


Theory of Change as a monitoring and evaluation tool aimed at achieving sustainable human settlements



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Background: The major challenge of the South African government has been to implement an effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process that can assist in evaluating the government's performance and identify factors that contribute to service delivery outcomes.

Aim: The article aims at giving a review of using the Theory of Change (ToC) as an M&E management tool aimed at achieving sustainable human settlements in the eThekweni Municipality.

Setting: The article was guided by the responses from participants' interviews with officials and provided views on the importance of change in housing delivery and the M&E of sustainable housing development.

Methods: The article adopted a qualitative method and hence both secondary and primary sources were used to examine M&E by integrating the ToC as a tool to achieve Integrated and Sustainable Human Settlements.

Results: The results of the article indicate that the successful implementation of housing projects depend on how the ToC can be an M&E tool aimed at achieving sustainable human settlements.

Conclusion: The article concludes that M&E systems adopted in institutions cannot be regarded as the only approach that can assist in achieving their intended objectives. Managers responsible for the implementation of programmes should be proficient in all key management areas.

Contribution: The article seek to indicate the importance of integrating the ToC in the department's M&E systems relevant to implementing human settlement programmes aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens.

Keywords: monitoring and evaluation (M&E); housing delivery; sustainable human settlements; Theory of Change (ToC); integration.

Introduction

The African Union Africa's 2063 vision has, among other things, a prosperous Africa that is based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. This vision can be achieved by ensuring that cities and other settlements are hubs of cultural and economic activities and have a modernised infrastructure (African Union Commission 2015). The result of achieving Africa's vision of growth and sustainable development would ensure that citizens have access to basic services such as shelter, water, sanitation, energy, public transport as well as information and communications technology (ICT). Hence, governments have committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Goal 11 of making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by 2030. In South Africa, there have been numerous policy and statutory developments relating to housing since 1994. These housing policies adopted in the country attest to the broad and complex nature of the housing terrain in the country. The National Development Plan (NDP) (2012) acknowledges the review of state housing policies to better realise constitutional housing rights while ensuring that housing delivery is used to restructure towns and cities and strengthen the livelihoods of households. The Presidency (2010) reaffirms that poor households were to be provided with adequate housing in better living environments. Housing provision should be supported by the development of a functional and equitable residential property market, improving institutional capacity and coordination for better spatial targeting. To accommodate the poor households, Breaking New Ground (Department of Human Settlements 2004) was adopted to ensure that low-income households were taken care of in the whole process of achieving a sustainable human settlement.

Human settlements are defined as follows:

Human settlements are defined as the totality of human community—whether a city, town or a village—with all social, material, organisational, spiritual and cultural elements that sustains it.’ (National Department of Human Settlements, 2015, p. 23). (Gardener, 2018, p. 1)

The NDP that is South Africa’s vision for 2030 acknowledges the strides achieved by BNG in attempting to address housing concerns. Furthermore, the Department of Human Settlements (2004) defines sustainable human settlements as:

... well-managed entities in which economic growth and social development are in balance with the carrying capacity of the natural systems on which they depend for their existence and result in sustainable development, wealth creation, poverty alleviation and equity.

The major challenge of the South African government has been to implement an effective M&E process that can assist in evaluating the government’s performance and identify factors that contribute to service delivery outcomes. Monitoring and Evaluation processes are concerned with providing users with the ability to draw fundamental links between policy priorities, resourcing of policy objectives, programmes designed to implement them, the delivery of services and their effect on communities (Presidency 2007). The Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks (GWME) (2007) alludes to the importance of M&E as a tool to evaluate performance and identify factors contributing to service delivery in the public sector. The South African government has spent billions of rands on housing development; however, the housing backlog continues to increase. The increase is caused by factors such as urbanisation, dysfunctional migration policies, population growth and other factors that are beyond the control of the government (Republic of South Africa 2022). To address such challenges, housing projects should be designed to address the housing backlog. Hence, sustainable human settlements can only be achieved if effective M&E systems are in place to be used by implementors of projects.

