




Stakeholder engagement framework to improve public housing delivery: A Stellenbosch case study



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Background: Inadequate housing in South Africa emanates from the apartheid regime's legacy of injustice. The post-apartheid government developed a constitution to address this legacy. However, insufficient stakeholder engagement by municipalities remains a pervasive issue, contributing to the failure to meet community expectations in delivering adequate housing units.

Aim: This study aims to develop a general stakeholder engagement framework to improve the delivery of public housing projects at the local government level.

Setting: Individuals involved in or affected by public housing projects in Stellenbosch Municipality.

Methods: A qualitative research approach was adopted, using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. A sample of 30 participants (Ward councillors, Traditional leaders, Project managers, Human Settlement staff and Beneficiary committee members) was purposefully selected; ATLAS.ti software was used to analyse the data.

Results: Key findings from the study highlight insufficient public input, poor communication and political polarisation as key factors contributing to the delivery challenges of public housing projects at the local government level.

Conclusion: The framework highlights the importance of proactive feedback integration and collaboration in overcoming challenges, contributing to more effective and inclusive housing delivery in South Africa.

Contribution: This study proposes a stakeholder engagement framework for the proactive integration of feedback from those affected by housing project delivery, addressing challenges in South African public housing. It emphasises collaboration and systematic involvement throughout the project lifecycle to improve outcomes, efficiency, and community satisfaction.

Keywords: stakeholder engagement; public housing; South Africa; government policy; housing policy.

Introduction

In South Africa, the legacy of apartheid has left a significant housing deficit, prompting the post-apartheid government to prioritise adequate housing as a constitutional right under Section 26 (Capell & Ahmed 2021; Check 2023; Kalonda & Govender 2021). Despite these efforts, municipalities often fail to meet community expectations because of inadequate stakeholder engagement (Mnguni 2010; Shaidi 2013). This study aims to develop a stakeholder engagement framework to address these challenges and improve public housing delivery. The housing crisis in South Africa is deeply rooted in historical injustices. According to Marutlulle (2021), the right to adequate housing is not only acknowledged by international human rights law and Sustainable Development Goal 11 but is also enshrined in Section 26 of the South African constitution.

However, the realisation of this right has been hampered by various factors, including inadequate stakeholder engagement at the municipal level. In the past decade, South Africa has experienced increased community unrest. Masiya, Davids and Mangai (2019) attribute these disturbances to the failure of municipalities to meet service delivery expectations, (including housing project) expectations of the community. This underscores the critical need for effective stakeholder engagement in public housing initiatives (Kowaltowski et al. 2024). The aim of this article is to develop a comprehensive stakeholder engagement framework designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public housing delivery in South Africa. By focusing on Stellenbosch

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Municipality as a case study, this research seeks to contribute methodologically and practically to the discourse on public service delivery, particularly in the context of housing projects.

Research questions

1. How can a stakeholder engagement framework improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public housing projects?
2. What are the key challenges faced in stakeholder engagement during public housing delivery in South Africa?

Literature review

Public housing in South Africa

The history of public housing in South Africa dates back to the *Housing Act of 1920*, which established a fund for municipalities to build affordable houses (Mabin 2020). Over the years, social housing has been recognised as a crucial intervention for providing adequate housing to the less privileged, as mandated by the South African constitution (Mazhinduka, Burger & Van Heerden 2020). Despite progress, significant challenges threaten the sustainability of public housing policies. These include corruption in allocation processes, poor housing quality and the dispersal of housing projects away from well-located areas (Amoah 2023; Scheba et al. 2021). Obioha (2022) reported that while the state has delivered over 3.3 million houses through a multiagency approach, concerns remain about equitable service provision to all homeless categories. To ensure the long-term success of public housing initiatives, addressing these issues and promoting inclusive housing practices are essential.

