

TRANSFORMING HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN A POST-COVID-19 ERA: A CASE STUDY OF THE MANGAUNG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

In South Africa, informal settlements are a home to a huge percentage of the country's population. The main key issue on transforming human settlements is accessibility. People do not have access to safe, affordable, adequate housing and basic services. This study focuses on the Sustainable Development Goal eleven (SDG), which highlights the importance of transforming human settlements and making cities inclusive, safe, sustainable, and resilient. This study explores the progress of transforming human settlements using the Mangaung Metropolitan municipality as the case study. In doing so, the study employs a qualitative research approach to critically analyse and observe shortcomings and challenges that the government currently encounters to achieve this goal and the progress thereof. In this line, the study results show that the Covid-19 pandemic provided an urgent need for housing and urban development. The pandemic exposed and expanded the threats associated with living in informal settlements. The results further indicate that, the mobility between work and home in this municipality is a struggle since such places are isolated and are far away from economic opportunities. Furthermore, natural disasters such as floods are also a threat to the informal community because houses easily get blown away and damaged by floods and pose a threat to the lives of children. The study recommends that, for the local government to see progress in transforming human settlements, there is a need for establishing a strong institutional structure. This entails proper support and commitment in leadership. A conclusion may be drawn that transforming human settlements is still a concerning factor that needs immediate action in this municipality. Therefore, the responsibilities of public officials need to be clarified in accordance with the provisions of the constitution to promote economic growth and development and to restore dignity in South African communities.

Keywords: Accessibility, Housing Policy And Practice, Informal Settlements, Post-Covid-19, Sustainable Development Goals.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic worsened an already deteriorating economy. The pandemic exposed deep inequalities in which the effects of the pandemic were mostly felt by the vulnerable and marginalized living in informal settlements. The pandemic further exposed vulnerabilities stemming from domestic violence, inequalities, food insecurity, and inadequate urban infrastructure such as water and sanitation. With informal settlements being a home to over 1 billion people worldwide, there is a growing need to not overlook the regression that occurred during the pandemic due to affected markets and job losses that really strained and threw informal communities under pressure for survival. This was alluded by the World Bank

(2021) which stated that in 2020, approximately 97 million people were pushed into extreme poverty.

In the South African context, according to the World bank, informal settlements and slums are home to half of South Africa's population and 60% of these populations are unemployed (Mbambo & Agbola, 2021). Although there has been a series of legislative milestones relevant to housing. It is evident that there are socio-economic challenges that hamper the full access to adequate housing. One of the challenges include limited financial resources and budget constraints, which hinders the ability to afford the costs of delivering a complete formal house to every citizen in need of housing.

In addition, it can also be stated that the injustices of apartheid spatial planning still exist in South Africa. Most of the post-apartheid housing programmes and policies were formulated to amend and review spatial configuration to restore dignity in South African local communities (Department of Housing, 2004). To understand post-apartheid human settlements transformation, according to the Department of Housing (1997), housing policies were formulated to transform informal settlements and townships into habitable, sustainable, productive, safe urban environments, free from violence and crime. However, unfortunately years later, South Africa still bears imprints of apartheid, which is characterized by informality, poverty, crime, and socio-economic backwardness (Mbambo et al. 2021). As observed, there were indeed some interventions made such as the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) in transforming human settlements. Yet in reality, the transformation has prioritized bringing economic opportunities closer to informal communities with less focus on improving human settlements and housing conditions such as revising township master plans (Mbambo et al., 2021). This gap and insufficiency of housing delivery has certainly reverberated people to take up residence in any unused land found and built shacks in those areas without proper authorization. As a result, this replicates the imbalance between urban growth and integration of policies and programmes to achieve ideal transformation of human settlements. On the downside, as noted by Mbanga (2020), globally the number of informal settlements dwellers is projected to increase from 1 billion to 3 billion in 2030. This actively illustrates that achieving sustainable development goal 11 to make human settlements safe, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable is unfeasible.

