

THE EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICALLY-DISABLED ADULTS IN THE VHEMBE
DISTRICT LIMPOPO PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The major problems in South Africa are poverty and homelessness. This research was carried out to investigate if provision of the state's low cost houses to a person or a group lessens poverty. These are houses that are commonly known as Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses and shall be referred as such from this point onwards. In addition, the study investigated the extent to which factors such as long waiting period, poverty, poor workmanship, safety, lifespan of the houses, abandonment of housing projects, corruption, self-help concept, unemployment and size of the houses affect the state's provision of RDP houses in the Limpopo Province. This research is human-centred and therefore necessitated the use of qualitative research method. As a result, the study placed a huge responsibility on the researcher to interact with the participants. The nature of the research expected that the perceptions of the participants be put at the core of the study. The study was conducted at different locations in the Capricorn, Waterberg, Mopani, Vhembe and Sekhukhune districts of the Limpopo Province. The sample size was 235 (100 occupants of RDP houses, 5 chiefs, 5 building contractors, 100 ordinary community members, 5 government officials, 5 counsellors, 5 engineers, and 10 workers). The study used interviews, oral discussions, document analysis and observation method to determine whether the provision of RDP houses alleviates poverty. The study used graphic representations such as bar charts, frequency polygons and pie charts for illustration purposes only. The findings from the study show that eighty percent (80%) of the traditional chiefs strongly agree that people take a long period on the waiting list before they are given houses. Forty percent (40%) of the beneficiaries strongly believe that the provision of RDP houses does not alleviate poverty. All Councillors strongly believe that the problem with access to RDP houses is funding. The study shows that the working relations between the Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlement and Traditional Affairs (COGHSTA) and local stakeholders are hamstrung by poor consultation. Most of the RDP household communities still experience food insecurity and unemployment. The government needs to engage the Department of Agriculture and Non-Profit Organisations to offer training to beneficiaries on sustainable food gardens and other income creating ventures. There is a need for the government to offer comprehensive low housing projects that are inclusive of other Government and Non-Government Organizations in order to meet the needs (such as water, sanitation, energy, health, transport, education etc.) of low income communities. The eligibility criteria should be reviewed and a thorough needs assessment carried out before allocation of government RDP houses to beneficiaries is made. The study recommends the improvement of RDP houses and the delivery of such will curb disgruntlement and incessant protests in the country.

Keywords: RDP houses, poverty, homelessness, food security, South Africa