# THE CHALLENGES IN THE PROVISION OF LOW-COST HOUSING IN THE DUDUZA COMMUNITY OF EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

Lucky Innocent Moamba[1] and John Mamokhere[2*]

[1]University of Limpopo, Rural Development and Innovation Hub (RDIH), Community Engagement Unit, Turfloop Campus, South Africa
[2]University of Limpopo, Research Administration and Development, Turfloop Campus, Polokwane, South Africa

This study examines issues in the provision of low-cost housing in South Africa, using the Duduza community as a case study. The RDP was launched in 1994 to address historical inequalities caused by apartheid by providing affordable housing to disadvantaged groups. The right to access adequate housing in South Africa is enshrined in Section 26 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which mandates the state to take reasonable measures to achieve this. Municipalities are also obligated to ensure sustainable service provision under section 152. This study adopted a qualitative research methodology. The semi-structured interview guides were conducted with RDP beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, the ward committee member, the councillor and the government official. The study used a purposive sampling technique to identify the participants. The primary data collection process was followed using semi-structured interviews, and in the secondary data collection, the existing literature was reviewed. The data was analysed using a thematic content analysis approach. The results of this study show that there are governance issues in low-cost housing provision in the Duduza community, including challenges with resource allocation and institutional capacity, such as skilled staff, fraud, and community participation. Moreover, the study revealed that the quality of the houses is poor, caused by corrupt practices from private service providers, and unfair allocation persists. The Department of Human Settlements and Municipalities should enforce stricter oversight of contractors and building standards to ensure houses are built using SABS-approved materials and meet safety and durability standards. Independent inspectors should monitor compliance throughout the

*Corresponding author: John Mamokhere, [2]University of Limpopo, Research Administration and Development, Turfloop Campus, Polokwane, South Africa. Email: johnmamokhere@gmail.com

construction process. A zero-tolerance policy on corruption should be enforced, with criminal prosecution for corrupt activities.

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## 1.   INTRODUCTION

In terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, access to adequate housing is a fundamental human right embedded in section 26 (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The provision of access to adequate housing encompassing not only physical shelter but also ensuring a safe, peaceful, and dignified living environment. This includes protection against forced evictions and access to services and amenities. The right to adequate housing is enshrined in international human rights law and various national constitutions, including South Africa's constitution of 1996 (Greyling, 2010). In 1994, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was introduced, aimed at providing access to adequate housing in South Africa, particularly for marginalised communities, as a fundamental human right. The RDP, initiated in 1994, focused on delivering affordable housing, often through government-subsidised houses, and sought to eradicate informal housing. While the RDP has provided millions of housing opportunities, challenges remain in achieving universal access and addressing issues like affordability and the quality of housing (Wilson, 2020). The right to adequate housing is recognised as a socio-economic right. What constitutes adequate housing is outlined in the Housing Act 107 of 1997, the BNG 2004 policy, and the National Housing Code 2009 (NHC), which facilitate a sustainable housing development process. The NHC specifies that the minimum size of houses is 40 square metres of floor area, including: a) Two bedrooms; b) A separate bathroom with a toilet, shower, and hand basin; c) A combined living area and kitchen with a wash basin; d) An electrical installation ready for connection, where electricity supply is available. The state is committed to reversing and eradicating the legacy of apartheid spatial geography. To this end, the National Department of Human Settlements has developed a Master Spatial Plan (MSP) aimed at achieving a creative balance between spatial equity, economic competitiveness, and environmental sustainability to overcome this legacy. Despite the BNG policy, numerous challenges persist in housing provision. These include concerns about the quality and workmanship of government-constructed houses, as 14.5% of beneficiaries reported weak

walls and 13.9% indicated weak roofs requiring rectification, leading to wasteful and fruitless expenditure (South African Human Rights Commission, 2025). Nokulunga, Clinton, & Didi (2018:1700) indicate there are main issues facing RDP buildings including: the building's small size, lack of an adequate ventilation system inside, improvements outside the formal system brought about by the building's small size, middle-class people's inability to afford housing, the lack of enough land for large-scale housing projects, the widespread use of houses by housing recipients through leasing, corruption and/or dishonesty in land transactions, poor building sanitation, and a large number of backyard dwellers and shacks surrounding the building. (Nokulunga, Clinton, & Didi, 2018:1700). According to the British Broadcasting Corporation (2019), since 1994, the RDP has helped construct over three million low-cost houses in South Africa, benefiting millions. However, the program faces challenges like governance issues, housing quality concerns, and criticism of allocation processes. This study examines the governance issues in the provision of low-cost housing using the Duduza community as a case study. The overview of this study covers the following: first, the study outline introduction; second, research problematization with the study objective outlined; third, methods and materials; fourth, results and discussion; and lastly, conclusion and recommendations.