Furthermore, it is obvious that there is a knowledge gap in previous research on transforming human settlements in a post-Covid-19 era and policies and programmes to achieve ideal transformation of settlements. Although studies have been conducted on informal settlements, social and economic implications of informal settlements, there is no specific study in the post-Covid-19 era that has looked at informal settlements in Mangaung metropolitan municipality and the municipal progress in addressing the issue thereof. The reason for this occurrence is that the MMM is regarded as one of the bottom three performing metropolitan municipalities in South Africa and has the highest number (52%) of land degradation issues (Governance performance Index, 2021). Additionally, the lack of access to information in other worst performing municipalities galvanize the rationalizing of MMM as a unit of analysis. Furthermore, the study aims to fill the gap and broadly identify shortcomings and challenges that the government currently encounter to transform human settlements and the progress thereof in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM). The study aims to answer the following research question: "How is the MMM progressing towards the transformation of human settlements in a post-Covid-19 era?" This is because the MMM has over 93 905 people living in informal settlements with extremely poor service delivery. In turn, the study will recommend strategies directed towards the reorientation and re-structuring of housing, security, and comfort

for transformational and sustainable human settlements. Mbanga (2020) asserts that the history in transforming human settlements is rapid and proposes a need for a new human settlement trajectory. The study further aims to influence South African and global policies in transforming human settlements and redressing the imbalances of the past to achieve social and economic development. The purpose of this study is to explore the progress of transforming human settlements using the Mangaung Metropolitan municipality as the case study. To achieve this purpose this study employs a qualitative research approach to critically analyse and observe shortcomings and challenges that the government currently encounters to achieve this goal and the progress thereof. In this line, the study results shown that the Covid-19 pandemic provided an urgent need for housing and urban development. Thus, the study shows how the pandemic exposed and expanded the threats associated with living in informal settlements. The study was divided into nine sections (i) About Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM) (ii) Contextualizing human settlements (iii) Covid-19 and informal settlements (iv) Research methodology (v) Results (vi) Discussion (vii) Conclusion (viii) Recommendations (ix) References.

1.2 About Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM)

The Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM) is in the Free State province. The MMM is one of the eight metropolitan municipalities in South Africa. It is the 6th largest city in South Africa. Areas in this municipality include Bloemfontein as the central area and economic hub of the municipality, Botshabelo, Thaba Nchu, South pan and Dewersdorp. Botshabelo is located Fifty-five kilometers from Bloemfontein, and it is the largest single township development in the municipality. On the other hand, Thaba Nchu is located 12 KM to the east of Botshabelo and this area comprises of large area of rural settlements. In this context, there is approximately 93 905 people living in informal settlements in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (Integrated Development Plan, 2021). In this regard, 54% reside in Bloemfontein, 26% in Botshabelo, 11% in Thaba Nchu and 9% in South pan and other areas (Integrated Development Plan, 2021). In addition, these informal settlements are located on land designated for building schools, parks, and halls in the municipality. This limits the expansion of educational and recreational sectors prevalent to the growth of the municipality. Furthermore, since the Informal Settlement Upgrading Strategy (ISUS) of 2013, the municipality was able to upgrade 6810 settlements (Integrated Development Plan, 2021). Consequently, this resulted in the municipality having a housing backlog of 30 329 which requires an estimated budget of R3.6 billion to address this challenge (Integrated Development Plan, 2021). Despite the slight improvement in housing upgrading, the challenge to alleviate poverty, ensure sufficient provision of municipal services and access to employment opportunities persist. According to this circumstantial view, this study aims to identify shortcomings and challenges that the government currently encounter to transform human settlements and the progress thereof in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.

2.1 Contextualizing human settlements

In defining human settlements, according to Zivkovic (2018), human settlements refer to a place where people live. It entails all social, economic, and political elements that sustain it (Zivkovic, 2019). According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNRA) (2021), human settlements consider the need to find balance between operational functions and meeting the basic needs of society. In the same line, this includes the constitutional mandate to ensure the provision of water and sanitation services as outlined in Section 152 of the Constitution (108 of 1996), ensuring the allocation of resources for developmental projects, and identifying economic dimensions that might influence policy implementation. Human settlements can be categorized into two types namely, formal, and informal settlements (Satterthwaite, Archer, Colenbrander,

