

# An evaluation of urbanisation challenges experienced in the Low-Income Areas of Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa

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## Case Report

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# Abstract

This paper examined the challenges experienced in low-income areas with specific emphasis on Khayelitsha, Cape Town. The paper argues that low-income areas in most cities are faced with enormous challenges, including amongst many others, crime, overcrowding, sanitation, health issues, floods, and shack fires. These challenges are the byproduct of poor/colonial and/or urban planning practices or institutional inertia/neglect from municipalities and skewed service provisions. Moreover, these challenges account for the spread of environmental health diseases like diarrhea, dysentery, pneumonia, and tuberculosis. It is furthermore argued that these areas are also associated with substance abuse, alcoholism, and prostitution. The objective of this paper is to highlight these challenges in Low-Income Areas and their implications. Interestingly, existing scholarship has barely mentioned these problems without intensely explaining their underlying implications. It is these lacunae or gaps in the extant literature that this current study will seek to address as it illuminates these implications. To gain these insights the study utilised ethnographic qualitative research and observations conducted from March 2018 to October 2019 utilising a sample of 28 individuals. The study found that these challenges impacts on the residents culminating in illness, loss of livelihoods, and lives, and also property. This rationalises the study as it seeks to influence policy and ensure a change in attitudes in these areas.

## Introduction: Challenges Experienced In The Low-income Areas

The burgeoning of low-income areas usually described as an informal settlement in the cities in the global south have emerged as an urban problem due to their attraction to migrants from rural areas, other urban centres and easy access to cheap and affordable or informal housing (Ranis and Stewart, 1999). Low-income housing is a common phenomenon driven by a lack of secure space for formal housing (UN-Habitat, 2003). These areas are usually overcrowded, have poor services like the absence of water and sanitation, high crime rates and are vulnerable to flooding and shack fires resulting from poor building materials and also the absence of urban planning regulations.

It is argued that people in these low-income areas experience socio-economic problems and face urban environmental health challenges like poor sanitation, overcrowding, and high levels of poverty, crime, unemployment, Gender-Based Violence and femicide (Von Donk 2004; Tissington 2011). Extant literature reveals that low-income areas such as those around Khayelitsha are by their nature created by new migrants and who in some cases creates them in the city and keep attracting more migrants and people due to cheap and affordable rental housing particularly for low-income earners (Ayedun & Oluwatobi 2011; Overy 2013; Rodna & Harris 2016).

This study is vital as available literature shows the challenges associated with the storm waters such as congestion and how several residents live in a housing complex and flats which were meant for a few people. In some case residents dump waste on the streets and drainage systems are blocked. Hence, leading to floods etc which are prevalent in these areas and suggest that transforming them is crucial to preempt further floods which lead to loss in property and lives and affecting their livelihoods (Anciano &

Piper 2018), but their research ignored the causes of fire, sanitation and health challenges. It is these causes that this study will seek to address as it highlights not only these causes but seeks to highlight their significance and their implications for these areas.

Shelton et al., (2004) weave in that fire for example is a challenge and a secondary cause of death in the city of Cape Town. This as a result been overlooked by city of Cape Town officials who are in-charge of low-income areas upgrading as they continue to ignore these low-income dwellers as they are not being providing with houses and basic services like electricity, sanitation, water and waste removal services in these areas.

With this in mind, the UN-Habitat (2003) explains that upgrading low-income areas like the ones in Khayelitsha has the plausibility of fighting poverty and preventing the residents' susceptibility to fire and flood and in ensuring sustainable human development. The literature adds that this can also promote environmental sustainability in these areas.

Scholars (Jalan & Ravallion 2003: Field 2005 and Franklin 2011) explain that providing houses and services has a positive correlation with alleviating diseases and improving the productivity of residents' and the welfare of women in these areas.