## Research Problematization

In this study, the problem statement is centred around the governance issues that affect the citizens in the allocation and provision of low-cost housing. Many countries across the globe have implemented low-cost housing programmes comparable to South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme, each with its unique challenges and contextual differences. In countries like Brazil (Minha Casa, Minha Vida) and India (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana), common obstacles include poor housing quality, corruption in allocation and construction, and exclusion of the most vulnerable due to rigid eligibility criteria or loan-linked access. These issues mirror South Africa's experiences with poorly constructed RDP houses, misallocation through politicised housing lists, and enduring informal settlements due to unmet demand (Gilbert, 2016; Satterthwaite, 2020; Nokulunga et al., 2018). Additionally, countries such as Mexico and Kenya face the challenge of "ghost towns" or housing developments located far from economic hubs, limiting accessibility to jobs and services—an issue also prevalent in South Africa, where RDP settlements often perpetuate spatial apartheid (UN-Habitat, 2015; Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2016). However, differences also emerge in how programmes are structured and funded. While South Africa provides free houses to qualifying poor households, many countries like Mexico (INFONAVIT), Chile (Vivienda

Social), and Malaysia's People's Housing Programme (PPR) rely on subsidised mortgages, housing vouchers, or rent-to-own schemes. This approach often excludes informal workers and the poorest citizens who cannot qualify for loans, thereby reinforcing socioeconomic disparities (Buckley & Kalarickal, 2005; Mukhija, 2014). Equally, South Africa's model has been criticised for fostering dependency and creating a "giveaway" culture, with little citizen engagement or shared responsibility. Furthermore, countries like Ethiopia and Nigeria struggle with weak institutional frameworks and inadequate infrastructure, which affect the quality and sustainability of housing delivery. Overall, comparative evidence suggests that successful low-cost housing requires integrated planning, robust anti-corruption mechanisms, and inclusive financial models that balance affordability with responsibility (UN-Habitat, 2011; Payne & Majale, 2004; Nokulunga et al., 2018). Therefore, this study examines the governance issues in the provision of low-cost housing using the Duduza community as a case study.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The government in South Africa, particularly during the apartheid era, systematically disadvantaged the majority of the population by restricting access to essential services like education, healthcare, and housing, resulting in widespread poverty and substandard living conditions. A significant portion of the population, over half, continues to experience housing shortages, living in informal settlements and impoverished conditions such as shacks and ghettos (Nicholas, Rautenbach & Maistry, 2010; Marutlulle, 2021). The Reconstruction and Development Programme was initiated in 1994 by the ANC government, aimed to address the deep socio-economic inequalities left by apartheid through the provision of essential services, particularly housing. While millions of low-cost houses have been delivered, governance challenges have severely undermined the programme's effectiveness (Manomano, 2013). Corruption is widespread, with officials and contractors implicated in fraudulent housing deals, poor workmanship, and misallocation of resources. Bribery, double allocation, and renting or reselling of RDP houses by beneficiaries further highlight a breakdown in administrative oversight. Housing developments are often built with substandard materials in remote, poorly serviced areas, making them unsuitable for sustainable living and economic access. Despite significant investment, the persistent housing backlog and the proliferation of informal settlements indicate a systemic failure in implementation, planning, and monitoring (Maluleke et al., 2019; South African Human Rights Commission, 2025; Greyling, 2010; Manomano, 2013). The RDP in South Africa faces challenges such as slow delivery, inadequate infrastructure, poor construction quality, and social issues. The

housing provision system is not always fair or effective, with some individuals renting out properties and reapplying for housing. The government aims to establish a fair system, but workers may accept bribes from desperate individuals, exacerbated by corruption. Urbanisation also impacts housing availability, as new migrants flock to approved areas for housing (Marutlulle, 2021).