Dodman, 2020). Formal settlements are also referred to as urban areas, cities, and towns. These settlements are mostly surrounded by primary activities such as fishing, agriculture and commercial activities which provide such communities with an advantage to have better access to economic opportunities (Satterthwaite et al., 2020). On the other hand, informal settlements have issues of access to basic services, inadequate living conditions and lack of access to economic opportunities. Marutlulle (2017) categorized informal settlements into slums, low-income settlements, semi-permanent settlements, shanty towns and in the same vein, denotes that all these types of informal settlements have common physical, legal, and social characteristics. As observed, rural areas do not have the same economic base that urban areas have. The development of such settlements is often a question of concern to academics, economists, and policymakers as opponents of spatial segregation and inequality. Consequently, such misfortunes increase socio-economic inequalities that already exist within society such as accessibility to public services and economic opportunities. South African towns and cities are of a unique nature characterized by historically distorted settlement patterns (Armah & Baek, 2015). This is attributed to the effects of societal divisions based on class, race and pre-1994 planning policies (Armah et al., 2015). Before 1994, more than 80% of South Africans were denied land and housing rights laws controlled where people could reside and resulted in large numbers of people having to live in unacceptable conditions in informal settlements, backyard shacks, and hostels (Department of human settlements, 2018). As observed, the results of such laws and policies still exist and emanated to an increase in poverty, unemployment and income inequality which amplified exiting socio-economic issues and informal settlements.

2.2 Covid-19 and informal settlements

The socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was harsher on the poor. A study by Leah, MacGregor, Scoones and Wilkinson (2020) investigated how the Covid-19 pandemic revealed spatial injustices and ways in which development must be re-structured. The results of the study showed that the poor and marginalized groups suffered more consequences of the pandemic rather than affluent groups. In agreement, Sonja (2020), confirms that this contributes to spatial injustices that already exist within society in which some groups have prerogatives than others. These authors further argued that control measures initiated by public officials contributed to existing inequalities (Leah et al., 2020). In this view, these studies highlighted that the “social distance” measure was inevitably impossible in crowded informal settlements and slums with limited water and sanitation infrastructure. The limited access to water means population in such inhabitants were prone to the Covid-19 infection. From these authors arguments, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated existing economic inequalities. Not only that, but this also posits how the pandemic has exacerbated the vicious cycle of poverty.

Moreover, although most countries have tried to provide food parcels as a measure to mitigate hunger to the poor, the level of provision has not been sufficient (Leah et al., 2020). This is because even prior to the Covid-19, from a household level, South Africa has been food insecure. The “lockdown” measures certainly pushed informal workers such as domestic workers, gardeners, street vendors and low-income households into extreme poverty (Leah et al., 2020). It can be noted that government provided additional unemployment relief funds to ensure survival but the R350 grant is already below the monthly minimum wage for South Africa. A question of concern would be how will a household of 7 people survive on R350 per month? considering the high food inflated prices. Unfortunately, the cycle of poverty and hunger increases. Furthermore, there was and has been an increase in domestic violence and abuse

during quarantine, lockdown and post-Covid-19. Women had to bear the burden of ensuring survival for families, this means fetching water and ensuring composition. These misfortunes fully outline how the Covid-19 pandemic affected the social, economic, physical, and mental health of the collective global society. Therefore, this is reflective on how people do not have safe and stable homes in informal settlements as a goal and mission in achieving sustainable human settlements.

2.3 Service delivery in informal settlements

Nkambule (2020) outlines that inefficiencies in transforming human settlements are attributed by demand variables in service delivery that exceed supply variables. The level of service delivery protests around the world provides an evidence-informed perspective to this argument. Consistent delivery of water, sanitation, and electricity is farfetched in informal settlements. This is because most informal communities get water from cross-contaminated dams, using bucket systems as a form of sanitation and using candle lights as a source of light. Using the words of Nkambule (2020), the existing backlogs in service delivery does not only emanate from the apartheid legacy but also, the pro-market policies initiated by the government post-1994. In subsequent, Jeffry (2019) highlighted that policy making is a concern. In agreement, Du Plessis (2013) expresses an opinion that South African policies have not been effective and successful in restructuring the apartheid spatial patterns of settlements and service delivery. And assertively looking at the current level of service delivery, it can be argued that there is clearly poor policy implementation.