Challenges in public housing delivery

The delivery of public housing in South Africa faces numerous challenges and bottlenecks. McNee and Pojani (2022) and Mhlongo, Gumbo and Musonda (2022) highlight issues such as 'Not In My Backyard' (NIMBYism) attitudes, political interference and inadequate stakeholder engagement. These factors often manifest in poor building standards, inadequate housing unit sizes and quality and insufficient services and amenities. Tyhotyholo et al. (2022) point out the scarcity of land for housing in urban spaces as a significant constraint. Manomano (2022) attributes the slow delivery of housing programmes to a lack of political will and commitment from governments.

Furthermore, Adetooto and Windapo (2022) notice the low adoption of alternative building materials, such as sandbag technologies because of a lack of understanding and training all contribute to the complexities in providing housing. Marutlulle (2022) argues that the remnants of the apartheid housing system continue to play a significant role in current housing challenges, particularly through laws that historically segregated black individuals and restricted their access to urban housing areas. Addressing these challenges associated with the delivery of public housing projects requires a holistic approach that includes stakeholder participation, accountability, transparency and a shift towards more sustainable and public housing delivery systems.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

Systems thinking theory

This study adopts system thinking theory, which views organisations as interconnected systems where changes in one part affect the whole. Developed by Professor Jay Forrester in 1956 and later applied to organisational learning by Peter Senge in 1990, this theory helps to understand how inadequate stakeholder engagement impacts public housing delivery and community satisfaction (Hansen et al. 2020; Ulak 2023).

Systems thinking ties together five disciplines: Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision, Team Learning and Systems Thinking itself. This cohesive management system allows different parts to work together effectively, producing optimal results (Hansen et al. 2020). Umar and Danburam (2022) describe a system as an interconnected and interdependent set of parts that defines its boundaries and the sum of its parts (subsystems). In the context of public housing delivery, this theory suggests that a default in one part of the system (e.g. stakeholder engagement) leads to defaults in the entire system, resulting in undesirable outcomes.

Key principles of system thinking theory

Systems thinking theory is founded on several key principles that provide a framework for understanding complex systems. At its core, the theory emphasises interconnectedness, recognising that elements within a system are not isolated but rather intricately linked and interdependent. This interconnectedness means that actions taken in one part of the system can have far-reaching and often unintended consequences in other areas, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to problem-solving and decision-making.

Another crucial principle of systems thinking is the concept of feedback loops. These loops describe how actions within a system produce results that subsequently influence future actions, creating a cyclical pattern of cause and effect. Feedback loops can be either reinforcing, where they amplify change and potentially lead to exponential growth or decline or balancing, where they work to stabilise the system and maintain equilibrium.

Lastly, systems thinking theory recognises the phenomenon of emergent behaviour. This principle posits that the overall behaviour of a system cannot be simply reduced to the sum of its individual parts. Instead, it emerges from the complex interactions and relationships between the system's elements, often resulting in properties or behaviours that are not predictable from analysing the components in isolation.

Applying systems thinking to stakeholder engagement

Systems thinking theory provides a valuable lens for understanding stakeholder engagement in public housing projects by highlighting several key aspects. Firstly, it emphasises the dynamic and interconnected nature of stakeholder relationships. Public housing projects involve

a complex web of stakeholders with diverse interests, perspectives and power dynamics. This theory underscores that changes in the engagement approach with one stakeholder group can have ripple effects, impacting the relationships and perceptions of others within the system.

Secondly, systems thinking theory illuminates the crucial role of feedback loops in shaping project outcomes. Effective stakeholder engagement necessitates continuous feedback mechanisms to ensure alignment between project goals and community expectations. These feedback loops serve as essential tools for identifying emerging issues, adjusting project plans and mitigating potential conflicts, thereby contributing to the overall success and sustainability of the housing project.

Thirdly, the theory stresses the importance of considering long-term consequences in decision-making processes. Choices made during the planning and implementation phases of public housing projects can have far-reaching and enduring impacts on the community and the project's sustainability. By encouraging a holistic view, systems thinking prompts stakeholders to consider the potential consequences of their actions on all parties involved and the long-term viability of the housing project. This comprehensive approach helps in developing more robust and sustainable solutions to complex housing challenges.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 illustrates the dynamic interplay between stakeholder engagement, project outcomes and community satisfaction in public housing delivery. The framework draws upon the 'shifting the burden' system archetype, which highlights the tension between short-term fixes and fundamental solutions.