The setting of this inquiry is Khayelitsha, which has an area of 44 square kilometers and a population size of 400,000 (Seekings, 2013:1) with a population density of 10.122km<sup>2</sup>. This makes it overcrowded and this further complicates these challenges. Further, Seekings (2013:1) explains that the area is 30 km from the Central Business District of the city. Abang (2013) adds that it was created by the Apartheid government between 1983 and 1985 as a dormitory town to house blacks that were transferred from Crossroads. Overy (2013) further explains that post-1990 many from the Eastern Cape moved into the area and set-up shacks. These shacks have to congestion, the risk of fires flaring up, and the risk of flood during winter in these areas.

The main challenge with the area is the high level of informality in that whereas the city has only 21% of households comprising of shacks or informal houses or makeshift houses, Khayelitsha has 55% of informal dwellings comprising of these shacks (Storey, 2014:13). This reveals that shacks are more prevalent in this community than the formal houses. Thus, the prevalence of these shacks is the underlying dynamic driving these urbanisation challenges in these areas.

Harvey (1985) reads these differences in income in the city as the outcome of the accumulation of capital in the formal areas and the neglect of these areas. This has led to huge disparities in levels of developments in these areas. Alcock (2015) counters that these low-income areas in many cities in the global south and elsewhere in the world present business and investment opportunities for economic development in the city which could in the long run create employment for the residents like in textile and traditional African wears and traditional African food in these areas. On the contrary, Bauman (2013) notes that city officials see these residents as superfluous humans as they live in the margins of the city and this is a challenge for many of them. Alcock (2015) counters that there are business opportunities

embedded in these areas which could be harnessed for sustainable economic development and employment creation. He explains that these business opportunities range from tourism to the textile industries, but they are being ignored by the formal economy. The failure to integrate these areas into the main stream economy is accentuating the disparities in the city.

A close examination of available literature on low-income areas reveals that little has been written in these areas in general and those in Khayelitsha in particular. This study examines the lived experiences of people living in these areas around Khayelitsha, Cape Town.

Apart from this introductory section, the rest of the article is structured into six interrelated sections. The second section is the literature review and the theoretical framework. While the third is an exploration of the challenges experienced in these areas with specific reference to Khayelitsha and the fourth is the research problem statement. The fourth section was the research methodology and the fifth deals with the findings and contextual analysis of Low-Income Areas from Khayelitsha and the sixth concludes the study with recommendations.

The research question this study seeks to address is: what are the urbanisation challenges experienced in the Low-Income Areas of Khayelitsha, Cape Town and what are implications for both the residents and the city?

## **The Concept Of Low-income Areas**

The UN-Habitat Program (2010, 2015:1), Huchzermeyer & Karam (2006:4), The Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC) (2003) describe these low-income areas more in terms of income levels, the security of tenure, and the quality of the housings. These authors delineate these areas as residential areas where the inhabitants have no security of tenure vis-à-vis the land they inhabit, with modalities ranging from squatting to informal rental housing, and the neighborhoods lack or are cut-off from basic services like electricity, toilet/sanitation, ablution facilities and water and waste removal services.

The UN-Habitat (2007), Srinivas (2005) in their earlier conceptualisation in 19th century focused on the word slum, and this was used to depict the poorest quality of housing and the most unsanitary conditions; and also a refuge for marginal activities such as crime, vice, and drug abuse. The conceptualisation also regards it as a likely source for many epidemics that ravages urban areas and a place apart from all that was decent and wholesome. Interestingly, these conceptualisation focus on the physical problems, crime, and vice and therefore ignored their employment, and income status. This is a challenge in which this study is illuminating to ensure that these areas are upgraded.

In South Africa, The Department of Human Settlement describes these areas based on their characteristics: (a) illegality and informality, (b) inappropriate locations, (c) restricted public and private sector investment, (d) poverty, and vulnerability and social stress (The Housing Development Agency Research Report 2012). In this light, any settlement that depicts these characteristics can be qualified or

classified as a low-income area. This view is also shared by the Housing Code of 2009 which outlines these characteristics.