Moreover, according to Jeffry (2019), while the focus areas of the Rural Development Program was aimed at reconstruction of over a million low-cost houses, meeting basic needs and ensuring proper provision of electric transmission, government expenditure costs were not increased to meet these objectives. Bradley (2020) concurs with Jeffrey's (2019) argument looking at the budget deficits and debts that government needs to repay every budget year, which cause slow progress towards the delivery of basic services. In addition, investment in transport is another important key element in transforming human settlements. This is because mobility between work and home is a struggle since such places are isolated and are far away from economic opportunities (Diaz-Sarachanga, Jato-Espino & Castro-Fresno, 2018). Ullbrich, Porto de Albuquerque and Coaffee (2019), claims that residents in informal societies travel for approximately seventy kilometers between work and home which impose high personal and social costs. This means some households spend 50% or more of their income on transportation. For that reason, some households might not see a need for seeking employment opportunities as most of their disposal income goes towards transportation. According to Taylor (2018), investment in transport is moving at a terribly slow rate which affects the productivity of the economy and personal mobility to boost economic growth. This further postulates a vicious cycle of economic retrogression for local economic development and upgrading of human settlements.

2.4 South African status quo on informal settlements

However, there is a constant expansion in informal settlements. A study by Pieterse (2019) denotes that South African informal settlements are meant to increase due to backyard shacks. In the same view, low-income households create three to four shacks in their yards to derive rental income or to provide accommodation for extended families (Pieterse, 2019). The exponential growth in slums and urban expansion put down more pressure on already dysfunctional educational and health systems. In agreement, this increases demand variables on

public and municipal service delivery. Also, this raises the cost of infrastructure, creates inefficiencies in service delivery and reduces the span of infrastructure network. Pieterse (2019) argues that population growth will lead to the poor distribution of food which results to hunger, the shortage of medical facilities to help people living in informal settlements and communities will also encounter problems with power distribution. For that reason, the insufficient provision of services has left citizens feeling abandoned by authorities (Khumalo, 2018).

Moreover, a study by Shekar, Schmidt and Wehling (2019) explored how the well-being of community members is a fundamental element in establishing sustainable and resilient human settlements. These authors argue that public participation is another dimension that can enhance spatial planning. But unfortunately, that dimension is missing in South African local municipalities (Shekar et al., 2019). This is because the views, experiences and needs of community members are essential for spatial alignment in policy design and implementation. In this context, transforming human settlements will not only contribute to the wellbeing of society but rather the overall economic growth and development, for instance, when a large portion of the population has employment, there will be more spending in the economy which will contribute to the fiscal policy of government to spend on programmes and projects initiated for development. According to Vaidya et al. (2020), there is an exponential need to stress out the importance of community development not only for achieving long-term objectives but understanding “how transforming human settlements can be transformative tool of opportunity to other goals,...” can be, such as poverty (goal one), clean water and sanitation (goal six), and economic growth (goal eight). In the same context, Russel (2018) highlights that cities and human settlements are the pivot of innovation, wealth generation and employment to achieve significant benefit to the quality and well-being of society.

2.5 Empirical contribution of the literature

In the empirical investigation of transforming human settlements in a post-Covid-19 era, the case study focusing on the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in South Africa, provides insightful observations and tangible contributions as highlighted below

- Studies have been conducted on informal settlements, social and economic implications of informal settlements, however no specific study in the post-Covid-19 era has looked at informal settlements in MMM in addressing the issue thereof.
- The study reveals the knowledge gap in previous research on transforming human settlements in a post-Covid-19 era since Covid-19 was a novel virus to the world.
- The study offers practical recommendations based on the specific experiences of MMM by contributing valuable insights to the broader discourse on post-pandemic human settlement transformations and providing a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic dynamics at play.
- The empirical findings shed light on the challenges faced by local authorities in adapting to the new normal, emphasizing the importance of resilient and sustainable urban planning.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach. This includes facts that are systematically analyzed to achieve the objectives of the study. This study utilized secondary data documents which includes the “MMM” approved Integrated Development Plan document in trying to obtain broader insights and overview of municipal decision-making, projects, and