The article discusses the Housing Legislative framework that guides human settlements in South Africa. The article further looks at how sustainable human settlements can be achieved through the M&E processes. The ToC is then analysed for human settlements in South Africa. The article looks at a housing development in developing countries. Data collected in the article are then presented and findings are then shared and discussed. Lastly, the article makes recommendations on the way forward towards the adoption of ToC as an M&E tool that can be adopted in ensuring sustainable human settlements.

Literature review

This section reviews the literature by other scholars on the ToC as an M&E tool used to achieve sustainable human settlements.

South Africa’s housing legislative framework

Post-1994, South Africa adopted several laws aimed at dealing with housing delivery and achieving sustainable human settlements. The high levels of urbanisation, poorly developed housing finance systems, malfunctioning land markets, inadequate infrastructure, struggling constructions industry and the burgeoning informal markets have been identified as the cause of housing problems in most countries (Bah, Faye & Geh 2018; Gbadegesin & Marais 2020). Hence, countries such as SA are experiencing challenges in accommodating the increasing numbers of communities migrating from rural to urban areas. The MTSF 2017/2024 indicates that more than 3.18 million houses over the past 25 years have been delivered through government subsidy programmes, which is translated to 14 million individuals who have been aided by the state’s housing programme (The National Treasury 2017).

South Africa’s housing policies aim to stabilise the environment by ensuring greater access to housing to protect human rights enshrined in the constitution. It should be noticed that the constitution has given concurrent competency functional areas in Schedule 4A on human settlements delivery to both national and provincial governments. However, in certain cases, the function is delegated to local government because of the human resource capacity (Republic of South Africa 1996). Gardner (2018) reiterates the functions of metropolitan municipalities as being responsible for planning, zoning, identifying, approving and implementing the human settlements programme in coordination with provincial governments.

The Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) (2020) identified components of good governance that local government should incorporate to deliver on its mandate. These should allow local government to be developmental and at the same time create sustainable communities. In addition, the issues identified are a representative system of local democracy, community accountability and participation among others; these are guiding principles for local government development. The implementation of the human settlement programme depends on whether municipalities observe the housing frameworks and regulations. The process of M&E programmes is thus critical in ensuring that sustainable human settlements are achieved. One proposed way to maintain sustainability in the housing programme is to integrate ToC as an M&E tool to achieve sustainable human settlements.

Monitoring and evaluation as a tool for sustainable human settlements

The NDP that is South Africa’s vision for 2030 acknowledges the strides achieved by BNG in attempting to address housing concerns (The Presidency 2012). The aim of introducing M&E in the housing programme was to improve good governance and service delivery. Monitoring is viewed as a collection and analysis of information on policy and

programme progress. On the other hand, evaluation aims at informing progress towards the achievement of policy outcomes and goals and providing information on strategic decisions (Department of Human Settlements [DHS] 2015). Rabie and Goldman (2014:4–6) in Uwizeyimana (2020) define evaluation as a system used to collect data using a systematic way of monitoring, to achieve the objectives identified while improving efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. To achieve sustainable human settlements a proper system of monitoring and evaluating activities should be identified. Once proper systems are in place the housing backlog facing the country would be reduced. The adopted system should be in line with the GWME (2007), Ile et al. (2012) a framework that aims at:

delivering output to improve the quality of performance and analysis at the programme level (inputs, outputs, and outcomes); improving M&E of outcomes and impact across the whole government; improving M&E on the performance of projects and building capacity for M&E.