Tomlison et al. (2002) add that in most cases these houses may not comply with current planning and building regulations and is often situated in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas. The authors add that informality has made possible the survival of a large percentage of the urban population, enabling precarious or risky livelihoods as many struggle to live in these hardships. The areas are characterised by inadequate infrastructure, poor houses, and poor access to health and education. Tomlison et al. (2002) reveal that these areas are built on land which is either municipal or privately owned using temporal structures. These materials render these houses vulnerable to fires and floods.

Tomlison et al. (2002) add that the houses in these areas are erected using discarded construction materials like corrugated iron sheets, cardboard, and wood, and also plastics, which makes the structures vulnerable to fires and susceptible to flooding especially heavy rains in winter. These floods lead to the destruction of houses, the loss of lives and property.

Moreover, the households in these areas do not have indoor toilets. Rather most use buckets or containers or communal toilets outside. Tomlison et al. (2002) add that these houses are not connected to water; rather they have standpipes outside, and do not have waste bins but use plastic bags. This study would now examine the theoretical perspectives of these areas.

## **Urbanisation Challenges Experienced In The Low-income Areas: A Theoretical Perspective**

This study is underpinned by the new economic theory. The proponents of this theory argue that the New Economic Theory is based on the concept of human capital and geographical differences in this capital especially as most of these residents are migrants from the Eastern Cape and they mostly have low-income earning capacities within the city of Cape Town.

According to Massey et al. (1993), the New Economic Theory was developed using a micro-level decision model. The theory views migration as an investment in human capital just in the same way one could invest in education or vocational training with the view to earn an income on completion of the education and training program (Constant & Massey, 2002).

Todes (2001) agrees that migration raises the value of human capital by increasing gains in earnings of the migrant. However, it should be noted that this increase occurs only when migration does not lead to redundancy. Secondly, despite having been developed using a micro-level decision model, the New Economic Theory of urbanisation is based on family or household decisions, not decisions by individual with regard to migration (Massey et al., 1993).

Accordingly, the new economic theory postulates that people migrate to urban areas seeking better wages so as to improve and sustain their families or household livelihoods. It also adheres to the idea that

migrating to urban centres can create multi-spatial households, in which family members are geographically separated, but remain economically and socially linked (Tacoli, 2002).

However, the New Economic Theory has been criticised in that migrating to urban centres is not based solely on search for higher wages, but on other factors such as diversification of resources and risk aversion or avoiding risk (Castles & Miller, 2009; Alig, Kline & Lichtenstein, 2003).

Nonetheless, the rationale of this theory is relevant to this study because it identifies the need to improve family or household economic welfare as a major force explaining the urbanisation, especially that which occurs in form of household spatial distribution. This need will be investigated with a view of ascertaining whether it is one of the challenges experienced in these low-income areas in with specific reference in those in Khayelitsha.

## **Challenges Experienced In Low-income Areas: Khayelitsha Perspective**

Low income areas in many cities have been associated with numerous challenges namely: housing, water, sanitation, crime, flood, overcrowding, shack fires, health issues, and poverty. Since all these challenges cannot all be analysed within a single paper they will be weave into six main themes which are overcrowding, sanitation, health, crime, floods, and shack fires. Besides, available literature avers that upgrading these areas with formal houses and basic services can plausibly address these challenges in these communities (Tissington, 2011: Van Donk, 2003).

Within the context of South Africa post-1996, Williams (2005) avers that housing is a vital tool for ensuring empowerment and service delivery as during apartheid blacks were denied housing and basic services. Bond (2000) agrees that in South Africa, housing is a prime step and a foundational agency towards empowering blacks to live decent lives post-1996. The author further adds that as a minimum a house must provide protection from the weather and should be a durable structure, and provide reasonable living space and privacy for its occupants. This reveal the relevance/importance of a house as Bond (2000) explains that it must include sanitary facilities, storm-water drainage, and household energy supply, and water, and must provide for secure tenure in a variety of forms to its occupants, especially in these low-income areas.