programmes. In analyzing the contents of the Integrated Development Plan, the researchers looked at the current level of municipal infrastructure analysis of basic service delivery including water, sanitation, and electricity. This includes the progress the municipality is making, demands, backlogs and sectoral plans and programs for informal settlements upgrading. The study also utilized municipal annual reports of “MMM” to obtain a greater perspective of how the municipality has been progressing in the post-Covid-19 era because there is few to no research that has been undertaken on the study area during this time. This allowed for the comparison of figures of how many houses and informal settlements was the municipality able to upgrade against the desired performance at the beginning of each budget year. In addition, the Auditor General’s report, which provides the municipality with an opinion regarding the use of its financial resources and how the municipality has been utilizing its allocated budget, was also used. This in turn informed the study on the extent of irregularities and maladministration that hinders the level of service delivery in the “MMM”. In addition, departmental statements from the Department of housing have been utilized to obtain statistical figures and social surveys done by the department to formulate an intergovernmental perspective for transforming human settlements. Furthermore, the study utilized scientific journals to analyze the knowledge gap about transforming human settlements in a municipal context and global context. In analyzing the data, content analysis was employed in which patterns, trends and themes were identified to draw significance to evaluate municipal progress to transform human settlement.

For the context of the study, “MMM” is used as the case study. As previously noted, the MMM is one of the bottom three performing metropolitan municipalities in South Africa and has the highest number (52%) of land degradation issues (Governance performance Index, 2021). In turn, this can decrease municipal resilience on prospects of achieving sustainable human settlements. Also, areas such as Thaba Nchu and Botshabelo within “MMM”, lack piped water, poor sanitation, and service delivery. Residents have, however, submitted a memorandum of underdevelopment in 2019 as a measure to raise concerns over municipal maladministration with no response and progress. As such, during and post-Covid-19, the municipality has prioritized public health crisis on informal inhabitants rather than a long-term measures to upgrade and transform informal settlements. However, at the heart of poor policy implementation, supply chain management, fraud and corruption, skills base of local officials, poor spatial development, budget constraints and lack of public participation are issues that have decisively not been acted upon in MMM. Unfortunately, such irregularities undermine the human right to dignity of local communities in informal settlements.

4. RESULTS

The “MMM” continues to experience unequal development challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. In this line, the municipal Integrated Development Plan (2021) denotes that these challenges emanate from the rapid increase in urbanization and the Covid-19 pandemic which provided complexities in integrated planning and inefficiency in community development. In the same context, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inefficiencies in service delivery in “MMM”. In addition, it is noted that the “MMM” has financial constraints and pressure which limits the delivery of community needs. On transforming human settlements intervention, according to Mokone (2019), “MMM” is a debt-ridden municipality. From 2009, the high debt in this municipality has affected the level of service delivery within the jurisdiction of the municipality (Mokone, 2019).

From the above scholarly arguments, proponents have agreed that service delivery is such a huge concern in informal settlements. In addition, to give context, the table below outlines the number of households that have access to municipal services such as water, electricity, solid waste, roads, and storm water against the level of municipal service delivery backlogs (as outlined in table 1 below).

Table 1. Municipal progress on delivery of public services

SERVICE	MUNICIPALITY 2019/2020 (as per the annual report)	
	Access	Backlog
Water	247 859	17 555
Sanitation	210 586	54 828
Electricity	254 525	10 890
Solid Waste	217 771	47 569
Roads	39.126km	2174.87km.
Storm-Water	69 Km	0

Adapted from: MMM IDP (2021/22)