Furthermore, the GWME according to the Presidency (2010) was expected to foster a culture of governance and decision-making in government projects. This means that clear links between planning, monitoring and evaluation must be established to understand the past, present and future initiatives as well as development results. It should be observed that planning starts at the departmental level when housing needs are identified. At this level, planners have a responsibility of setting realistic targets to achieve the intended objectives. The targets set should prescribe the process to be followed in monitoring and evaluating the projects. Hence, M&E is seen as a strategy that can assist institutions in extracting relevant information from past and ongoing activities that can be used as the basis to finetune programmes and future planning (World Bank 2016). To date, the housing backlog has not been decreasing; however, it is increasing. Hence, the need for change is critical for the department to achieve the desired outcomes. As the SA is a developmental state, the need for change in the implementation of housing projects is key.

Scholars such as Hlatshwayo and Govender (2015) allude to M&E tools assisting the government in improving budgeting, decision-making, intergovernmental fiscal control, enhancing the quality of government policy and reducing corruption. Therefore, for municipalities to improve the delivery of sustainable human settlements, M&E tools should be prioritised as key drivers in the delivery of services to communities. Programmes and projects with strong M&E interventions tend to stay on track (GWME 2007). If housing development programmes are monitored properly, problems are identified in their early stages, thus reducing the prospect of incurring unnecessary costs or delays. To improve the chances of success, attention needs to be placed on some of the common areas of weakness in programmes and projects. The need for effective M&E has been reaffirmed by the DHS (2015) for achieving four main purposes: learning from past experiences to improve practice, providing internal and external accountability regarding the results obtained and

making informed decisions for future initiatives. It should thus be observed that the outcome, in the end, should be to create sustainable human settlements while improving the quality of life. Quality of life can only be realised through the development of integrated settlements, communities and neighbourhoods.

The Monitoring and Evaluation and Impact Assessment (MEIA) Policy further outlines and Implementation Framework for the Human Settlements sector 2013/2014 - 2018/2019:

M&E activities; the key M&E questions which should be addressed; indicators to be collected, how often, from where and the reason for collection; targets and assumptions, and how they will be analysed or interpreted. (Department of Human Settlement 2013–2019:8)

If the MEIA policy is implemented as expected, public confidence will be restored because official reports on the results of the programmes will be more authentic and will receive greater attention. Hence, the policy should be adhered to by the DHS and will assist in ensuring a culture of continuous improvement in the delivery of houses.

Achieving sustainable human settlements through the implementation of monitoring and evaluation processes

The DHS through the BNG has tried to utilise housing as an instrument for the development of sustainable human settlements in supporting spatial restructuring. It emphasises the need for relocation to mixed-income and attempts to address mixed-use housing projects by extending the scope of the project-linked subsidy programme. Furthermore, the BNG has introduced a more diverse housing form by structuring new programmes that include the upgrading of informal settlements as recognition of entry into the incremental housing delivery process (The Presidency 2012). The UN-Habitat on Sustainable Housing recommends that the national sustainable housing strategy should:

[S]et out a clear housing vision for the country over a 10-20 year timeframe and key strategic objectives; based on a sound evidence base; set out policies and a detailed action plan to implement the vision and objectives; set out the outcomes expected from the delivery of the actions and the indicators that will be used to monitor progress towards them, including quantified targets; all of which should be reasonably concise and accessible to the general public. (Sharifzai et al. 2016:97)

In measuring the progress, policies and programmes should therefore be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure that outcomes are achieved and report on the areas identified for intervention. Monitoring and Evaluation should thus be institutionalised in the sense that it becomes the responsibility of all stakeholders to support systems established within the institutions. Hlatshwayo and Govender (2015:93) indicate that institutionalisation of M&E in the public sector is the:

[...]reation of an M&E system, which produces monitoring information and evaluating findings, which are judged valuable by key stakeholders, used in the pursuit of good governance and where there is sufficient demand for the M&E function to ensure its funding and its sustainability for the foreseeable future.

The need for a fully functional M&E system is critical for sustainable human settlements to be achieved. These systems incorporate the principles of good governance that should be adopted in municipalities aimed at improving the quality of life of identified communities.