This is cogent as a house entails the enjoyment of substantial benefits ranging from security to the security of tenure, access to improved health, better educational services to the access to income-earning opportunities (Rodwin & Sanyal, 1987). The realisation of these benefits at the household level is in terms of section 26 (2) of the South African Constitution. In South Africa, housing has the potential to either empower or hamper development as it helps to foster poverty reduction and alleviate the negative impacts and its absence has led to a series of challenges.

## **Research Problem**

Globally low-income areas including those in Khayelitsha in Cape Town are faced with enormous challenges, including amongst others, crime, overcrowding, sanitation, health issues, floods, and shack fires. All of which is the predicament of poor/colonial and/or urban planning practices or neglect by cities and to some extent by the skewed service provision. This presents a complex scenario for both national and local government authorities to address these areas.

In this study we argue that low-income areas like those in Khayelitsha in Cape Town continue to experience challenges like sanitation, water, electricity and health issues like diarrhea, dysentery, pneumonia and the spread of tuberculosis (TB). Further, it is argued that these areas are prone to social ills like crime, substance abuse, alcoholism and prostitution amongst others.

To address these challenges, Williams (2005) notes that the African National Congress (ANC) government in 1993 launched the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) to usher in transformation in housing, electricity, sanitation and water to pre-empt the emergence of these low-income areas. But little was achieved and as such the areas still experience similar problems as they were during apartheid. Bond (2000) argues that rectifying past injustices remain problematic as the new government encountered conflicting public policy challenges like RDP and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR). However, Bond fails to explain how these problems could be addressed. Further, Bond (2000) avers that the introduction of GEAR before fully testing the outcomes of RDP appears to be the contributing factor to these challenges. Meanwhile, Williams (2005:49) argues that GEAR led to the privatisation of services like electricity, and water which has made it difficult for many in these low-income areas to afford basic services. Especially as many are destitute, unemployed and others have no skills.

While Williams (2005) points to these difficulties like unemployment and the absence of skills but he seems to contradict the foundational agency which is a constitutional provision that all South Africans have equal rights to access to basic services including water and sanitation. But what is at play is the total disregard of what is envisioned in the constitution and this is the crux of the problem which this study seeks to reveal. This could be argued in terms of jurisprudence or Case Law as in the Grootboom case of 1999 which clarified that socio-economic rights should be respected in the country (Williams, 2001). Having said that, paradoxically, by 2018 many residents in these areas continues to live in overcrowded areas coupled with irregular, inequitable and apartheid-style services like bucket toilets.

The burgeoning of these areas, despite constitutional provisions and institutional capacity to address them like the 1996 Constitution Act 108 which mentions in section 26 that all South Africans should be provided with housing and Part B of Schedule 4 which mandates municipalities' to provide basic municipal services like housing, water and sanitation to all remains a challenge. For example, the Housing Act of 1997 recognises the right to housing, but the quality of houses provided in these areas is substandard.

Though in 2014 the government introduced the Upgrading of Informal Settlement Program (UISP) with the vision to transform these areas and despite the euphoria of optimism that many residents welcomed

this policy, it too has failed. William (2001) points out that despite the construction of a discourse of change to ensure transformation and social change in the new era, but this is fraught with structural flaws leaving practically little change in these communities, rather bequeathing more challenges leading to illness, loss of livelihood and loss of lives.

## **Research Methodology**

The study employed a qualitative ethnographic research design which is exploratory and iterative. It comprised of 28 participants and observations conducted from March 2018 to October 2019. It involved semi-structured elite interviews involving Ward Councilors) in the community of Khayelitsha and focus group discussions conducted with 9 Ward Councilors (WCs) in the low-income areas in Khayelitsha.

The data were collected through semi-structured elite interviews with Ward Councillors and members of the Ward Development forums, members of street committees like the South African Civic Organisation (SANCO) through thematic analysis based on the objectives of the study. Furthermore, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with key informants and the data were analysed.

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with the residential civic society (RCs). These included the chairpersons of street committees and leaders of the South African National Civic Organisations (SANCO). This was envisaged to gather the data an evaluation of the challenges in these low-income areas in Khayelitsha. Besides, focus group discussions were conducted with community development workers (CDWs), SANCO, and RCs. The data collected from primary and secondary literature were analysed.