As outlined in Table 1, the municipality has been able to make commendable progress to transforming human settlements but there are still backlogs in the provision of water, sanitation, electricity, roads, and solid waste. Yet in the context of water backlogs, the municipality has 17555 water backlogs in which 10505 is in Bloemfontein, 3267 in Botshabelo and 3783 in Thaba Nchu (Integrated Development Plan, 2021). These numbers include 53% of households with water inside their yards, followed by 39% of piped water and 4% receiving water from a community stand. It is further noted that the municipality experiences a supply deficit of 60ml/day (Integrated Development Plan, 2021). According to the Auditor General Report (2022), there is a challenge of aging infrastructure in the municipality in which the repairs and maintenance rate is at 2% compared to the standard 8%. This is due to the municipality prioritizing new infrastructure over the maintenance of existing infrastructure. As a result, this affects the sustainable provision of water services in the municipality. This then derives the need for community members to fetch water in unsafe environments such as the river, lakes which poses a threat to their health conditions. On a broader context, women and girls become at risk for domestic violence and other issues such as rape.

Furthermore, the municipality has an enormous backlog on the provision of sanitation services. This includes 84% of households with access to sanitation facilities, 10% have access to pit toilets without proper ventilation and 6% utilize bucket systems or have no toilets (Integrated Development Plan 2021/22). The World Health Organization (2022) highlights that poor sanitation service delivery results in diarrheal diseases such as intestinal worm infections, cholera, and typhoid. In areas like Thaba Nchu and Botshabelo, the municipality has not been able to provide sewer systems. In this regard, there is regular and recurring blockages which results into raw sewerage flowing into the drain water system which consequently affects the quality of available drinking water for community members. Although there are backlogs in municipal service delivery, the “MMM” through Centlec has ensured the universal access to electrification in local communities. It is noted that the Centlec entity has developed a maintenance plan to ensure efficient and constant access to electricity. In controversial, the operational budget for the maintenance plan is insufficient to cover the whole network and

require additional financial resources to address the maintenance backlog but nonetheless the municipality have been mostly sufficient in the provision of electricity (Integrated Development Plan, 2021).

Moreover, there is inconsistency in waste collection services, and which results to illegal dumping sites in the municipality. In this line, refuse is collected once in two weeks in areas like Botshabelo. This certainly poses a threat to the health conditions of community members of the municipality. In addition, according to Mosebetsi (2022), the “MMM” has neglected road infrastructure and there are issues of potholes. In Thaba Nchu, there are also faded road signs (Mosebetsi, 2022). As a result, this is a risk to pedestrians, postulates a high probability of accidents and reckless driving. The municipal Integrated Development Plan (2021) highlights that 56% of residents in Botshabelo are unemployed. In this vein, people living in Botshabelo, and other surrounding areas depend on Bloemfontein for employment opportunities. According to Koteli (2022), the employment rate in the municipality and in Bloemfontein is not sufficient to give everyone employment opportunities in the city and surrounding areas. Yet in early 2022, the municipality was able to provide short-term employment under the Public Employment Programme (PEP) to one thousand five hundred (1500) residents of the municipality as a Covid-19 response (Koteli, 2022).

Moreover, in the 2018/19 budget year, the municipality recorded approximately eleven thousand nine hundred and forty-two (11 942) crime cases. These include murder incidences, sexual assaults, and common robbery incidences. In early 2022, the police minister, Cele, made a visit to Botshabelo and highlighted that most police officials in the area are not doing well in performing their duties. According to Cele’s analysis and investigations, 11 people were arrested for murder, 33 people for rape, 240 for assault and 38 for drugs in Botshabelo. The minister further outlined that according to municipal projections, the police service in Botshabelo is required to have 22 cars, but there are only 9 cars available. This in turn, affects the sufficient need to combat the high rates of crime in the area and the municipality at large. In this view the Auditor General’s audit report (2018) outlined that the “MMM” does not have a solid foundation of monitoring and internal control measures. This consequently affects the rate of irregular, wasteful and fruitless expenses in the municipality that influence service delivery backlogs.

Taking note of community facilities, the bulk provision of these facilities is in Bloemfontein which is unfair to other areas within the municipality. The “MMM” has 14 libraries, with 9 located in Bloemfontein, 2 in Botshabelo and 1 in each area of Thaba Nchu, Dewetsdorp and South pan (Integrated Development Plan, 2021). Furthermore, there are 10 community halls in “MMM” in which 7 is in Bloemfontein, 2 in Thaba Nchu and 1 in Botshabelo (Integrated Development Plan, 2021). In that line, other areas in the municipality do not have sufficient access to community facilities. Also, recreational and sport facilities are mostly in urban areas expect for soccer fields. The unavailability of these services affects the local economic development of the municipality. In transgression, this increases crime rates, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse within the municipality and consequently affects the progress of local economic development. Table 2 below shows how the number of wards with which the municipality still needs to provide community services for compared to the overall 52 wards in the “MMM”.