Theory of change for human settlements in South Africa

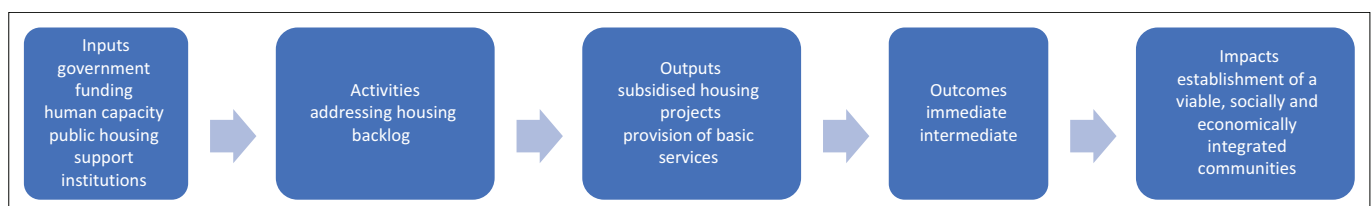
The right to housing is enshrined in the constitution therefore the creation of sustainable human settlements is an instrument aimed at addressing apartheid's special legacy (Department of Housing 1997). The United Nations defines the ToC as a method aimed at explaining given interventions that are expected to lead to a specific development change based on the available evidence (UN 2014). The ToC is further defined by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (United Nation Development, 2014) as producing a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impacts. The intended impact of the government is to improve the quality of life of citizens by achieving sustainable human settlements. In the public sector, the ToC is used to take a long-term view with a focus on implementation, knowledge management and impact assessment (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Hlatshwayo & Govender 2015). Nonyane (2019) reaffirms that the ToC should be applied at the inception stage of projects as it refines the planning and implementation of interventions required for its success. The South African government has embarked on various interventions towards the achievement of sustainable human settlements; however, these interventions have failed to address the core issues in human settlements (van der Walddt 2015). Failure in the implementation of projects was a result of poor planning, budget constraints, increased urbanisation and other factors that had an impact on the delivery of services. The ToC thus assists in facilitating the development of meaningful and attainable goals towards sustainable human settlements. The adoption of the ToC, therefore, assists governments in identifying how human settlement challenges can be addressed while using an integrated approach to ensure sustainability. The interventions indicated in the ToC are instituted where objectives and activities are identified and planned prior by the planners in departments.

According to Banerjee, Verghese and Ghosh (2017), the theory-based evaluation should allow institutions to have an in-depth understanding of the relevance of programme design in meeting the needs of beneficiaries. Hence, for long-term programmes their impact and sustainability can only be evaluated by how the needs of the stakeholders are addressed in responding to their demands. However, there are gaps in addressing aspects that are beyond the conventional ToC that examines the effectiveness of programme inputs that are translated into outputs and outcomes.

The chain to be followed in the ToC, which can be applied to sustainable human settlement, is presented in Figure 1.

The ToC chain indicates the inputs as government funding, human capacity, public housing and support institutions. These should be converted into activities to be implemented by the DHS in addressing housing backlogs. These activities should then be converted into outputs by providing subsidised housing projects for ownership in low-income households and the provision of basic services. Outcomes should be indicated as immediate and intermediate, which are aimed at increasing the provision of housing as well as access to basic services and access to social and community services (OECD 2010; Shoemaker & Reid 2005). The impact on housing development should be the establishment of viable, socially and economically integrated communities (Chaskin 2001). These developments should be situated in areas allowing convenient access to economic opportunities and health, educational and social amenities. The ToC, therefore, assumes the effective integration of spatial planning and coordination across all three spheres of government, which contributes to the delivery of sustainable human settlements.

Hence, the article provides a review of using the ToC as an M&E management tool aimed at achieving sustainable human settlements in the eThekweni Municipality. The ToC assists in scrutinising, planning, monitoring and reflecting on whether, how and why particular activities of an initiative trigger a particular change (Oberlack et.al. 2019). Scholars such as Uwizeyimana (2020) proposed that the M&E tool log frame should be used as government interventions are implemented in a complex environment, ever-changing and chaotic. This indicates the need for M&E systems to be in place for institutions to achieve their intended objectives.