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1, grounded in systems thinking theory, offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the dynamics of stakeholder engagement in public housing projects. At its core, the framework identifies inadequate stakeholder engagement as the primary 'problem symptom', leading to a misalignment between community expectations and project outcomes, ultimately resulting in dissatisfaction. In contrast, adequate stakeholder engagement is positioned as the 'fundamental solution', addressing the root cause by ensuring community needs and expectations are considered throughout the project lifecycle, thereby fostering greater satisfaction.

The framework incorporates two types of feedback loops: *balancing* and *reinforcing*. The balancing loops (B1 and B2) represent the gradual transition from inadequate to adequate engagement over time, acknowledging the inherent delays in complex projects and emphasising the need for continuous improvement and adaptation in engagement practices. Conversely, the reinforcing loops (R3, R4 and R5) highlight potential pitfalls in the engagement process. R3 demonstrates how inadequate

engagement can create a false sense of accomplishment, perpetuating ineffective practices. R4 illustrates the double-edged nature of expediting processes, which can either enhance or hinder outcomes depending on their management. R5 shows how community unrest stemming from dissatisfaction can further reinforce reliance on inadequate engagement, creating a negative cycle. This systems-based conceptual framework provides a valuable tool for analysing the complex interplay of factors in stakeholder engagement within public housing projects. It underscores the importance of adopting a systematic, proactive and adaptive approach to engagement, taking into account feedback loops, long-term consequences and the potential risks associated with short-term solutions.

Research methods and design

Research design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges and perspectives surrounding stakeholder engagement in public housing delivery within a specific local (Patton 2014). A case study research design was chosen to provide a rich and contextualised understanding of the phenomenon within the setting of Stellenbosch Municipality. This approach aligns with the interpretivist philosophical stance, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding stakeholder engagement challenges in public housing delivery (Duff 2018; Mohajan 2018).