## **Findings And Contextual Analysis**

The data collected for this study were thematically analysed according to the main themes of the research question, namely, overcrowding, crime, flood, sanitation, fire, and health. The study describes how these themes came up and what they mean, including examples from literature and data as evidence to support our explanations. The literature was analyzed alongside the study's title and themes. This view is shared by Clarke et al. (2015) who note that thematic analysis is about finding out something that relates to the participants' views, opinions, knowledge, and everyday experiences, for example, interview transcripts.

We used this to closely examine the data to identify common themes/topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that repeatedly came up (Braun et al., 2019). Finally, our conclusion shows how the analysis answered our research question. The oncoming section presents the challenges inherent in these areas in terms of the lived experiences of the residents and these are overcrowding, sanitation, health issues, crime, fire, and floods.

## **Overcrowding**

Nkosi, Haman, Naicker and Mathee (2019) define overcrowding as insufficient space to support the maintenance of clean indoor air, reduce the risk of disease transmission, reduce the risk of noise exposure and meet needs for privacy, amongst other factors, is a fundamental element of healthy housing. According to UN-HABITAT (2005), overcrowding is when there are more than two people per room excluding bathrooms but including kitchens and living rooms. While for the World Health Organization (2010) overcrowding can be measured as the average living area per person in the place of residence. For the purpose of this paper, the UNHABITAT definition of residential overcrowding as more than two people per room (excluding bathrooms but including kitchens and living rooms) was adopted as this is definition fits the South African context in the low-income areas. It is challenging to discern the health impacts of overcrowding in the low-income areas in Khayelitsha, but this study will attempt to explore that.

One of the participants indicated that:

*Overcrowding in these areas is a challenge as most of these shacks are overcrowded and this is the outcome of lack of planning as residents erect their dwellings without engaging the Ward Councilors or the Ward Development Forum (Interview 12 June 2018).*

The study revealed that most of these areas are overcrowded with informal houses or shacks as a result of haphazard construction and absence of planning regulations. This usually contributes to fire outbreaks. This arises from the fact that they do not have construction permits and they also do not possess the resources to acquire huge parcels of land and construct large houses. Further, most residents erect small houses behind those of families, friends, and acquaintances crammed to each other without any boundaries demarcating them from each other. According to the Ward Councillors since 1985, there had been a rapid growth of these areas due to migration. This photo was taken during my field observations in Khayelitsha.

Table 1  
depicts the growth of these areas, their household sizes, and population sizes.

Year	No. of low-income areas	No. of household	Population
1985	0	0	0
2000	6	13000	42,900
2008	13	42,170	139,161
2018	37	80,000	220,000
Source: Authors' research 2018			

Table 1 depicts that when Khayelitsha Township was created in 1985 there were no low-income areas in the township especially as during Apartheid the racist authorities had strict urban planning regulations which did not permit informal settlements of any sort and this explains why the area had no single low-income area (Miraftab (2009). She notes that this situation was bound to change following the end of Apartheid and the dawn of a democratic state in 1994 and the relaxation of urban planning regulations in the city by the new government led to the influx of many migrants from other provinces into Cape Town and by 2000 there were six low-income areas around Khayelitsha.

Scholars like Astrid (2008) explains that by 2008 the number of these areas grew to 13 different low income areas housing 42,170 households and a decade later they burgeoned to 37 with 80,000 households with 220,000 residents. This pattern of growth for Overy (2013) and Ronda & Harris (2016) is driven by migration from the Eastern Cape. This growth can be attributed to the natural growth of the population in the township which Napier (1993:22) elucidates that the high birth rate and low mortality are due to improve health services post-1994 as the ANC introduced free access to health for all. The overcrowding is contributing to illnesses, crime, vulnerability to shack fires, and floods leading to the loss of property, livelihood, and lives.