Source: United Nation Development, 2014, *Theory of change: UNDAF campaign guidance*, New York, NY

FIGURE 1: Theory of change chain.

Housing development in developing countries

The research conducted by Cities Alliance (2016) indicates that almost one billion of the population in urban areas live in slums. Most of these people living in a slum in the world are from developing countries. Hence, this has increased global poverty, which is known as the urbanisation of poverty. It should be observed that the movement of people from rural to urban areas poses different housing challenges to the cities. Patel (2018) argues that the result of the exodus causes an increased demand for land to build houses and the changing land use in and around towns and cities. This means that the land that should have been used to build something else to benefit communities is identified for housing development.

In addition, El-hadj, Issa and Zekebweliwai (2018); Bah et al. (2018) argue that the shortage of housing policies should be prioritised to address the challenges of urbanisation planning and strategies. Prioritising housing policies is important in addressing housing problems in developing countries as these have an impact on the delivery of services as expected by cities. The UN reaffirms the conclusion made by previous studies that it is not all the poor people in Africa reside in informal settlements and slums. On the other hand, the quality of housing and the non-existence of basic services, common in all informal settlements, shows a clear element of urban deficiency (Cities Alliance 2016). Scholars such as Bah et al. (2018) attest to the fact that the rapid urbanisation process and inadequate urban planning in Africa have caused an increase in the urban infrastructure and the available resources in the urban areas. This has resulted in the increasing number of people living in slums and urban sprawl in major agglomerations that in turn turned people away from the agricultural land. Hence, cities are not able to meet the demand for housing in urban areas, which has been the case in most African countries. The shortage of housing policies in Africa has had an impact on the housing supply and more especially in the cities that are seen as a beacon of hope.

Research methods

The research reported in this article adopted a qualitative approach using both secondary and primary sources to examine M&E by integrating the ToC as a tool to achieve sustainable human settlements. In this study, a review of existing literature on sustainable human settlements, ToC, M&E reports, regulations and direct quotations from respondents aimed at improving the quality of life of communities was analysed. In understanding the importance of change in the M&E of government projects, the eThekweni Municipality was chosen as a case study. The Cornubia Housing project was identified by the eThekweni Municipality as one which would fulfill the mandate of integrated sustainable human settlements. Seven officials at both the provincial DHS and the municipality from the Human Settlements Unit in the eThekweni Municipality were interviewed. Interviews with officials assisted in understanding the importance of change in housing delivery

and the M&E of housing development to achieve sustainable human settlements. The collection of data was informed by the clearance letter issued by the university and the gatekeepers' letter from the eThekweni Municipality. The informed consent form was signed by all respondents before participating in the study, and all respondents were informed that participation was voluntary. Respondents were allowed to ask questions before participating in the study. Ethical principles in the research were adhered to during the collection of data.

Presentation of data, findings, and discussion

The data collected were presented in different themes, which assisted in examining M&E by employing the ToC aimed at achieving sustainable human settlements.