Table 2. Community issues and number of wards

COMMUNITY ISSUES	NUMBER OF WARDS
Rural development (Cooperative support, fencing of camps)	5
Social services and engineering services (Law enforcement on by-laws and Road traffic Management)	6
Cooperate services (Rehabilitation of community halls, multi-purpose centres)	10
Social services (Parks and cemeteries)	14
House electrification, streetlighting	29
Provincial sector (Clinics, schools, police station, main roads)	36

Source: Own illustration (Integrated Development Plan 2021/22)

As previously outlined, the “MMM” has 52 wards and the table above outlines community issues in the municipality and number of wards that still need municipal attention, reorientation and restructuring on the identified key issues. These numbers show how much more the municipality need to replan to achieve anticipated municipal goals and objectives.

5. DISCUSSION

In analyzing the results of the study, the Mangaung municipality has not been making progress in addressing housing issues and informal settlements (which fulfills the objective of the study in analyzing the progress thereof). The actual performance against the current performance, the municipality must deliver to all 52 wards (100% performance rate) and must ensure that all these wards have sufficient and adequate services. According to the analysis of the study, the municipality still needs to deliver schools, police stations and clinics to 75% of these wards. Without a shed of a doubt, these facilities are a key commodity to local economic development. Giving reference to Zivkovic’s (2019) statement that human settlements entail all social, economic, and political elements that sustain it. So, if the municipality is unable to keep up with these services? How will progress be made? In the context of transforming human settlements, the municipality is progressing at 25%. The municipality has not been progressive in addressing housing issues and informal settlements. In addition, there seems to be general agreement that service delivery is a key commodity to trans-forming human settlements and local economic development (Agostino, Arnaboldi and Lema, 2020; Kalonda and Governdor, 2021). On the downside, the MMM has been experiencing challenges of sewer spillages, refuse removal, road infrastructure, water, and sanitation. It became evident that the MMM has been placed under national administration since January 2020 as result of “significant financial and service delivery failure”. This substantiates that the MMM is a viable choice to contribute to literature cited in section 2. Thus, it is imperative to study the MMM as a unit of analysis as the municipality does not have the capacity to transform settlements of communities in its geographical area.

Moreover, it was identified that there is lack of effective control on revenue in which the municipality is currently facing a huge financial risk. There are also high levels of corruption as the municipality has been under national administration since January 2020 following the municipal inability to perform its basic service delivery for years (COGTA,2022). From a broader view, personal interests of public officials are a pivot to service delivery backlogs in the

municipality (Mosebetsi, 2022). In addition, the maintenance and upgrading of local infrastructure has also been an issue affecting service delivery. Furthermore, from a social perspective, “community members in the MMM have lost confidence in the authorities and governance of the municipality”. This highlights a huge element of public distrust. In the same vein, public officials are not held accountable for deficiencies that occur, residents in the municipality are not provided with timely information about projects and programmes initiated for development in the municipality. Thus, there is disintegration in cooperation between government departments with community members which leads to the inability to meet anticipated targets and goals. The progress of the municipality on the delivery of essential services is dilapidating and appalling. It is appalling to see that after 28 years of democracy, citizens still live in such inhumane conditions without proper provision of water and sanitation. According to the objects outlined in chapter 7 of the Constitution (108 of 1996), this is a violation of human rights.

6. CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature revealed that current knowledge on transforming human settlements in a post-Covid-19 era is limited. In addressing the knowledge gap, an understanding was exposed that transforming human settlements has a potential of being instrumental to both redressing the imbalances of the past and improving the general welfare of society with reference to local and global policies. In answering the research questions of the study. In brief, a conclusion may be drawn that the MMM is making notable and commendable progress, but further interventions need to be done to restructure policies to meet anticipated targets and municipal objectives. Since the municipality still has service delivery back-logs, there is an exponential need to revise policy. From the prospects of the Integrated Development Plan (2021), in response to developmental issues, the municipality has initiated projects and programmes such as the sewer system project to deal with the sanitation backlogs, and the municipality has also collaborated with SASSA and RED Cross to help assist local communities in formulating new poverty alleviation projects. On a broader scale, the municipality should take note of how the non-progression of transforming human settlements not only hinders the local economic development of the municipality but the broader South Africa Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to achieve economic growth and development. Therefore, the responsibilities of public officials need to be clarified in accordance with the provisions of the constitution to promote economic growth and development and to restore dignity in South African communities. Moreover, for future research, it is necessary to assess the effectiveness of current sectoral plans for informal settlements upgrading in African fragile states.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The development of this study is to outline recommendations that can help local communities strengthen their planning, coordination, and cooperation mechanisms. In addition, this provides an approach to make amendments and adjustments on policies through the identification of structures, systems and processes that should be revised to make proper alignments with necessary focus areas to ensure that there is consistent progress in transforming human settlements.

According to George (2017), the progress of transforming human settlements can be achieved through a strong institutional structure. This entails proper support, commitment in leadership and political will. In a broader context, the study suggests that the municipality should promote social innovation and cohesion which can foster creativity in decision-making as also

noted by Sheka et al., (2019) in section 2. This includes public meetings and forums that can be held twice a month to enable public scrutiny and participation so that community members can gain confidence and trust in the local municipal leadership again. On the other hand, this will enable the municipality to prioritize intervention in areas that need reinvention such as the supply of clean water, unemployment, and transportation according to key priorities as identified by community members in such community forums. The motive is to democratize development to ensure that everyone is included in ensuring and achieving a better society.

In addition, a vehicle for transforming human settlements is service delivery. In that line, the study recommends study that the municipality should implement a water-harvesting network and reduce reliance on potable water from municipality. This may include installing appropriate renewable equipment in both domestic and public buildings. The municipality should further invest in infrastructure maintenance, upgrade old infra-structure to deliver quality and reliable water services.

Furthermore, to reduce self-inflated benefits from public officials, institutional accountability should be established in which all public officials will be held accountable through Key Performance Areas (KPA) and Individual Performance assessments. Performance reviews allows municipalities to challenge current results with previous performance to find the best value in service delivery (Koch & Krellenberg, 2018). This is to ensure that councillors do not deviate from targets, responsibilities and objectives that are set for them (Van der Walddt, 2017). A lot of investigations have been undertaken regarding state corruption, but no legal action or sanctions have been imposed on those officials who were found guilty, and the same patterns of corruption are still transgressing. However, to enforce compliance, public officials in the municipality need incorporate public sector ethical performance evaluation, conducting ethical audits and penalties and fines that are established because of misconducts, irregularities and maladministration as outlined in Chapter 10 of the Public Financial Management Act of 1999. This is ensuring that state officials are not exploiting public resources and assets for their own personal use and benefit, however, use resources and funds for public benefit.

Moreover, the municipality must foster good human-resource management and career development to increase human potential, this also implies that there should be broad representation of all people from different backgrounds, race, people with disabilities in employment and personnel management from the jurisdiction of the municipality (Thomas, Hsu & Weinfurter, 2020). In the same line, this means that the municipality should promote a sustainable and inclusive economic growth that provides an enabling framework for new economic opportunities that promotes the regulation of land and housing markets and timely provision of adequate infrastructure and basic services (UN Habitat, 2018). This includes establishing voluntary programmes that can help enhance the skills base of local community members in the municipality. Additionally, designing local mobility plans with surrounding municipalities will assist with better integration and influence of the external environments. This entails municipalities and provincial officials working together to create a unified agenda with a vision to promote sustainable human settlements and development.

Lastly, the municipality should ensure the connection of sustainability policies and urban planning (United Nations report, 2018). This is to bridge the gap that exists within urban planning and implementation. The municipality needs to make reconfigurations on initiatives such as the Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP) to speed up the process of procurement and restore dignity in South African local communities.

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