and sanitation (Marutlulle, 2017). The lack of provision of basic services and resources from the government at such sites often results in community protests and translates into attacks against immigrants residing in those communities.

We approach this chapter using two important lenses. Firstly, we largely depart from the stereotypical binary discourse that frames residents of informal settlements around illegality as land invaders, undocumented immigrants and criminals. Secondly, we challenge the assumption that such communities are unsophisticated, disorganised and unresourceful. Instead, we recognise them as resilient and self-organised communities, with bottom-up participatory structures that engage and advocate for appropriate solutions to the private and public sectors' inability to

¹In this chapter, we distinguish between *internal* and *cross-border migrants* (also referred to as *immigrants*); when we refer to both categories, we use the term *migrants*.

A. Oksiutycz (✉) · C. M. Azionya
Department of Strategic Communication, University of Johannesburg,
Johannesburg, South Africa
e-mail: aoksiutycz@uj.ac.za; carolinea@uj.ac.za

provide formal, quality housing for all. This chapter aims to explore the realities and lived experiences of the residents of Zandspruit informal settlement.

8.2 Migration, Housing Policy and the Social Role of Informal Settlements

South African shantytowns, popularly known as “squatter camps” and officially referred to as “informal settlements” (Stats SA, 2018b), are a distinct feature of South African urban areas. They are indicative of economic inequality, housing policy failures, the long-standing practice of spatial segregation of poor migrants in urban environments, and corruption and maladministration at municipal, provincial and national government levels (Marutlulle, 2017).

8.3 Informal Settlements, Migration and Urbanisation in South Africa

The growth of informal settlements in South Africa is mainly driven by urbanisation and internal migration, although other factors such as cross-border migration and population growth also affect urbanisation (Segatti, 2011). Currently, more than 60% of South Africans live in urban areas (Stats SA, 2019) compared to 47% in 2001 (Stats SA, 2006). Population relocation and burgeoning household growth compound state interventions to address fresh housing demands and existing backlogs (Stats SA, 2018b). Similarly, the private sector lacks a model to house the urban poor profitably. Therefore, the inability to provide housing at scale for rural-urban/urban-urban migrants and immigrants leads the affected to identify vacant land (usually municipal) and use their meagre resources to build informal dwellings and find ways to address service delivery gaps.

While not all migrants are poor, they account for a large percentage of urbanites living in poverty (Tacoli et al., 2015). A study on the needs and vulnerabilities of people living in poverty in the Gauteng province names long-term, urban, informal-settlement migrants as most vulnerable to insecure and unstable livelihoods (IOM, 2013). Nevertheless, migrants settled in urban areas “tend to have better economic prospects than people who remain in rural areas” (Turok, 2018: 7). Although all residents of urban informal settlements are vulnerable to poor health and living conditions, violence, assault and harassment, immigrants are the most vulnerable to these factors (IOM, 2013). Generally, in South Africa, poor migrants and immigrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, are pushed to live together in informal settlements and experience similar socio-economic conditions.

Informal settlements are mainly considered to be cases of socio-economic spatial segregation within South African cities (Turok, 2018). In developed countries,

considerable evidence of spatial segregation of immigrants based on their origins (Sydes, 2019; Nielsen & Hennerdal, 2017; Søholt & Lynnebakke, 2015) raises concerns about integration and the existence of parallel societies. However, in South Africa, poor internal migrants and poor immigrants live side by side, usually on the periphery of large cities, with poor transport links and limited access to education, training and job opportunities, which consequently perpetuates poverty (Marutlulle, 2017). That does not mean that the co-existence of internal and cross-border migrants is always peaceful within the settlements.