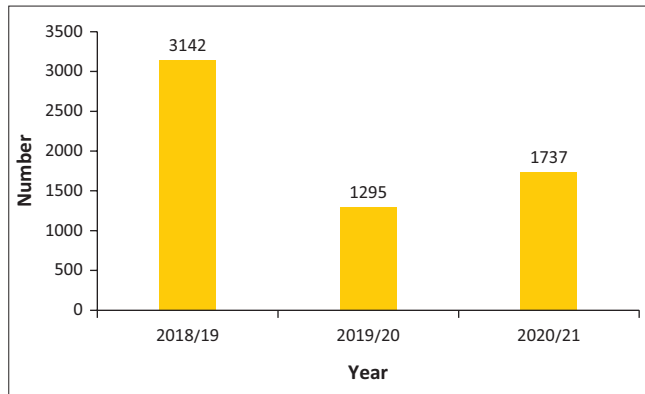
Redressing housing provision

The rationale behind redress was to adopt policies that were aimed at influencing the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) post-1994. The programme was to assist in building a non-racial and non-sexist future presenting the fundamental challenges of transforming South African society. However, what was not prioritised was the M&E of the resources that were to be utilised in the provision of housing. The respondents when interviewed agreed that since 1994, the government continued to provide low-income houses in the form of mass production and the need for change was to be prioritised. Respondents indicated that:

The provision of houses was just numbers, numbers, numbers, numbers soon after 1994. But then they realised that no man, we are almost creating the same apartheid mentality of monotonous low-density development. (4)

The findings indicate the increase in the number of low-income houses that were in line with the mandate of the housing department. However, the mandate changed as the focus was on human settlements in making sure that people can access all amenities as expected. This resulted in the adoption of new strategies for addressing human settlements challenges as mandated by law. Figure 2 indicates successes made by the eThekweni Municipality towards building fully subsidised housing based on the 2020–2021 Annual Report.

Figure 2 indicates that 3142 new fully subsidised houses (eThekweni Municipality 2021/2022) constructed in 2018–2019. There has been an increase of 442 from 2019–2020 to 2020–2021 of the actual amount of new fully subsidised houses constructed. There is a clear indication that between 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 the number of houses built decreased by 1847. These houses are subsidised by the KwaZulu-Natal DHS for low-income earners who are the first-time homeowners and meet the criteria set down by the DHS (eThekweni Municipality 2021–2022). The given table further indicates the lack of a functional M&E system within the municipality, which can assist in dealing with the increasing housing backlog



Source: eThekweni Municipality, 2021/22, *Integrated Development Plan*, Durban, viewed 20 January 2022, from www.durban.gov.za

FIGURE 2: New fully subsidised houses constructed.

TABLE 1: Housing delivery in eThekweni Municipality.

Basic service	Existing backlog as of the end of December 2019	Delivery ranges per annum	Timeframe to address based on current funding levels
Housing	440 000	5000	90+ years

Source: eThekweni Municipality, 2021/22, *Integrated Development Plan*, Durban, viewed 20 January 2022, from www.durban.gov.za

that the city is facing. Scholars such as Shoemaker and Reid (2005) and OECD (2010) argue that activities in the projects identified should always be converted into output. The outcomes should be indicated as immediate and intermediate, which are aimed at increasing the provision of housing as well as access to basic services and access to social and community services.

Table 1 further indicates the output set by the municipality in delivering houses to redress past imbalances achieving sustainable development. This evidence supports the need to fast-track the delivery of houses that need to be prioritised by the municipality. Furthermore, collecting and analysing information in the monitoring of the project are key to achieving the mandate (Goldman et al. 2013; Gonzalez 2012; Magwaza & Moodley 2012).

Achieving an integrated human settlement

The provision of housing in large numbers did not address housing delivery challenges. The need for change resulted in the adoption of the integrated human settlement strategy by the National DHS. As a result, the BNG was adopted by the government as a new strategy to address the housing backlog. The approach of catalytic projects such as Cornubia was thus viewed by BNG as key to achieving integrated human settlements. With the increased number of informal settlements, officials noticed that the government was left with no choice but to develop strategies to deal with the housing backlog. It has been observed that the housing backlog has increased over the years, especially in metropolitan cities as most people believe that life is better in cities. The respondent indicated that:

... then what happened is that there had to be a paradigm shift by officials. ... but if you're going to count the settlement as being good for human habitation, you're going to start addressing the issue of sustainability. (7)