Beyond corruption, poor intergovernmental coordination and weak institutional capacity continue to derail housing delivery. Financial constraints, ineffective land allocation processes, and a lack of synergy between traditional leaders and municipal officials delay project approvals and reduce land availability for housing. The absence of meaningful public participation leads to top-down planning, disconnecting housing developments from the needs of communities. The unlawful occupation of land and buildings, particularly in urban areas, reflects both the desperation of low-income households and the state's inability to fulfil its constitutional housing obligations. Overall, these governance failures spanning corruption, poor quality assurance, inadequate planning, and regulatory lapses have turned what should be a transformative housing policy into a contested and often dysfunctional programme (Burgoyne, 2008; Kolanda & Govender, 2021; Matloga, 2024). Maluleke et al. (2019) indicate that corruption and poor governance are prevalent issues in South Africa's housing projects. These issues have led to community challenges and service delivery protests, raising socio-economic questions about the government's loyalty to its citizens. Some public officials are corrupt and discriminate against needy people, with desperate people bribing administrators to secure houses. Poor administration and corruption have downplayed the objectives of RDP houses, leading to illegal occupation and conflict between rightful owners and illegal occupants. High levels of corruption in supply chain management and beneficiary management are evident in the number of incomplete housing projects, poor workmanship/defective houses, payments where there was failure to build houses, inflated costs, fronting and fraudulent claims/invoices, and misallocation of low-income houses. These illegal practices negatively impact service delivery and the government's commitment to providing adequate access to sustainable human settlements and improved quality of life. Matloga et al. (2024) imply that the lack of public participation in municipal affairs, such as the RDP housing projects, is another issue. Citizen participation tends to occur primarily at later stages, resulting in minimal engagement and limited avenues for stakeholders to voice their needs and expectations. This lack of public participation fosters a passive engagement, leading to a top-down management approach in executing these projects. This disconnect has sparked widespread frustration and contributed to endemic violence in many parts of Gauteng. Common factors contributing to poor municipal service delivery include a lack of public participation, poor

leadership, insufficient human resources, financial difficulties, corruption, and ineffective strategic management (Manomano, 2013; Kolanda et al., 2021).

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### *Methods And Materials*

This study employed a qualitative research methodology, which focuses on understanding participants' experiences, perceptions, and insights in depth. The research was conducted in the Duduza community, situated within the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in Gauteng Province, South Africa. Mongwe (2024) indicates that Duduza is a black township in the Greater Nigel Area of Gauteng, South Africa, with a population of approximately 150,000-200,000. It is part of the City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality and is located near the towns of Nigel and Springs. The township was established during the apartheid era as a residential area for black South Africans. The name "Duduza" means "to comfort" in the local language, reflecting the community's resilience and spirit. Duduza's population is diverse, primarily consisting of African communities. The township has experienced significant growth, leading to increased housing developments and infrastructure improvements. The economy is primarily driven by small businesses and informal trading, with many residents commuting to nearby industrial areas for employment opportunities. Duduza is part of a larger economic zone that contributes significantly to the national GDP, with Ekurhuleni accounting for nearly a quarter of the economy. The township has several primary and secondary schools, community centres, and health facilities, including clinics for the local population. However, Duduza faces challenges such as high unemployment rates, inadequate housing, and limited access to basic services (Mongwe, 2024). The target population included community members (both RDP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries), ward committee members, a councillor, and a government official. While the intended sample size was 50 community members, only 6 were successfully interviewed; 1 ward committee member, 1 councillor, and 1 government official were also interviewed. The target population and sample frame are outlined in Table 1 below. A purposive sampling technique was used, meaning participants were deliberately selected based on their relevance to the research topic. Data was gathered using a semi-structured interview guide, which allowed the researchers to follow a set of open-ended questions while providing flexibility for follow-up questions. Secondary data, such as existing literature, policy documents, and reports, was also used to support and complement the primary findings. Different materials were used, such as journal articles, government

documents, conference papers, books and book chapters and internet sources. The data was analysed using thematic content analysis, a method that involves identifying, categorising, and interpreting key themes and patterns within the data. Throughout the data collection process, the study adhered strictly to ethical considerations, ensuring confidentiality and respect for participants.