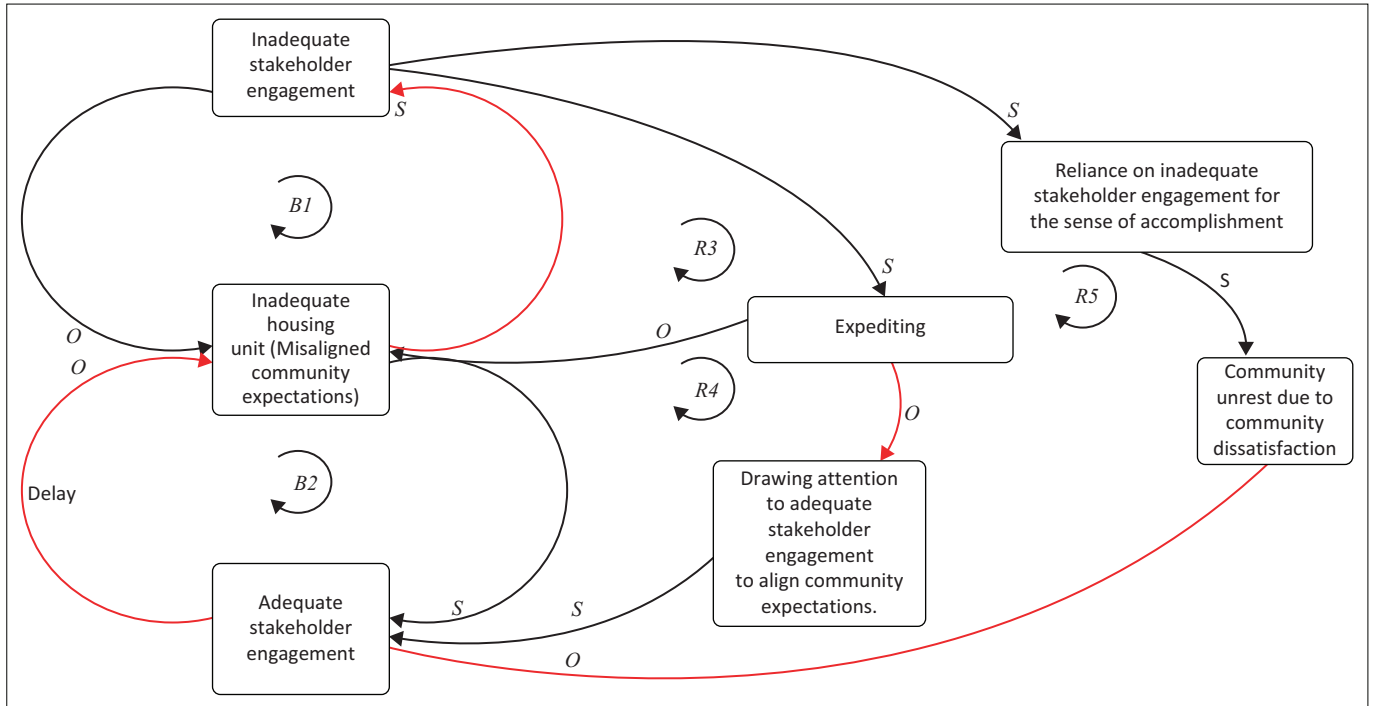
Participants and sample size

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 participants (Ward councillors, Traditional leaders, Project managers, Human Settlement staff and Beneficiary committee members); this includes individuals involved in or affected by public housing projects in Stellenbosch Municipality.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select this total of 30 participants. This sample size aligns with recommendations by Vasileiou et al. (2018) and Moser and Korstjens (2018), who suggest that 20–30 participants are typically sufficient for qualitative studies to ensure data saturation. The participant profile included a diverse range of stakeholders, including 2 traditional leaders, 4 ward councillors, 10 members of beneficiary committee, 11 human settlement staff and 3 project managers. The sample comprised 19 males and 11 females, with varying lengths of service in their respective roles, refer to Table 1.

Data collection process

To address the long-standing problem of stakeholder engagement in local municipalities, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with the rest of the participants excluding beneficiary committee members, and focus groups were conducted with beneficiary



Source: Adopted from Senge, P.M., 2006, *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*, Revised ed., Broadway Business, New York

FIGURE 1: Conceptual framework.

TABLE 1: The profile of the study participants.

Ethnic group	Gender group			Designation					Length of service (years)				
	M	F	Other	TLs	WCs	MBC	HSS	PMs	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
African people (n = 18)	12	6	0	2	4	10	3	0	0	09	0	9	8
Asian people (n = 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mixed race people (n = 10)	6	4	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	0	3	7	0
Indian people (n = 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White people (n = 2)	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
Other (n = 0)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total (n = 30)	0	0	0	2	4	10	11	3	0	09	3	18	0

Note: Male = 19; Female = 11.

M, Male; F, Female; TLs, traditional leaders; WCs, ward councillors; MBC, members of beneficiary committee; HSS, human settlement staff; PMs, project managers.

committee members at a community hall setting. This approach allowed participants to share candid experiences and opinions. Interviews were conducted at participants’ offices, audio-recorded with consent and focus group discussions were documented via field notes. Ethical considerations, including anonymity and confidentiality, were strictly maintained. A structured data collection schedule was devised, analysed and adjusted per research objectives. Observation notes complemented the qualitative data. Interviews averaged 10 min – 20 min, while focus groups spanned approximately 60 min each, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perspectives and enhancing engagement strategies.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data using ATLAS.ti software, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step data analysis process. This method involved a systematic process of coding, categorising and interpreting the data to identify recurring themes and patterns (Castleberry & Nolen 2018; Ronzani et al. 2020). Cross-validation and group

discussion were crucial to ensure mutual understanding, analytical accuracy and the validity of research outcomes (Appelbaum et al. 2012). As an attempt to prevent confirmation bias during the analysis stage, the transcribed data and field notes were independently coded by the authors.

To ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the analysis, a comprehensive process was implemented. Initially, two researchers independently coded the transcribed interviews and field notes, promoting consistency and reducing potential researcher bias. This step was crucial in establishing a foundation for reliable data interpretation. Subsequently, an external researcher within the faculty verified the coding process, enhancing accuracy and eliminating subjectivity, thus ensuring inter-coder reliability. This external validation was critical in maintaining objectivity throughout the data analysis phase, with codes being revised based on feedback from the neutral investigator.

Following this data analysis and coding process, the researchers engaged in extensive discussions to reach consensus on the identified themes and sub-themes.

This collaborative approach ensured a shared understanding of the data and strengthened the validity of the findings. As a final measure, the external researcher conducted a double-check and verification of the results, minimising the potential for confirmation bias. This rigorous, multi-step process significantly enhanced the credibility and dependability of the analysis, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent discussion of findings.

Ethical considerations

An application for full ethical approval was made to Cape Peninsula University of Technology Research Ethics Committee and ethics consent was received on 31 May 2023. The clearance certificate number is 2023_FBMSREC_ST06. Strict ethical considerations were prioritised throughout the data collection process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary participation and understanding of the research objectives. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms and removing any identifying information from the data.

Findings and discussion

Two overarching themes emerged from the thematic analysis: public housing delivery challenges and stakeholder engagement processes. These themes provide insight into the complex dynamics of public housing delivery in Stellenbosch Municipality and highlight the critical role of stakeholder engagement in addressing these challenges.

Public housing delivery challenges

Objections

A significant challenge to public housing delivery in Stellenbosch Municipality is the resistance from existing communities, often rooted in 'not in my back yard' (NIMBYism) phenomenon. This phenomenon, characterised by opposition to developments perceived as undesirable in close proximity to one's residence, stems from concerns about property values, safety and the perceived social impact of public housing.

One instance highlighted by human settlement staff involved a court injunction that halted the construction of housing units on municipal land adjacent to private properties. This legal challenge, fuelled by residents' anxieties about decreased property values and potential increases in crime rates, delayed the project for several years. This case exemplifies how NIMBYism can significantly impede the progress of public housing initiatives, delaying the provision of much-needed housing units. The literature confirms that NIMBYism is a pervasive challenge in public housing development worldwide. Studies have shown that NIMBYism opposition often intertwines with issues of racial and economic justice, further complicating the discourse surrounding public housing. Addressing NIMBYism requires proactive engagement strategies that involve communities early in the planning process, address concerns transparently and demonstrate the potential

benefits of well-designed and managed public housing projects.

A lack of public input

A recurring theme in the data is the lack of meaningful public input in the planning and design of public housing projects. This lack of engagement contributes to a sense of alienation and frustration among community members, who often feel their voices are not heard or considered. Many respondents highlighted the lack of meaningful community involvement in housing project planning and implementation. One community representative stated, 'We are often informed about decisions after they've been made, rather than being part of the decision-making process'.

Other members of beneficiary committees expressed their dissatisfaction with being involved only in the later stages of projects; often after key decisions had already been made. They described a sense of being 'managed' rather than genuinely engaged, highlighting the limitations of their participation. This limited involvement, coupled with the fact that the housing units are provided free of charge, creates a perception that their input is not valued or necessary. Other stakeholders across different groups emphasised the inadequate flow of information between government officials, project managers and community members. A human settlement staff member opined, 'There's often a disconnect between what we plan and what the community expects, largely due to communication gaps'. This finding aligns with the literature, which emphasises the crucial role of community participation in the success and sustainability of public housing projects. Engaging communities in the early stages of project planning, allowing them to shape the design and implementation, can lead to better outcomes, greater satisfaction and increased ownership.

Stakeholder engagement processes

Stakeholder engagement processes involve identifying and involving stakeholders in decision-making to manage relationships and align goals. Strategies such as surveys and workshops aim to build trust and resolve conflicts, ensuring accountability and better project outcomes. Challenges include power dynamics and conflicting interests, requiring transparent and inclusive approaches for sustainable success.