Respondents contended that the move towards integrated human settlements was to ensure that houses were designed in a way that would reduce the environmental impact while ensuring that the community needs are met without compromising the needs of future generations (Goebel 2007). Hence, the government implemented projects such as Cornubia. So, the need to outline M&E activities should be addressed while identifying the indicators to be used to measure performance and how often and from where will these be analysed should be prioritised (Department of Human Settlements 2013/2014–2018/2019). The application of the ToC is thus critical as it assists in identifying interventions that are expected to lead to an identified developmental change, which consequently leads to the successful implementation of projects/housing projects (UN 2014). This necessitates that the inputs on the ToC chain should be indicated, how they are converted into activities, output in terms of the number of houses to be delivered by the municipality, the setting of outcomes from short to intermediate and the impact (United Nations Development 2014). These are guiding principles for success in the implementation of projects. However, in ensuring the quality of life of communities, the municipality, through the Housing Development Agency (HDA), has the responsibility to identify such land – which is difficult to find. It is easy for the municipality to develop mega projects in Greenfields as the municipality can build double-storeyed units using the limited space available. As a result, such projects result in the integration of communities in terms of race, socioeconomic, status and income (eThekweni Municipality 2015–2016).

Sustainable integrated human settlements

To achieve sustainable human settlements, housing developments should seek to create a liveable environment with integral abilities that stimulate an ongoing process of consolidation and upgrading over time. Officials responsible for housing delivery both at provincial and local governments emphasised that sustainable human settlements should not only be about providing people with houses. It should encompass the provision of social amenities, skills development and economic opportunities. They observed that through developments such as Cornubia, the municipality has been tasked to ensure that integration is achieved as this project also entails a strong partnership between the private sector and municipalities. In line with Gardner (2018), sustainable human settlement development should be prioritised by municipalities, which should focus on human elements necessary for urban living, that is education, healthcare, recreation and safety. In agreement, officials also indicated that:

The nature of development and the scale of the development should not just be an ordinary housing project but integrated human settlement development which encompasses more than just housing, it encompasses social amenities, skills, and economic opportunities. (1)

... the other important question that we address as public sector housing is to test the sustainability of that development. A human settlement establishment will not be sustainable if it is not

integrated, you must see for instance how people travel (you know) to the place of employment, and you must check also whether there are adequate educational facilities within the development. (2)

The successful implementation of housing projects depends on the M&E systems adopted by municipalities in delivering on their mandate. The action plan should indicate how the integration is to be achieved, and outputs should be in line with the MTSF as well as detailed output, outcome and impact (Oberlack et al. 2019; Uwizeyimana 2020). The findings indicate that there is no clear plan from the municipality prioritises human elements necessary for urban living hence. The findings further indicate that some communities were relocated to Cornubia to units without the provision of basic services needed to adhere to the human settlement strategy adopted by the city.

Recommendations

Developing quality life-enhancing environments

The BNG has advocated integration into the use of land and planning for public transport as key drivers in ensuring a more diverse and responsive environment is created while reducing traveling distances. The article recommends that through housing delivery, municipalities should ensure that quality living environments are provided for poor households. Beneficiaries should be allowed to decide on spaces where they want to settle and where basic services can be provided as expected. If M&E systems are fully functional, housing projects will be able to meet the demands brought by the change in communities. The continuous increase of people moving to the cities cannot be understated as it increases pressure on the already strained infrastructure in the urban areas. Hence, it is critical to ensure that proper planning is carried out by the planners. However, what is critical is the achievement of the results/outcome and making an impact on communities.

Clear monitoring and evaluation systems towards achieving a sustainable human settlement

A study conducted by Nonyane (2019) indicated that the municipality is struggling to implement the M&E system in line with the GWME framework. This is a witness in the reporting where it only reports on the key performance indicators (KPI). The city has prioritised human settlements on its agenda to build and allocate fully subsidised housing to qualifying beneficiaries, but the Cornubia project indicated a need to improve planning and the delivery of integrated human settlements. Scholars such as Banerjee et al. (2017) alluded to M&E systems in institutions needing to demonstrate the results and the impact of the planned projects. Officials and implementors of the programmes should be held accountable for the resources allocated to their units and the efficient utilisation of public funds aimed at achieving the desired outcomes. The municipality should therefore have proper systems in place that can assist the municipality in delivering on its mandate.