Despite research indicating the positive impact of immigration on local employment, labour earnings, wages and public finance (OECD/ILO, 2018) in South Africa, widespread negative attitudes towards immigrants – particularly those living in the informal settlements – persist. Saleh (2015: 298) and Mensah and Benedict (2016: 73) argue that the biggest trigger for the xenophobic violence in 2001, 2002, 2008 and 2015 was the sentiment that immigrants were taking away employment opportunities from South Africans and that immigrant entrepreneurs were pushing local micro and small enterprises out of business using nefarious business practices (Skinner, 2015). Distorted perceptions around the number of immigrants in South Africa (Pretorius, 2019) further fuel negativity towards immigrants. South Africans often portray immigrants as impediments to accessing services in formal and informal settlements (Mensah & Benedict, 2016) and attribute high crime levels to illegal immigration, despite lack of evidence supporting such claims (Crush & Williams, 2002). Furthermore, South Africa lacks an effective system for managing migration and integrating immigrants into communities for social cohesion (Landman & Napier, 2010).

8.3.1 The Role of Fragmented Policy in Housing Delivery Failures

The rate of migration in South Africa remains relatively constant, at around 12% of the population for the five-year intervals studied by Stats SA between 1975 and 2001 (Stats SA, 2018c). Since South Africa has not experienced rapid migration, housing shortages, growth of informal settlements and service delivery problems are not solely attributable to migration. This indicates policy failures in terms of housing delivery and migration management. The right to housing is entrenched in the South African constitution, which states that all South Africans have the right to have “access to adequate housing” (Republic of South Africa, 1996: 26). The constitution also makes it incumbent on the state to realise this right.

To assist the poor to get access to housing, the government introduced a range of subsidies such as providing Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) housing after 1994, serviced building stands, and rental housing (National Department of Housing, 1994). The RDP was replaced by the Breaking New Ground (BNG) housing policy in 2004, which aimed to deliver housing to the poor

as a form of poverty-alleviating, wealth-creating asset, holistic and sustainable (National Department of Housing, 2004). Although a 25-year longitudinal study found “little evidence that informal settlement dwellers build assets by means of the secondary housing market”, the study highlighted an improved quality of life for some beneficiaries (Marais et al., 2018: 105). BNG/RDP housing² is allocated to beneficiaries with a household income of less than R3,500 per month. Beneficiaries of this subsidy receive a once-off grant for land, basic services (water and sanitation) and the house (top structure) (Landman & Napier, 2010).

Despite these policies, after 25 years of democratic Black majority rule, informal dwellings comprise 13.6% of all houses (Stats SA, 2019). This is significantly less than in other African countries such as Kenya or Nigeria, where it is estimated that well over half of urban dwellers live in slum-like conditions (Abubakar & Dano, 2018; Amendah et al., 2014). Official informal settlement definitions are premised on illegality and informality, inappropriate locations, restricted public and private sector investment, poverty and vulnerability, and social stress, and are rarely considered in the context of managing the outcomes of migration. “When shack settlements are seen as a problem, we are assigning blame for the exclusion of the poor from their rights as citizens [to] the poor themselves”, argue Bradlow et al. (2011: 269). Furthermore, housing, migration and economic policy fragmentation in South Africa hinder the efficacy of interventions related to informal settlements. For instance, migration issues are often regarded by local government as the responsibility of the national government. Since 1994, the South African government’s policy documents proclaim a people-centred approach to housing delivery based on community participation and partnership between low-income groups and the government (Miraftab, 2003). However, research suggests that both internal migrants and immigrants are largely excluded from local government participatory processes such as Community Policing Forums, stakeholder forums or even meetings held by ward councillors (Landman & Napier, 2010).

Facing the reality of the social housing backlog, in 2004, the South African government introduced the *Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme* as part of its new housing policy (National Department of Housing, 2004). Municipalities apply to the provincial government for basic infrastructure funding limited to providing electricity, sanitation, water and roads; a housing subsidy for construction is accessed via other programmes (National Department of Housing, 2004). Despite the importance of infrastructure for poverty alleviation, which has been highlighted by several studies conducted in other African countries (Ogun, 2010), very few applications for funding for informal settlement upgrading have been submitted.

²Despite the policy change, the public still refers to this housing as RDP houses.