Communication

Communication emerged as a significant challenge in stakeholder engagement processes. The data revealed a disconnect between the council's communication efforts and the community's perception of these efforts, highlighting a lack of trust and transparency. One ward councillor recounted an experience where a community dismissed a feasibility study report presented to them, claiming they were already aware of the information. This incident exposes a fundamental communication breakdown, where the council's attempts to inform the community were met with scepticism and a perception of being misled.

Participants emphasised the importance of engaging stakeholders from the project's inception. A beneficiary committee member stated, 'When we're involved from the start, we feel more ownership over the project and its outcomes'. The literature on communication in construction projects, including public housing, highlights similar challenges. Barriers such as limited access to information, complex procurement systems, cultural differences and technical jargon can hinder effective communication between project teams and communities.

Political polarisation

The data revealed instances of political polarisation impacting stakeholder engagement processes. The involvement of individuals with political agendas can create divisions within communities, further marginalising those without political influence. Members of beneficiary committees expressed concerns about more educated and affluent homeowners from surrounding communities hijacking the decision-making process, often side lining the needs of the intended beneficiaries. This political manoeuvring can exacerbate existing power imbalances and lead to project outcomes that fail to address the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

The influence of political dynamics on housing projects was a recurring theme. A ward councillor commented, 'Sometimes, political interests overshadow the actual needs of the community, leading to delays and misallocations'. This finding underscores the need for stakeholder engagement strategies that mitigate political influence and promote inclusivity. Empowering marginalised communities to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes is crucial to ensure that their voices are heard and their needs are prioritised.

Bureaucratic inefficiencies

Slow administrative processes and complex regulatory requirements were identified as factors contributing to project delays. One traditional leader remarked, 'The amount of red tape involved in getting approvals can be overwhelming and time-consuming'. Other respondents highlighted the need for clear communication about project timelines, budgets and decision-making processes. A human settlement staff member noted, 'Transparency builds trust and helps manage expectations'. Several participants mentioned the importance of educating stakeholders about the complexities of housing projects. A project manager suggested, 'Workshops and training sessions can help community members understand the challenges we face and contribute more effectively to solutions'. These findings align with previous research by McNee and Pojani (2022) and Mhlongo et al. (2022), who identified similar challenges in public housing delivery across South Africa.

Conflict resolution mechanisms and continuous feedback loops

The need for established processes to address disagreements and conflicts was emphasised. A ward councillor commented,

'Having a clear protocol for resolving disputes can prevent small issues from escalating and derailing projects'. Participants stressed the importance of ongoing communication throughout the project lifecycle. One traditional leader remarked, 'Regular updates and opportunities for feedback help keep everyone aligned and engaged'. These findings support the argument by Kowaltowski et al. (2024) that stakeholder expectations can be met through constant engagement of the end user from the beginning to the end of the project.

Proposed stakeholder engagement framework

Based on the findings and drawing from systems thinking theory, this study proposes a comprehensive stakeholder engagement framework for public housing delivery in South Africa. The proposed stakeholder engagement framework in Figure 2 aims to address the identified challenges and leverage the insights gained from successful engagement processes.

The given stakeholder engagement framework advocates for a systematic and proactive integration of feedback from individuals or entities who may be affected by or influence the delivery of housing projects. The framework outlines a cyclical process with eight interconnected stages, emphasising the importance of continuous stakeholder involvement throughout the project lifecycle.

The process begins with stakeholder identification, encompassing government agencies, community members, developers, contractors and civil society organisations. This is followed by a comprehensive assessment of stakeholder needs and expectations through various methods such as surveys, focus groups, interviews and community meetings. Based on these insights, a detailed engagement plan is developed, outlining specific objectives, strategies, timelines and responsibilities for engaging different stakeholder groups.