The housing backlog can only be reduced if projects such as Cornubia are implemented as per the set goals and objectives identified in the plans. Therefore, sustainable human settlement is possible if municipalities are ready to change by integrating all plans, strategies, goals and objectives with national government plans. There are gaps in addressing aspects that are beyond the conventional theory of change, which examines the effectiveness of programme inputs that are translated into outputs and outcomes (Will 2016; Archibald et al. 2016). It should be observed that ToC can assist managers to ensure that the intended objectives of the projects deliver the right activities for the desired outcomes.

Capacitation of local government to fulfil its executive obligation

Local government as a sphere close to communities should be given support by the other two spheres of government as enshrined in the constitution. Municipal officials have made significant progress in addressing housing backlogs and providing other services; however, they continue to face challenges as there is still a huge infrastructure backlog and inequalities caused by apartheid. To overcome the challenges regarding human resources, financial resources and technical skills among others in municipalities' capacity, the development of structures and programmes should be prioritised so that the executive obligations are met. The human capital development and performance improvement should be the areas of improvement that require urgent attention in municipalities (Zandamela & Mphahlele 2021). The capacitation of municipalities assists in ensuring that there is maximum utilisation of the resources allocated evenly for the delivery of sustainable human settlements. Hence, the development of inputs, activities and outcomes and having an impact on the delivery of services should be key in creating an environment that is conducive to human capital development, which results in increased performance in the municipalities.

Prioritisation of housing policies

In a study conducted by Mvuyana (2019), the need for housing reforms was identified as a gap in addressing housing challenges in South Africa. This article has taken it further by focusing on the neglect of housing policies in Africa is seen as an area to be prioritised by governments. The consequences of such neglect have resulted in towns and cities having to focus more on the housing challenges and neglect issues affecting communities. The continued exodus of communities from rural to urban areas has put more pressure on the dilapidated infrastructure and poor urban planning in the cities (Bah et al. 2018; Mvuyana & Nzimakwe 2022). Prioritising housing policies is important in addressing challenges brought about by urbanisation. This requires governments to develop strategies and plans that address housing problems in developing countries as these have an impact on the delivery of services as expected by cities. Thus, the adoption of M&E as a tool to address such challenges is significant in ensuring that communities can

access formal housing aimed at improving the quality of life. The need for change is critical in measuring the impact of such services on communities. The monitoring of the projects identified, and the evaluation of these projects is critical for governments to achieve the intended objectives.

Conclusion

The M&E systems adopted in institutions cannot be regarded as the only approach that can assist in achieving their intended objectives. Managers responsible for the implementation of programmes should be proficient in all key management areas including other planning, financial management and governance for the performance of municipalities to improve in achieving a sustainable human settlement. It should be observed that the application of the ToC in the implementation of human settlements programmes assists in assessing the relevance of the programme, while contributing to the quality of life of citizens. While projects or programmes are monitored and evaluated, these processes also provide a space for change if identified as not being able to achieve the intended objectives. Similarly, human settlement projects should be monitored and evaluated to ensure their sustainability while improving the quality of life of communities. Hence, the ToC assists in facilitating the development of meaningful and attainable goals towards sustainable human settlements. Therefore, the adoption of the ToC in M&E assists municipalities in identifying how challenges regarding human settlements can be addressed while using an integrated approach to ensure sustainability.

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Competing interests

The author has declared that no competing interest exists.

Author's contributions

The author declares that he is the sole author of this research article.

Ethical considerations

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Data availability

The data results and interpretation presented in the article were collected from the qualitative research study during the Doctoral Studies completed in 2019 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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