8.3.2 *Social Aspects of Informal Settlements*

Informal settlements are an integral part of the South African economy and society. Cross (2008: 7) argues that shack housing is “the active lowest level of a functioning housing market”, where there is evidence of an informal land management system embedded in the community networks which has a significant capacity to distribute resources. The informal settlement also provides a moderate level of security (Cross, 2008). Other factors influencing the quality of life in informal settlements include residents’ employment statuses, access to basic services (such as sanitation), quality of roads, access to leisure services, levels of crime and violence, the prevalence of drug abuse, and access to local government officials (Richards et al., 2007). A study by Hunter and Posel (2012: 294) shows that the 43% unemployment rate for those living in informal dwellings is lower than for those living in traditional rural dwellings (62%). This explains the migrational drive from rural to urban areas in search of jobs. Many of the jobs are in the informal sector – 27% of people living in informal dwellings have informal sector jobs – and 35% perform casual jobs (Hunter & Posel, 2012: 294).

Perceptions of social injustice and being victims of undelivered government promises about housing and infrastructure frequently culminate in anger and violent protests (Huchzermeyer, 2008). Having a house fulfils an important social and symbolic function of belonging and giving legitimacy to living in the city (Oldfield & Greyling, 2015), conferring a certain social status and sense of stability which thus influences migrants’ perceptions of their quality of life. The inefficiency of government housing delivery programmes is not the only obstacle to accessing housing. Informal settlement dwellers face economic and bureaucratic barriers when applying for a state-built house or a subsidy (Oldfield & Greyling, 2015; Gunter, 2013). Engagement with the state bureaucratic machine requires financial, temporal and other resources that many of the inhabitants of informal settlements do not have.

8.4 The Study Site and the Survey Design

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in one of the oldest informal settlements in the north-west of Johannesburg, namely Zandspruit, which means “sand river”. It has been in existence since the early 1990s and is surrounded by luxury estates. It is near Cosmos City, a multiracial, multiclass, mixed-use suburb established in 2005, considered a beacon of modern urbanisation by the government of South Africa (Sisulu, 2016). During the 1990s, Zandspruit was on the outskirts of the city. Now it is well within the boundaries of the Johannesburg metropolitan area, close to commercial and formal residential areas. As such, Zandspruit is a typical case of an informal settlement in South Africa, where issues of migration, economy and policy intersect.

The primary data collection method for this study was a survey. In designing the questionnaire, we consulted the Zandspruit leadership committee to identify issues of concern to the community. The data collection instrument had five sections, namely demographics, living conditions, community needs, housing preferences, and communication preferences. A group of 70 field workers collected data in one day over four hours from all 13 sections (“wards”) of the settlement. The field workers were volunteers instructed in data collection procedures prior to the field visit. For safety reasons, each group of five to six field workers had a local guide provided by the youth activists from the settlement.

Without a sampling frame, sampling was limited to an accessible sample. Within the wards, field workers applied heterogeneous sampling in terms of the age and gender of respondents. Van Hoeven et al. (2015: 2) argue that, in circumstances where random sampling is not feasible, as was the case in this research, purposive sampling may lead to representative samples “where a sample is considered representative when either sample characteristics or inferences from the sample approximate population values.” Collis and Hussey (2009) state that, for a population of 20,000 to 50,000, a sample of 380 cases is sufficient. The 2011 census recorded 31,716 residents in Zandspruit. Our realised sample size was 445. The respondents were Zandspruit residents. However, questions about nationality or country of origin were not included in the questionnaire due to the sensitive nature of such information. The question about native languages provided some indirect evidence about respondents’ origins. The survey data was supplemented by qualitative data obtained through a focus group with the Zandspruit leadership committee, an informant interview with a youth leader, and ethnographic observations made during our two visits to the settlement. The discussion in the focus group and the interview with the youth leader focused on living conditions, housing and infrastructure needs and coping strategies used by the residents of Zandspruit.

8.5 Results

8.5.1 *Sample Description*

Of the 445 respondents, 221 (49.7%) were female and 224 (50.3%) male. Most of the respondents (76.2%) were between the ages of 18 and 45 years, with the highest concentration in the 31 to 45 year age range (see Fig. 8.1). Only 26 people were above the age of 60. Therefore, most respondents were working-age adults.

