

INCLUSION OF THOSE
MOST LEFT OUT

Hands-on

Learning from our implementing partners

Project Preparation Trust

Towards a more inclusive Special Needs Group Housing Programme in South Africa: Addressing a Situation of Crisis

Despite South Africa's progressive constitution which enshrines the right to adequate shelter for all, those who are most vulnerable and in special need are seldom able to access state housing assistance. A particular problem is that non-profit organisations providing group shelter and care within communities for orphans, abused women and children, the severely disabled, the elderly and others in special need, cannot access state housing subsidies within most Provinces. This is because Special Needs Group Housing (SNGH) is not provided for within the policies and programmes of the National Department of Human Settlements, despite certain provincial Departments having pro-actively done so for many years. The National Department of Human Settlements has to date been unsupportive of SNGH and mass housing delivery has tended to take precedence. As a result, most provinces do not have special needs housing programmes and NPOs are generally unable to access much needed housing subsidies.

An urgent and concerted response is therefore required in order to address this situation and to enable improved access to housing for those in special need. Given the extended time frames it would take to develop new policies and housing subsidy instruments, it is critical that the existing institutional subsidy mechanism is made use of, as is already occurring within certain provinces. Greater commitment, communication and collaboration are also required.

PPT's role in Special Needs Group Housing

It is within this context that Project Preparation Trust (PPT) is working to create a more enabling policy environment for people with special needs to access adequate shelter and care. PPT is a public benefit organisation that specialises in the preparation of a wide range of pro-poor development projects. Dating back to 2001, PPT has been assisting large numbers of NPOs to prepare their SNGH projects and to accessing state housing subsidies. PPT is also involved in evidence-based lobbying for a more enabling policy environment. PPT has worked extensively on SNGH in KZN, the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and the Western Cape. To date PPT has leveraged more than R54million in state SNGH housing subsidies for NPOs for 978 beneficiaries in special need on 41 projects and is currently preparing SNGH projects benefiting a further 368 beneficiaries in special need. The successful preparation of SNH projects is however highly challenging due to a range of problems and obstacles discussed in this learning brief.

With the DG Murray Trust's support we are addressing the following aspects of the SNH challenge: A) Creating much-needed change at the policy and programme levels with the ultimate objective of mainstreaming SNGH in South Africa and making it more accessible and in building increased understanding and consensus

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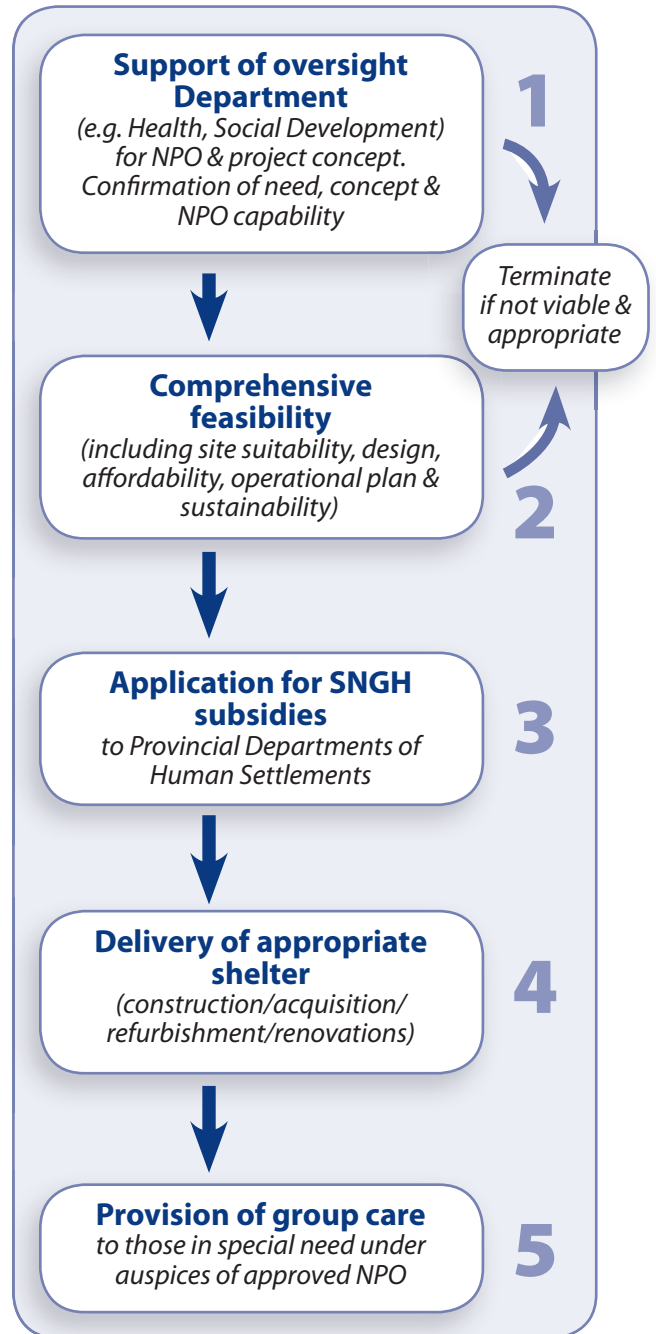