**Table 1.** Target Population and Sample Frame

| Participant*s* Group | Target Population Numbers | Successfully Sampled Numbers |
|---|---|---|
| RDP Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries | 50 | 6 |
| Ward Committee Members | 2 | 1 |
| Ward Councillor | 1 | 1 |
| Government Officials | 6 | 1 |

Source: Compiled by the authors

Table 1 shows the target population, which comprised community members, including both RDP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, as well as ward committee members, a councillor, and a government official. Although the initial goal was to interview 50 community members, only 6 individuals were successfully engaged. Additionally, 1 out of 2 ward committee members, 1 councillor, and 1 out of 6 government officials were also interviewed. In the honours project, which was submitted for the degree, the study adopted a mixed methodology whereby 50 participants were sampled through surveys and interviews. The 50 participants, especially the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, were also intended to be interviewed as the second phase of this study, however, the participants did not show interest in this approach. For interviews, this number of participants was sufficient in understanding the in-depth information about the challenges that the communities of Duduza face in the provision of RDP houses. The findings are presented in the following section.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion. The results are presented in interview questions that were probed of the study participants. Data collected through interviews was done with the RDP beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, ward committee member, ward councillor and government officials. The results from these interviews are presented below in interview questions.

### Presentation of Results from the RDP Beneficiaries and Non-Beneficiaries

*Do you believe the government is using the funds allocated for RDP houses effectively and efficiently?*

In order to uncover if government spending on RDP houses yields positive results and redress, or rather, realises the objectives it seeks to achieve, RDP beneficiaries and ordinary citizens were asked if they believe that the government is using the funds allocated for RDP houses effectively and efficiently.

In response to the interview questions:

The participants expressed their responses by outlining their satisfaction with the low-cost houses. The participants indicated that there is no doubt that the government has gone beyond its means to build and deliver RDP houses to eligible applicants. Since the initial implementation of the RDP project, it is estimated that more than 3 million houses have been built, offering more than 20 million individuals with proper shelter. Given the above statement, one has to appreciate the progress that has been made by the government through the RDP housing project to redress the imbalances of the past and empower those who were previously disadvantaged and poor *(RDP beneficiaries & non-beneficiaries).*

However, other participants indicated that despite the magnitude of progress made by the government in constructing and delivering these RDP houses, there are some challenges raised by the beneficiaries regarding the quality of the houses. Most of the participants interviewed had enormous grievances and were dissatisfied with the quality of the houses. One such grievance is the issue of leaking pipes and taps. The major concern is the cracking of the houses after a few years of being built, and the size of the houses is also a concern. Poor or cheap building material is also a major problem that has resulted in hundreds of RDP houses being destroyed by heavy storms. One participant stated that in 2011, an incident happened at Cool Breeze, Duduza, which left many families without shelter. The first, second and third generation of RDP houses were not partitioned and provided no room for privacy, space and freedom of movement. However, some of the beneficiaries were less concerned about satisfaction and more focused on the fact that they now have proper houses *(RDP beneficiaries).*

Lastly, other participants, especially the non-RDP beneficiaries, believe that the RDP houses are not big enough to accommodate large families, and they are ideal for smaller families. They further affirm that the government is doing a magnificent job by providing RDP houses to those who are unemployed or cannot afford to build houses. While other participants are against the RDP housing project because it creates laziness

and too much dependency on the government. They argue that people should work and build their own houses instead of expecting everything from the government because the government can only provide basic needs that are within its limited resources. Other participants indicated that there is a lack of effective community involvement in municipal affairs. The participants stated that effective community participation is crucial for the successful implementation of housing projects. However, there are challenges in ensuring adequate public involvement in decision-making processes related to low-cost housing *(RDP non-beneficiaries).*

*Do you still own the RDP house, or have you rented/sold it? If rented or sold, how much is being paid per month, and for how long?*

Many people support the RDP initiative. The RDP initiative is seen as a tool that empowers the poor and a mechanism that seeks to eradicate informal settlements. Moreover, this initiative is recognised for addressing the imbalances and injustices of the past that the policy seeks to redress and eliminate. In this section, the authors wanted to understand the governance issues in relation to the renting and selling of the low-cost housing at the Duduza community. Most community members are aware that the RDP house cannot be used for business purposes, such as renting out or selling it. The responses to the above-mentioned interview question are outlined below.