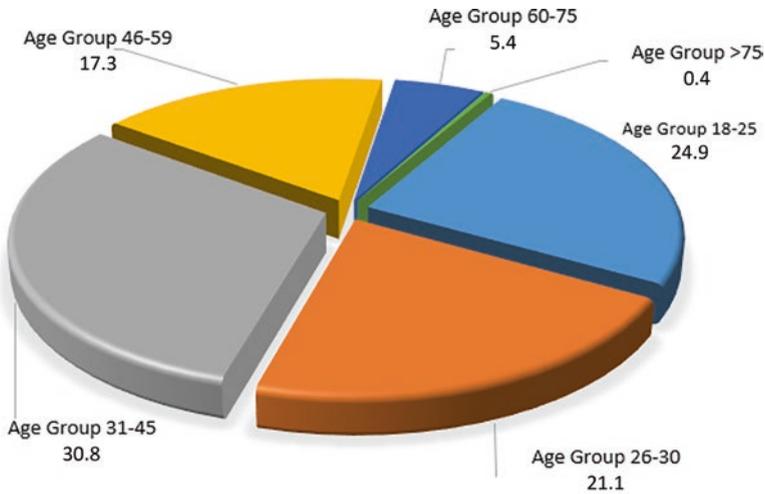


Fig. 8.1 Age of respondents (%)

8.5.2 Mother Tongue

Most of the respondents (39.4%) spoke one of the Nguni languages spoken in South Africa, eSwatini, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. These include *isiZulu* (95 respondents), which is the most widely spoken in South Africa, *isiXhosa* (42 respondents), *isiNdebele* (29 respondents) and *siSwati* (10 respondents). The Sotho-Tswana languages spoken in Botswana, Lesotho and South Africa were spoken by 37% of the respondents. Xitsonga, which is spoken by the Shangaan-Tsonga people found in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, eSwatini and South Africa, was spoken by 7.4%; also, 7.4% of respondents declared Tshivenda their mother tongue. Overtly foreign languages represent a minority in the sample, 4.9%. They include *chiTumbuka*, which is spoken in Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia; Swahili, spoken in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Amharic, which is native to Ethiopia; West African dialects; and Portuguese, which is spoken in Mozambique and Angola.

8.5.3 Education

A significant proportion of respondents – 58.2% – had dropped out of school while 29.2% had attained their matric (high school) certificate. Only 12.6% of participants were pursuing a post-high school qualification (see Fig. 8.2).

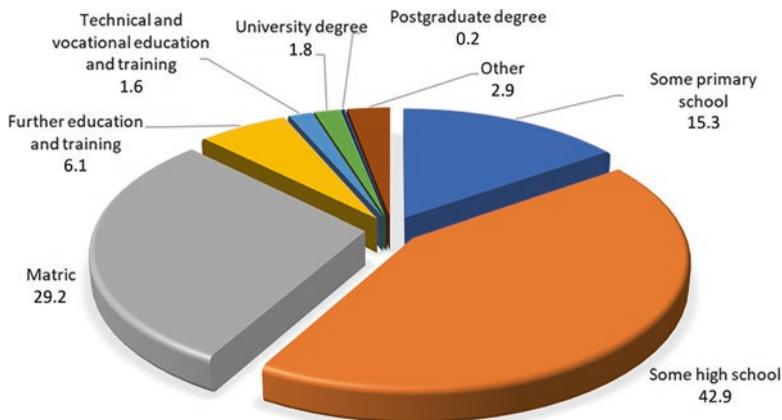


Fig. 8.2 The education levels of respondents (%)

8.5.4 Unemployment and Underemployment

The data point to a widespread state of unemployment (joblessness) and underemployment (part-time employment or employment in jobs not commensurate with qualifications). Self-reported unemployment levels for this cohort are quite high at 46.1%, with only 18.2% reporting full-time employment. The rest support themselves through occasional jobs (21%) and about 10% have their own businesses, usually in the informal settlement. Although there is no data to point to what type of business they are engaged in, it is most probably in the informal sector (selling alcohol, hawking food, fruits and vegetables, running beauty salons or spaza shops). The vast majority of the residents who can supplement their primary income tend to do so through casual work (42.5%), a government grant (10%), or pensions (5%). Many (14%) rely on support from their family and 10% get income from miscellaneous sources, such as rental income from renting their “properties” in the settlement.