The engagement execution stage as shown in Figure 2 involves implementing the engagement plan, ensuring active and continuous participation of stakeholders throughout the project. Regular feedback mechanisms are integrated to assess the effectiveness of engagement efforts and identify areas for improvement, allowing for adjustments to the

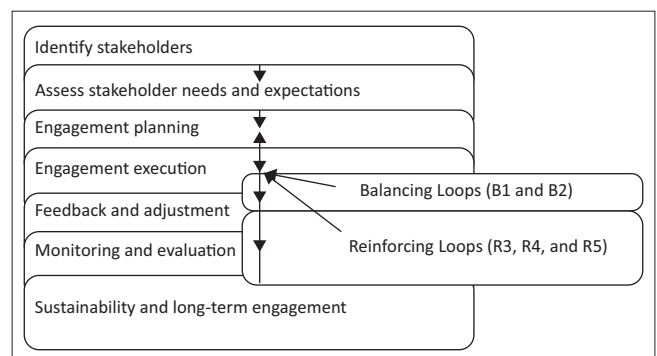


FIGURE 2: Proposed stakeholder engagement framework.

project plan and engagement strategies to better align with community expectations. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of engagement efforts are crucial to measure their impact and identify potential challenges, with the resulting data used to refine the framework and ensure its effectiveness in future projects.

The stakeholder engagement framework in Figure 2 emphasises the importance of sustained engagement beyond project completion, establishing mechanisms for ongoing communication, collaboration and community involvement in the management and maintenance of housing units. It integrates concepts from systems thinking theory, incorporating balancing loops (B1 and B2) that emphasise continuous adaptation and improvement in engagement practices and reinforcing loops (R3, R4, and R5) that highlight potential pitfalls to be managed proactively.

By emphasising the interconnectedness of stakeholders and project outcomes, this framework aligns with the systems thinking approach, promoting a collaborative, transparent and accountable approach to public housing delivery. Its implementation can help municipalities create a more inclusive and effective public housing delivery process, ensuring projects are aligned with community needs, fostering a sense of ownership and contributing to the creation of sustainable and thriving communities.

Recommendations

To effectively implement the proposed stakeholder engagement framework and improve the delivery of public housing projects in South Africa, a comprehensive approach is necessary. Municipalities should prioritise early and continuous engagement with beneficiary committees and community members, as mandated by the *Municipal Systems Act (Act No. 32 of 2000)*. This early involvement ensures that community needs and aspirations shape the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and project designs, fostering a sense of ownership and alignment with local priorities.

Investing in capacity building for marginalised communities is crucial to empower them to participate more effectively in stakeholder engagement processes. This includes providing training on communication skills, negotiation techniques and understanding project documentation, thereby enhancing their ability to contribute meaningfully to discussions and decision-making.

Transparent communication strategies should be adopted by municipalities, using clear language and avoiding technical jargon. Regular updates on project progress, prompt addressing of community concerns and ensuring information availability in multiple formats are essential. Leveraging digital platforms and tools, such as mobile applications for project updates and feedback or geographic information system (GIS) for participatory mapping exercises, can significantly enhance communication and facilitate stakeholder participation.

In cases where political polarisation is evident, engaging independent facilitators to mediate discussions can help ensure that all voices are heard and respected. This approach can level the playing field and promote more equitable decision-making processes, mitigating the potential for political interests to overshadow community needs. Establishing clear and accessible grievance mechanisms is vital for community members to voice their concerns and seek redress for any perceived injustices. These mechanisms should be transparent, accountable and responsive to community needs, fostering trust and open dialogue throughout the project lifecycle.

Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks is essential to assess the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement efforts and the project's impact on the community. Establishing clear metrics and indicators to measure the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement in housing projects can provide valuable data to identify areas for improvement and inform future public housing initiatives. This continuous learning approach ensures that stakeholder engagement strategies evolve and adapt to meet the changing needs of communities and the challenges of public housing delivery in South Africa.

Implications

The successful implementation of the proposed stakeholder engagement framework has the potential to significantly enhance the delivery of public housing projects in South Africa, with far-reaching implications for both communities and governance structures. By fostering collaboration, transparency and accountability, the framework can contribute to a range of positive outcomes that address longstanding challenges in the public housing sector.