In response to the above, the participants indicated that:

The non-beneficiary participants indicate that the government is encountering challenges related to people who apply for RDP houses only to rent and sell them. These practices make it difficult for the government to fully implement the objectives of the RDP housing project. The renting and selling of RDP houses are challenges which directly affect the provision of RDP houses to the homeless and needy.  Another concern raised by the participants is the fact that individuals who are as young as 18 years are also applying for these low-cost houses, which further creates too much dependency and a financial burden on the government. The participants implied that some of these young applicants are not responsible enough to get and maintain the houses, and they end up selling and renting the houses, which could have been allocated to desperate people *(RDP non-beneficiaries).*

Moreover, RDP beneficiary participants admitted that they are renting their RDP houses, and tenants pay between R1000 – R2000 per month (*RDP beneficiaries).*

In this regard, it can be inferred that some people turn RDP houses into businesses. They only apply to rent them out, not because they are desperate like the people who are renting the houses. When people apply for RDP houses only to rent them

out later or sell them, it creates a financial burden to the government because it cannot properly redress, empower and uplift those who deserve and are in desperate need of houses.

*Has any official demanded a bribe or anything in return for the house?*

Maluleke, Dlamini, & Rakololo (2019) imply that corruption can be referred to as a lack of integrity or dishonesty and the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It can be classified as grand, petty and political depending on the amount of money lost and the sector where it occurs. In this section, the authors intend to understand the governance issues, such as corruption, in the provision of low-cost housing in Duduza community. The participants were interviewed to answer this question: Has any official demanded a bribe or anything in return for the house? The responses to this question are presented below.

The majority of the participants concurred that:

South Africa as a whole has had its own fair share when it comes to issues of corruption, from the highest level of power and authority to the lowest level. Most of the respondents were not scared to confirm that corruption is indeed happening and taking place when it comes to delivering RDP houses. One of the common responses from the respondents regarding corruption referred to the issue of unfinished RDP houses. The response from the contractors was that there is a shortage of materials, or it has run out. The issue of unfinished RDP houses poses a burden for both the government and the beneficiaries. When RDP houses are not finished on time due to unknown reasons, the government incurs financial losses as it has to allocate unbudgeted financial resources to rectify and complete the remaining houses. The beneficiaries are suffering in the sense that they have to wait even more before they can acquire their houses due to mismanagement, incompetence and the corrupt activities of the parties involved in building and delivering RDP houses. The interviewees recommended that the government should build bigger RDP houses to accommodate those who have bigger families. Secondly, they indicated they want to be placed in areas that are closer to basic facilities and economic hubs. The respondents also stressed the use of substandard building materials and unqualified contractors. They advocate for the appointment of qualified people. They view the appointment of qualified individuals as a measure that will ensure proper quality houses that can withstand heavy rain and deterioration (*RDP beneficiaries & non-beneficiaries).*

The other participants indicate that:

> The subject of corruption further expands to contractors who do not conform to the set principles, guidelines and regulations imposed by the government with regard to the specification of the material to be used. Contractors are alleged to be using substandard building materials instead of the recommended (SABS) approved building materials. The issues of cracking, leaking, collapsing, and poor-quality RDP houses are a direct result of the use of substandard building materials. The government needs to enforce tighter and stronger measures when awarding tenders to contractors. The measures should be accompanied by prosecution and penalties should a contractor fail to comply with the set regulations and be found to be using substandard building material. Other participants disclosed that they are often called by government officials, indicating that they have been provisionally awarded the RDP houses, but for them to get allocated the house, they must pay a small fee called a cold drink (*RDP non-beneficiaries and beneficiaries).*

### Presentation of Results from the Ward Committee Member, Councillor and Government Official

*What major challenges are you facing in providing and constructing RDP houses in the Duduza Community?*

The key informant participants, namely, the ward committee member, the councillor and the government official, were interviewed to uncover the challenges they face in working with the community and the councillor to deliver houses to the communities and the proposed solutions to address the challenges of the community. The responses to this question are presented below.

The participants started by indicating their satisfaction with the low-cost houses delivered so far in the area. The key informants were happy with the houses they delivered to the beneficiaries. They affirm that the beneficiaries are also happy with the houses because they rarely receive complaints from the beneficiaries. The committee members emphasised that the government is doing enough to better the lives of the people in the community because the design and size of the RDP houses have improved and developed significantly since the first design of the houses in 1994. The current RDP houses are 40m² structures that have tiled roofing, solar geyser, are fully electrified and appealing. The Key informant mentioned that they also face a problem of people who refuse to move out of their current houses and shacks to create space for RDP houses to be built. Most of the applicants refuse to move or resize their houses to create space for RDP houses because it normally takes a long time for the RDP houses to be finished.