Examples of participant views on employment opportunities were as follows: A 26–30-year-old Tswana woman with some primary education school state, “Job creation is needed so that we can be able to feed our families.” A 26–30-year-old Xhosa woman said, “[We need a] subsidy to do projects in the community.” An 18–25-year-old Xhosa woman with a matric [high school diploma] said, “I would like the government to create projects that will uplift this settlement while creating jobs for us.”

8.5.5 Housing Conditions, Preferences and Infrastructure Needs

Three-quarters of the respondents live in temporary structures commonly referred to as shacks. About 15% live in permanent houses constructed within the boundaries of the settlement and around 10% indicated that they live in backrooms in someone's yard. The vast majority of residents (72.4%) live with their families or partners, 14.8% live alone, and 12% share accommodation with friends, acquaintances or other families. Just about 55% of the respondents live in households of two to four people, 23% in households of one or two persons, 15% in households having five to six people and 7% in houses having seven or more residents. Nearly 40% declare that they "own" the house in which they stay, and around 60% are renters. Considering that all houses in Zandspruit are built without necessary permissions, the concept of property ownership has a very specific meaning. Around 25% of respondents moved to Zandspruit in the three years before the survey; nearly a third have lived in the settlement for four to nine years; 40% have resided in the settlement for 10 to 25 years, and 6% have lived there for longer than 25 years.

Just more than half (55%) of the respondents indicated that they would move to another area, while 45% would stay in the area they are currently living in. The residents indicated a high preference for an RDP house (67%) and believe that the qualifying criteria should include families who earn R0 to R3,500 per month (76.9%). Around 12.6% would prefer a serviced stand and 8% would prefer help with building on their land. Only 38.2% declared that they had applied for social housing, while 61.8% had never applied; 61.3% stated that they did not know how to apply for government housing, while three quarters did not know how to apply for a housing loan from a bank. Around 17% of respondents indicated that, apart from an RDP house, they would welcome any type of housing subsidy. For example, a 31–45-year-old male Tsonga speaker with some primary school education said, "We would like RDP houses; we are tired of paying rent."

Answers to the section of the questionnaire that asked what improvements were needed in the informal settlement indicated that the settlement is lacking almost all facilities. The survey identified electricity as the top priority area for most households (69.1%). The second priority area revolves around access to water and sanitation (53.8%). During the data collection process, there were areas where raw sewage was flooding the streets. Children were running in it, exposing them to untold health hazards. The poor sanitation issues can also be linked to the third priority area, which is the provision of quality healthcare in the community. The community clinic is then an important interface where community members can access health services. The survey found 46% of the respondents pointing to the need for another clinic. Considering the health hazards identified in informal settlements, longer opening hours are needed whilst still taking into consideration the safety of health care providers.

Concerns about crime were frequently expressed during the focus group. Inadequate policing compounds the issue of crime. Even though the Honeydew police station is not far, residents point to the unavailability of police services or

slow response times, partly due to infrastructural inadequacies (bad, inaccessible, narrow roads) and poor lighting. Street lighting is a deterrent for crime to some degree. Consequently, street lighting and high mast lights were high on the wish list of the residents of Zandspruit.

Examples of participant views on infrastructure needs were as follows: An 18–25-year-old Tswana male resident with some high school education said, “We also need drug rehabilitation facilities as drugs are a big problem among the youth of this community. I have been smoking *nyaope* [a highly addictive drug] since 2010 and would like to quit but I need the government’s help.” A 60–75-year-old Zulu woman with some high school stated, “The government can’t provide services when people do not have houses.”