Initially, the framework's emphasis on incorporating community needs and expectations from the outset is likely to result in more relevant and sustainable housing solutions. This alignment with local contexts can lead to improved project outcomes, ensuring that housing developments are not only structurally sound but also responsive to the specific requirements of the communities they serve. Such tailored approaches can enhance the long-term viability and success of public housing initiatives.

Moreover, the framework's focus on meaningful engagement is expected to foster a sense of ownership and pride among community members. This increased involvement can lead to greater satisfaction with both the project process and its outcomes, potentially reducing instances of community unrest and dissatisfaction that have historically plagued public housing initiatives in South Africa. The sense of ownership cultivated through active participation may also contribute to better maintenance and care of housing units, extending their lifespan and overall quality.

The open and transparent communication channels advocated by the framework can play a crucial role in building trust and addressing concerns proactively. This approach has the potential to mitigate conflicts and reduce

NIMBYism opposition, which has been a significant barrier to public housing development in many areas. By engaging with stakeholders early and consistently, municipalities can navigate potential obstacles more effectively and gain broader community support for housing projects.

Furthermore, the framework's emphasis on community empowerment represents a significant shift in the approach to public housing delivery. By enabling communities to participate actively in shaping their living environments, the framework promotes social cohesion and a sense of agency among residents. This empowerment can have ripple effects beyond housing, potentially catalysing broader community development initiatives and fostering a more engaged citizenry.

Lastly, the framework's focus on transparency and feedback loops has important implications for government accountability. By ensuring that public resources are used effectively and that projects deliver on their intended social objectives, the framework can help rebuild trust between communities and local government structures. This enhanced accountability may lead to more efficient use of resources, reduced corruption and ultimately, a more responsive and effective public housing sector. In conclusion, the successful implementation of this stakeholder engagement framework has the potential to transform the landscape of public housing delivery in South Africa, addressing many of the systemic issues that have hindered progress in this critical area of social development.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical role of stakeholder engagement in public housing delivery in South Africa, particularly in the context of Stellenbosch Municipality. The findings reveal that insufficient public input, poor communication and political polarisation are key challenges that hinder effective housing project implementation. The proposed stakeholder engagement framework addresses these issues by emphasising proactive stakeholder involvement, transparent communication and adaptive management practices.

The conceptual framework, drawing on the 'shifting the burden' archetype, emphasises the importance of addressing the root causes of inadequate engagement rather than relying on short-term fixes. By adopting this framework, municipalities can enhance project efficiency, improve community satisfaction and ultimately contribute to the realisation of the constitutional right to adequate housing. The study's findings and recommendations have broader implications for public service delivery in South Africa and potentially other developing countries facing similar challenges.

Future research

Further studies should explore the application of this framework across different municipalities and housing project types to

validate its effectiveness and identify areas for refinement. In addition, longitudinal studies could assess the long-term impacts of improved stakeholder engagement on housing project outcomes and community satisfaction. By implementing these recommendations, South African municipalities can improve their public housing delivery systems, fostering greater social equity and sustainable development. The implications of this research extend beyond housing, offering insights into effective stakeholder engagement practices that can be applied to various public service delivery domains.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on stakeholder engagement in public housing delivery, providing a practical framework grounded in empirical research and systems thinking theory. As South Africa continues to grapple with its housing challenges, the adoption of more inclusive and participatory approaches to project delivery will be crucial in realising the vision of adequate housing for all citizens.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

M.S.X. contributed towards the conceptualisation and investigation and writing the original draft. M.S.X., M.T.-D. and R.K.T. contributed to the methodology. M.T.-D. and R.K.T. contributed to the validation and resources of the article. The formal analysis was performed by M.S.X., M.T.-D. and R.K.T. M.S.X., M.T.-D. and R.K.T. contributed towards the writing, review and editing of the article.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, M.S.X., upon reasonable request.

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