is important in achieving this end; B) Investigating and piloting new SNH models addressing stage 2 and 3 housing for abused women and children and older persons.

What is Special Needs Group Housing (SNGH)?

SNGH is housing provided by registered and suitably capacitated NPO's for those requiring special group care for a range of reasons. These people are usually in urgent need of care which requires specialised capacity, resources or expertise and who have no other care option within the family environment. Housing subsidies are usually allocated in terms of a variation of the institutional subsidy (often referred to as the 'transitional' variation). Categories of special need include: orphans and vulnerable children (OVC's); the seriously ill (including those infected by HIV AIDS); the old and infirm; those with physical, intellectual disabilities; victims of domestic abuse; the homeless; those under substance rehabilitation and parolees; ex-offenders; and juvenile offenders. Typical examples of project types include foster care homes, accommodation for older persons, residential care and assisted independent accommodation for people with disabilities, hospices, centres for abused women and children and shelters for homeless people. In all cases the approval of the respective oversight Department (Social Development or Health) is required along with a comprehensive feasibility report before housing subsidies can be released. Wherever possible, less-institutional forms of care are promoted (e.g. small family based foster care homes. See diagram on right).

South Africa is a country with very high levels of vulnerability due to a range of mutually reinforcing factors such as its high levels of inequality and poverty, HIV AIDS prevalence, spatial dislocation, weakened family structures, substance abuse and gender-based violence. The incidence of vulnerabilities are often increasing over time as in the case of orphans and vulnerable children where the numbers have increased by 845,000 (28%) between 2002 and 2010 bringing the estimated total number of maternal orphans in South Africa to about 2 million. Many welfare organisations



have long waiting lists such as those caring for those with physical and intellectual disabilities, older persons and victims of domestic violence. Shelters for abused women and children report that they have to turn people away as they do not have sufficient facilities to accommodate those in need. As already indicated, NPOs lack adequate state assistance and funding, including for capital costs. Less than 0.15% of the more than 3 million state housing opportunities provided so far have



benefited beneficiaries in special need (including allocations to those with disabilities on mass housing).

What is the Constitutional and Legislative Obligation?

There is a clear-cut obligation on the State to provide housing / shelter to those in special need and to ensure that those in special need receive special priority in this regard. In the first instance, the South African Constitution enshrines the right of everyone to have access to adequate housing and makes it incumbent upon the State to take reasonable legislative and other measures within it's available resources to achieve the progressive realization of this right. The Housing Act makes it clear that "National, provincial and local spheres of government must...promote the meeting of special housing needs, including, but not limited to, the needs of the disabled" (Act 107 of 1997, paragraph 2(1)(e)(viii)). The Social Housing Act also indicates that "special priority must be given to the needs of women, children, child-headed households, persons with disabilities and the elderly" (Act 16 of 2008, clause 2(1)a).

What is the Central Problem?

The central problem is that NPOs providing care and shelter to those in special need at grassroots-level cannot access state-assisted housing or shelter within most provinces. Those in special need do not receive any special priority but

instead tend to suffer further discrimination and marginalisation. Despite the existence of provincial SNGH programmes (dating back to 1998 in the case of KZN) the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) has been slow to respond. There is currently no clear support from the NDHS for SNGH nor any enabling directive (in particular indicating that the institutional subsidy mechanism may be utilised for purposes of SNGH, as is already occurring in certain Provinces).

What is the Status of Provincial SNGH Policies and Programmes?

Despite the lack of a national policy or framework, certain provinces have put in place provincial SNGH policies/programmes including KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Gauteng. The KZN policy and programme is the oldest dating back to 1998. The Western Cape has a comprehensive SNGH Policy which has been on hold since late 2010 due to the uncertain mandate from the NDHS. To date no known queries have been raised by the Auditor General concerning SNGH expenditure and it is therefore evident that the existing institutional housing subsidy instruments can indeed be successfully utilised for purposes of SNGH. The figures below provide an indication of the scale of delivery to date.