A 31–45-year-old Xhosa woman with some high school education highlights the need for “buildings for elders.”

A Zulu-speaking 31–45-year-old man with some high school education stated, “I would like the government to come here and address the issues that we face every day.” A 31–45 year old Tswana man with a further education and training qualification said: “The government has forgotten about the people residing in Zandspruit. We would also appreciate [the] housing subsidy and community growth like they are doing for Diepsloot even though Zandspruit has been around longer.” A 26–30-year-old Sesotho speaking male said, “Relocate residents to (a) different place while fixing different sections at a time.”

8.5.6 The Quality of Life of the Youth

An interview with a youth leader points to low levels of education among youth due to apathy and a lack of finances. A lack of recreational facilities geared to youth results in young people engaging in illegal activities such as crime, gangsterism, and alcohol and substance abuse. The participants of the focus group indicated that teenage pregnancy is also rife. At the same time, the settlement has an active grassroots youth leadership group that proactively engages in self-help such as sharing employment opportunities and skills development, and even engages with authorities such as the City of Johannesburg’s top officials to highlight the plight of Zandspruit.

Participants had this to say about the effects of living in the settlement on youth: A 46–59-year-old Zulu man with some high school education stated, “The surroundings that we live in have clouded our children’s visions and dreams to a better future, as a lot of the youth has lost all hope and resort to drugs and crime to forget all that they are facing.” An 18–25-year-old Tsonga woman with some high school education said, “Sometimes I just imagine how my life would have turned out if it was not of the situation in this area, I probably would have not been a victim of teenage pregnancy and would have finished my matric.” A 26–30-year-old Sotho woman with some high school education states, “There are a lot of alcohol operating businesses that contribute to the high level of alcohol abuse that leads to killings among the youth.”

8.5.7 Views on Immigration

Immigrants are directly and indirectly linked to all manner of social ills and negativity, including rape and vandalising and stealing state resources. Although the prevalence of these sentiments cannot be quantified from this data set, it does provide an important indication of the depth of resentment and fear immigrants attract. The study also demonstrates that a lot of misinformation exists around the allocation of housing resources by the government and eligibility criteria. Only a few residents correctly identified community members as the perpetrators of selling the RDP houses allocated to them to immigrants. Participants made the following statements about immigrants: A 31–45-year-old Sotho man with a further education and training qualification said: “There are too many migrants [immigrants] in [the] informal settlement.” A 31–45-year-old Sesotho *saLeboa*-speaking man with some high school education believed, “There is just too much crime. Too many foreign nationals are occupying the informal settlements and this affects our employment opportunities. There are many rape incidents. Cables get stolen at night. [The] government should ask for IDs [identity documents] from foreign nationals.” A 60–75-year-old Zulu woman stated, “Foreigners buy these houses and end up having RDPs. [I] applied for an RDP in the ‘90s, but due to corruption it was given to someone else.”

8.6 Discussion: Disillusionment and Resilience

In this study, we present Zandspruit informal settlement in South Africa as an example of physical manifestation of migration to urban centres that highlights migration drivers and the impact of the inefficient implementation of policies on the lives of poor migrants. This study highlights the fact that Zandspruit is a melting pot of different ethnic and cultural groups, as demonstrated by the plurality of languages and nationalities found in Zandspruit. Since many of the languages spoken by respondents are not specific to a single nationality, it is impossible to make definite assumptions about the country of origin of the respondents. Nevertheless, our results paint a picture of a multi-ethnic community comprising internal and cross-border migrants, united by the similar challenges of living in a resource-deprived and underdeveloped urban area. While locals and immigrants co-exist in Zandspruit, the study showed that there is some underlying animosity towards immigrants. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Mensah & Benedict, 2016; Skinner, 2015), which indicated that immigrants, without real evidence, are often accused of perpetrating crimes, “taking” away opportunities from locals, and even manipulating the system to obtain social housing.