Moreover, the key informants outlined the following issues:

- Urbanisation

One of the biggest challenges faced by the community and the municipality is the high volume of people who seek RDP houses. To avoid the continuous influx of people who build structures where they previously moved people, the municipality builds parks as a control measure to curb the increase of informal settlements.

- Unskilled Personnel

No government department or municipality can perform smoothly, effectively, economically and efficiently if it does not have qualified, capacitated and skilled personnel to carry out its duties. The official confirmed that they do have and face administrative challenges that contribute negatively to the implementation of the RDP project due to the lack of a knowledgeable, skilled and qualified workforce. To overcome this challenge, the municipality is offering workshops intending to develop relevant individuals with the relevant skills and knowledge. However, despite this initiative by the government, there are people who are reluctant to attend the workshops to gain the relevant skills and knowledge.

- Selling and Renting RDP Houses

The key informants also stressed that the selling and renting of RDP houses by beneficiaries has become a common practice. It is stated that beneficiaries sell and rent their houses for a variety of reasons, ranging from covering the living and education expenses of their children.

The official explicitly stated that it is not an easy task to prevent the renting of RDP houses by beneficiaries because they do not have any mechanisms to address the renting of RDP houses. However, when it comes to selling RDP houses, the government has limited measures to prevent the sale, such as the suspended condition embedded on the title deed that specifically states that a beneficiary cannot sell the house for a period of eight (8) years. It is only after 8 years that a beneficiary can sell the house, provided that they first receive the first refusal offer from the government. A first refusal offer means that the beneficiary has to sell the house to the government first before they can sell it to anyone. The house can be sold to anyone only after the government has rejected the offer.

- Financial constraints and Corruption

The councillor highlighted that the financial burden of building RDP houses in Duduza falls on the provincial government because of the magnitude of the projects in the area.

The councillor further stated that if the government limits the excessive consultation from private bodies, it could save a lot of money because consultation processes are time and resource-consuming. Thus, such consultations are one of the sources that open up a gap for corruption and self-interest gain of officials at the expense of the intended beneficiaries. Corruption has a negative impact on development and governance. The government has various policies and mechanisms that seek to address corruption. However, all those measures seem to be failing because corruption continues to prevail. The same applies to the provision of RDP houses, whereby others are given houses which are not due to them. A suggested solution for this matter is for the government to have internal bodies to render professional services. If there are none, the relevant department can develop and train such bodies and individuals. The initiative will benefit the government and contribute towards cost reduction.

The official indicated that the South African government, like any other government in the world, has its financial difficulties and limitations. The government has to use its limited resources to deliver services and the diverse needs of the people within South Africa. Such limited resources are sometimes misused, spent recklessly and kept for private gain through corruption. Furthermore, the official acknowledged the existence of financial limitations in constructing and delivering RDP houses. The Official highlighted that the Ekurhuleni region has a backlog of two hundred and fifty thousand (250,000) houses. The backlogs result from financial limitations. The waiting period that applicants have to go through before they can get their RDP houses result of the financial challenges encountered by the government. The demand for RDP houses exceeds the supply due to the stated reasons above. In 2021, the Ekurhuleni government had a five-year (5) year planned project of delivering fifty-nine thousand (59,000) houses, and the project started in 2016.

## 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Based on the data collected from the Duduza community regarding perceptions of government spending on RDP houses, several key governance issues emerge. Participants acknowledged the positive strides made by the government in redressing historical injustices through housing delivery, with over 3 million RDP houses built since 1994, benefiting more than 20 million people (Department of Human Settlements, 2022). However, they raised concerns about efficiency, quality control, corruption, and misuse of resources. Many beneficiaries expressed dissatisfaction with the poor construction quality, cracked walls, leaking pipes, inadequate space, and use of substandard materials, which questions the value for money and oversight in project implementation. These