Known SNGH Projects with approved subsidies as at June 2012:	
Number of projects	71
Capital value (R thousands)	80,419,452
Number of beneficiaries	3,301
Known SNGH Projects under preparation as at June 2012:	
Number of projects	31
Capital value (R thousands)	40,220,842
Number of beneficiaries	812

What Progress has been made with Advocacy?

So far various advocacy efforts dating back to 2005 have produced limited change. Civil Society has highlighted the need for a more pro-active





approach to SNH and has called on and interacted with the NDHS on various levels since the late 1990's. In 2005, PPT and eThekweni Municipality made a joint submission to the NDHS and various provincial DHSs. A National SNH Forum was established in 2005 under the auspices of the Social Housing Foundation with representation from a range of NPOs, civil society organisations, and government departments. The Forum met with the National Department of Human Settlements in 2008 and tabled a briefing document with recommendations on how to unblock and mainstream special needs housing.

National Joint Submission by Civil Society Organisations

A joint Civil Society submission supported by 42 organisations was submitted to the National Department of Human Settlements in January 2013 calling on the Department to issue an enabling directive for SNGH which amongst other things would confirm that SNGH can be undertaken as a legitimate variation of institutional subsidy mechanism, that budget for purposes of SNGH be set aside, and that provinces without SNGH policies and programmes be required to develop and initiate them. It is understood that Human Settlements MINMEC has subsequently considered the issue of special needs housing and it is hoped that the NDHS will now move to respond proactively.

Why can SNGH be successfully up-scaled and main-streamed?

The issue of SNGH has often been avoided due to it being poorly understood, because of a lack of will, and seemingly because certain government officials are concerned at the capacity and cost implications of engaging with it more fully. These fears are largely unfounded. The following are some of the main reasons why SNGH can and should be mainstreamed:

- SNGH is championed mainly by well capacitated and credible NPOs and only such organisations are eligible for state funding. Government's role is limited and confined mainly to considering and approving (or turning down) funding for projects.
- The capacity 'load' on government for SNGH is hence limited, provided the correct process is followed.
- SNGH is not costly relative to mass housing. Only a very small proportion of the national housing budget would be required.
- SNGH projects are far less complex and challenging than mass housing projects.
- There are already proven and long-standing SNGH programme approaches in several provinces which can be replicated.
- There are already well-established criteria and parameters for SNGH which ensure adequate risk management and assure quality.
- There is an adequate body of knowledge on SNGH which can be made use of both by government and civil society stakeholders (including practical guidelines and toolkits).

What are the Solutions? How do we Move Forward?

A range of critical actions are required in order to bring about broad-based change and mainstreaming of SNGH in South Africa. The most important of these are as follows:

1. Those in special need to be afforded special priority and special attention in terms of accessing housing assistance from the state. They are the most vulnerable members of society and the least able to help themselves.
2. A clear and unequivocal mandate relating to





SNGH is required from the NDHS in the form of an enabling Directive to all Provinces as an enabling starting point. This would empower and encourage Provinces to proceed with making available housing subsidies to NPOs for purposes of providing SNGH utilising a variation of the institutional subsidy mechanism and within a broadly defined framework (which has already been clearly outlined in the joint civil society submission made to the NDHS in January 2013 which is available on PPT's website).

3. A portion of the housing budget needs to be allocated for purpose of special needs housing (both group and individual) at both National and Provincial levels (it being noted that the budgetary requirements for special needs housing are small relative to mass housing and will not impact negatively on the overall housing budget).
4. Preparation funding needs to be made available to ensure that adequate project feasibility studies are completed. Such preparation funding would only be made available by Provincial Human Settlement Departments to suitable NPOs with appropriate project concepts and would be utilised to enable them to secure the necessary professional services. This will ensure that subsidies are only allocated to viable and appropriate SNGH projects.
5. More effective interdepartmental co-operation, communication and commitment is required at National and Provincial Levels. Key principles of co-operation include the role of oversight Departments (such as Social Development and Health) in approving project concepts and NPOs and the provision of housing subsidies by Provincial Departments of Human Settlements on a structured and transparent basis.

6. A series of provincial and national SNGH workshops need to be held in order to inform both government and non-governmental stakeholders about SNGH and to promote greater understanding of it.
7. Advocacy pressure for SNGH needs to be intensified and sustained on a constructive basis until key outcomes such as those outlined above have been achieved.
8. A political champion needs to be found who can help get SNGH prioritised on the national platform and secure the necessary political commitment to taking positive action.

This learning brief tells of the hands-on experience of:



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