Our study revealed the high levels of unemployment and underemployment among residents, with fewer than 20% of the respondents having stable jobs and many relying on part-time and casual jobs. This is despite nearly 40% of the respondents having completed at least high school education or having formal vocational

training. At the same time, there is evidence of a thriving informal economy with a functioning rental market, although generally the entrepreneurship level in Zandspruit, at 10%, is relatively low by comparison with similar settlements in other African countries. For instance, in a study of informal settlements in Lagos, more than 40% of participants identified themselves as traders (Akinwale et al., 2013).

The biggest challenge highlighted by the residents is the provision of housing or rather lack of it. While the residents are subject to government's inability to efficiently execute its BNG housing policy, they face other obstacles to accessing affordable housing, primarily revolving around a lack of knowledge of qualifying criteria, relevant policies or application procedures for a house from the government or a loan from the bank. Consequently, nearly 40% of the respondents have not applied for any form of social housing. This points to the need to educate the communities living in informal settlements about the application process and make the information available in plain English or conversational vernacular. In line with the suggestions made by Gunter (2013) and Oldfield and Greyling (2015), in general, the bureaucratic barriers to accessing housing must be lowered.

As informal settlements are a reality in South Africa it is necessary to move away from perceiving informal settlements in terms of illegality to rather see them as natural outcomes of migration and urbanisation. As such, policies should be developed and implemented that effectively address the issues associated with migration and mushrooming informal settlements, primarily by engaging with the community to utilise their social capital. We concur with Saharan et al. (2019: 7) that "even though city interventions are top-down, households living there cannot be viewed as 'passive' recipients of policy interventions." Our study revealed that Zandspruit residents have developed grassroots self-governance structures, independent of the formal structures such as those around councillors.

The dominant approach to dealing with informal settlements in South Africa is evictions (often unlawful), displacement of population to temporary accommodation, or resettlement to formal BNG/RDP housing in a different location, which destroys the fabric of the community (Huchzermeyer, 2008). The government is still far from even modest implementation of the programme to upgrade informal settlements such as Zandspruit by providing basic services as intended by the 2004 policy (National Department of Housing, 2004). As shown by the example of Zandspruit, residents are very unhappy with service delivery and lack of basic infrastructure such as electricity, water and sanitation. Associated with these are issues around basic healthcare and crime prevention. As indicated by prior research in Africa, infrastructure plays a key role in reducing poverty (Ogun, 2010). Other areas for improvement are community upliftment, mentoring and skills transfer programmes, and schools to stimulate the economy of settlements were identified by the respondents as a priority. In particular, issues related to creating opportunities for young people are of high importance to the community.

Overall, the respondents are largely disillusioned with the state's perceived indifference to their plight and inability to improve their living conditions. The survey responses indicated that the residents call for urgent government interventions; at

the same time, there is a lot of mistrust of and even hostility towards the government. During and before data collection, we had to assure residents and the leadership committee that we did not represent any government agencies. As previously noted by Huchzermeyer (2004), people living in informal settlements tend to resist external control.

8.7 Conclusion

This chapter explored the realities and lived experiences of the residents of Zandspruit informal settlement, against the background of drivers of migration to urban centres in South Africa resulting in ever-expanding informal settlements around major cities. Informal settlements are not unique to South Africa. They are a common feature in many African countries when the rate of urbanisation and migration accelerates. At the same time, the distinct features of South African migration, which are determined by the country's history, economy and geopolitical situation, need to be acknowledged. Among these are the historical legacy of apartheid, extreme social inequality, high unemployment, and low economic growth that result in a growing army of urban poor. Another unique factor, which to some extent affects the growth of informal settlements, is the country's attractiveness as a legal and illegal immigration destination. Notwithstanding the differences, South Africa and other African countries face the challenge of developing and implementing effective, coherent and sustainable policies leading to investment in social and physical infrastructure such as housing, health facilities and education to alleviate poverty and build a prosperous society. These actions need to focus on delivering on the policy promise, through the provision of social housing and through upgrading infrastructure in informal settlements. At the same time, more effort should be put into building community participation and partnership between low-income groups and the government.

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