INTRODUCTION

The eKhaya Lane Management & Upgrading Project is located in Hillbrow, the highest density inner city suburb in South Africa. Hillbrow is currently home to around 100,000 people. Once the centre of Bohemian high-rising, Johannesburg’s Manhattan, Hillbrow became an urban slum over a 30 year period. Owners lost control of their buildings under the pressure of massive in-migration of both local and foreign migrants accompanied by loss of social control and sanitation virtually collapsed. The breakdown of tenant landlord relations into an eviction cycle of recurrent boycotts and protests resulted in no maintenance of buildings and frequent evictions, together with the criminal seizure of some buildings (‘hijacking’). These activities exacerbated the physical degeneration of the buildings and the immediate surrounds, and added to the formation of a dangerous area.

1.3 KEY INTERVENTIONS

In 2004 building owners formed the eKhaya Neighbourhood Association (ENA) dedicated to the re-development of the area. Following several meetings, lead property owners met to work together. Facilitated meetings were arranged in which building owners could discuss options for co-operative cleaning and development of their lanes. Inspections with city engineers for planning and infrastructure and management. There was a shift in responsibility from property owners to a self-governing body, which led to the improvement of maintenance of buildings. Control tenants who threw rubbish out of windows and abused cleaner, co-operate to keep lanes clean and organise appropriate disposal of rubbish for collection by Pikitup and finally share the cost of installing gates to improve security and control of access.

The "Our Safe, Healthy & Friendly eKhaya Neighbourhood" Campaign followed, which incorporated the inclusion of residents in protecting the area, using posters and leaflets in all buildings sponsored by ENP and Hipath. A workshop of young adults produced large socio-environmentally-conscious posters for display throughout the neighbourhood. The eKhaya Lane Project came after 4 years of successful self-management. The Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) implemented the upgrade of 32 lanes in collaboration with ENP. This recognition by the City of the eKhaya project led to an invitation undertaken by the property owners to enrol the City’s commitment to inner city regeneration (City of Johannesburg). The immediate success of the co-operative management and infrastructure upgrade project was the emergence of an increasingly valued, protected and well-managed neighbourhood in Hillbrow. Specific social issues were the reduction of crime within the area (anonymity, adverse hostility, and passivity in eKhaya), nearby buildings were broken and neglected, growing crime, and in supportive relationships, new dealer and escape routes were opened, dangerous lanes were removed. Overall there have been significant declines in rates of vandalism, theft and vandalism in the whole lane. The transformative nature of this account lies in its organizing of stakeholders to act on their own initiative and in conjunction with other stakeholders with the same issues (albeit different self interests). This model of engagement, eminently scalable as relationships form the basis of development in most poor communities, is led by committed stakeholders prepared to engage in a facilitated process of ‘patient investment’ in valuing, safeguarding and protecting social relations for sustainable development.

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Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) implemented the first capital investment into the upgrade of 30 lanes in conjunction with ENP.

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Property owner members of ENP together with JDA invested in upgrading landlord tenant relations with property owners reporting better tenancies in the eKhaya neighbourhood compared with other buildings owned by them elsewhere in the inner city. New sustainable relations have also been established around specific services between owners, tenants and owners and city services agencies such as Hipath and the JDA.

1.4 GOVERNANCE

A major success of this and other ENP projects has been growing confidence amongst property owners, the City and residents and users in the area, in the ability to secure and sustain regeneration in this formerly taboo area in addition to enacting lasting crime reduction. ENP projects have also seen co-development and management of public space and eKhaya Park, organically in Phase 2, see the painting of giant wall murals by local artists in 6 lanes, earning positive response from local community and residents. Property owner members of ENP together with JDA invested in upgrading landlord tenant relations with property owners reporting better tenancies in the eKhaya neighbourhood compared with other buildings owned by them elsewhere in the inner city. New sustainable relations have also been established around specific services between owners, tenants and owners and city services agencies such as Hipath and the JDA.

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The eKhaya neighborhood lanes management & upgrading project in Hillbrow, South Africa demonstrates how the regeneration of low-income residential areas may be undertaken through community engagement and infrastructure rehabilitation. The regeneration included improved maintenance of buildings, clearing of lanes, and the installation of gates to improve security, and establishing trash removal. With an assortment of beneficial economic, social and environmental impacts, this model of engagement is eminently scalable as it serves to create new relationships within the community whilst also improving the existing social network.

SOURCES

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 Courtesy of the Housing Development Agency and eKhaya Neighbourhood Association