grievances align with findings by Lindeque (2017) and Benetti et al. (2021), who argue that poor workmanship and low-quality building materials undermine the objectives of sustainable housing development. Moreover, reports of corruption, such as bribes, unfinished houses, and "cold drink" fees, further reveal deep-rooted governance issues that affect service delivery. According to Maluleke et al. (2019), corruption in the housing sector, whether grand or petty, erodes public trust and prevents equitable distribution of resources. A related challenge is the misuse of RDP houses through unauthorised renting and selling. Six RDP beneficiaries admitted renting out their houses for between R1000 and R2000 per month, despite regulations that prohibit such practices, especially within the first eight years of ownership. This commodification of public housing contradicts the programme's intended purpose to empower the poor and reduce homelessness (Manomano, 2013). Non-beneficiaries expressed frustration that many people apply for RDP houses with the sole intention of generating income, depriving truly needy individuals of access. The key informants, ward committee member, councillor, and government official, also confirmed that the municipality lacks adequate enforcement mechanisms to monitor and prevent these practices. Governance concerns extend to urbanisation pressures, the use of unskilled contractors, and excessive outsourcing of services, which inflate costs and open the door to procurement-related corruption. Financial constraints, acknowledged by the councillor and government official, further exacerbate the situation, with the Ekurhuleni region facing a backlog of 250,000 houses. Despite having policies and oversight frameworks, poor implementation, weak accountability, and limited community involvement hinder the effectiveness and impact of the RDP housing programme. These findings are consistent with broader critiques of South Africa's housing policy, where inadequate monitoring, politicised beneficiary selection, and capacity limitations remain persistent barriers to inclusive development (Charlton & Kihato, 2006; Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2023).

## 6.   CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings from the Duduza community highlight both the achievements and ongoing challenges in the implementation of the RDP housing programme. While the South African government has made commendable progress in addressing historical inequalities by delivering millions of RDP houses to previously disadvantaged communities, serious governance and operational issues persist. These include poor construction quality, inadequate oversight, corruption in the allocation and delivery processes, and illegal renting and selling of low-cost housing. In the study, community members who were both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries acknowledged the role of the

RDP in poverty alleviation but also expressed dissatisfaction with the structural integrity of the houses, the limited size, fraud and lack of adequate public participation. Furthermore, key informants from government structures pointed to systemic problems such as financial constraints, administrative inefficiencies, urbanisation pressures, and the use of unskilled contractors, all of which undermine the intended objectives of the RDP programme. Therefore, this study proposes some recommendations for improvement. The study recommends the following:

- *Strengthening Monitoring and Quality Assurance*

  The study advocates that there should be stricter oversight of contractors and building standards to ensure that houses are built using SABS-approved materials and meet minimum safety and durability standards. The Department of Human Settlements and Municipalities should deploy independent inspectors to monitor compliance throughout the construction process.

- *Combat Corruption with Accountability Mechanisms*

  The study recommends that a zero-tolerance policy on corruption must be enforced. Government officials, contractors, and beneficiaries found guilty of corrupt activities such as soliciting bribes, using substandard materials, or illegally selling/renting RDP houses should face criminal prosecution. This should be accompanied by a transparent reporting system accessible to the public.

- *Enforce Regulations on Selling and Renting*

  The study encourages the government to tighten enforcement of the eight-year restriction on the sale of RDP houses and improve the tracking system for RDP ownership transfers. Legal awareness campaigns should be rolled out to educate beneficiaries about the implications of illegal renting and selling, and municipal officials responsible for housing/shelter should conduct regular compliance inspections.

- *Improve Beneficiary Verification Systems*

  Since we are moving toward digitalisation in South Africa, the study recommends that the application and allocation process ought to be digitised and centralised to avoid duplication and ensure that only qualified, deserving citizens benefit. Continuous updating of the Housing Subsidy System (HSS) and thorough vetting processes should be implemented to prevent abuse.

- *Address Skills Shortages in Municipalities*

The study recommends that municipalities should invest in capacity-building programmes to train and equip their personnel with the technical and administrative skills necessary for effective housing delivery, as recommended by (Ncamphalala & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2025). Where required, partnerships with academic institutions can support short courses or certifications in housing development and management. To reduce reliance on external consultants and curb inflated expenses, the government should establish internal units within municipalities for design, supervision, and inspection of RDP projects. This approach could both reduce costs and improve accountability.

- *Plan for Urbanisation and Land Invasion*

Lastly, the study recommends that the municipalities should improve land-use planning by identifying suitable, well-located land for RDP development to avoid settlement in flood-prone or remote areas. Proactive urban planning can help curb land invasions and promote spatial justice.

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