## Sanitation

According to WHO and UNICEF (2020), sanitation is a human right and the literature adds that everyone is entitled to sanitation services that provide privacy, ensure dignity and safety, and that are physically accessible and affordable. The literature again adds that sanitation is also a public good, providing benefits across society in improved health as well as economic and social development. The literature also points out the effects of the lack of safe sanitation which leads to illness and disease that disproportionately affect children, including diarrhoea, worm infections and stunting. They again add that poor sanitation affects everyone, and a polluted environment impacts the entire community, whether or not an individual household has a sanitation facility. Furthermore, they note that there are hard-to-quantify effects on dignity, safety and gender equality, there are significant financial costs related to lack of sanitation,

In the course of the inquiry, the SANCO leadership explains that:

"the absence of toilets, water, and ablution facilities in these areas has led to many residents resorting to open defecation behind houses and in the bushes (Interview 26 June 2018)."

The outcome of this is that the area is filthy with excreta. These conditions contribute to the rise of urban environmental health diseases like diarrhea and dysentery amongst many others.

The figures below illustrate two sanitation conditions in Khayelitsha. The first is the use of Public Communal Toiles and the second is open defecation as practiced in these areas.

The Community Development Worker concurs that these residents face huge challenges. This finding implies that many in these areas have to grapple with diarrhea, dysentery, pneumonia, TB, HIV/AIDS, and others. Tissington (2011) agrees that the prevalence of open defecation promotes the spread of diseases

like diarrhea which is associated with open defecation. Besides, Sheillah (2018) adds that shared toilets when left unattended are linked to enteric fevers, faecal-oral diseases, and adverse maternal issues.

Van Donk (2002) agrees and points out that though cities are both actual and perceived centers of employment and income-generating opportunities with social amenities like better housing, on the contrary, this is not true of these areas as they do offer neither employment opportunities nor social amenities. Moreover, Van Donk (2002) explains that this has led many young adults, mostly males migrating to the city in search of economic opportunities. The author adds that on arrival, many become jobless and resort to alcohol and in sexual networking with women, which sometimes leads to unsafe sex which leads to the spread of HIV/AIDs in these areas.

Though there are no official data on HIV prevalence rate by income, yet, Van Donk (2002) holds that HIV/AIDs is concentrated in townships as the community shows higher rates compared to other parts of the city. Van Donk (2002) further notes that in many of these areas health clinics are inadequate and preventative treatment is hard to come. Van Donk (2002) again explains that income poverty forces people to engage in the survival strategies of sexual engagement which puts them at risk of HIV/AIDs infection like sex trading which is common in these areas. Tissington (2011) agrees that these diseases place stress on the weakened immune systems of HIV positive people and renders them susceptible to other illnesses in these areas.

## Health

The current WHO definition of health, formulated in 1948, describes health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The study found that health was a challenge as the CDWs revealed that:

"The daily experiences of these residents are characterised by urban environmental health challenges like dysentery, diarrhea, pneumonia, TB, and AIDS/HIV (Interview 29 June 2018)."

The study found that the absence of electricity, water, sanitation, and ablution facilities leads to open defecation leading to diarrhea and dysentery, and also congestion. The lack of social distancing leads to the spread of tuberculosis and novel coronavirus. The high poverty levels contribute to sexual networking leading to sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, which are all endemic in these areas, and also criminal activities.

The study found that the absence of toilets, water, and ablution facilities in these areas have presented new sets of challenges amongst this is sanitation. This finding implies that the area is filthy with excreta which are scattered all over in some of these areas. Vearey (2010) agrees that the nature of these structures accounts for the rise of urban environmental health diseases like diarrhea and dysentery amongst many others leading to the rise of health challenges. Tissington (2011) explains that open defecation promotes the spread of diseases that impact negatively on these communities.

## Crime

According to Thotakura (2014), crime is a public wrong. He observes that it is an act of offense which violates the law of the state and is strongly disapproved by the society. Further the literature Crime is defined as acts or omissions forbidden by law that can be punished by imprisonment or fine. Thotakura (2014) adds that murder, robbery, burglary, rape, drunken driving, child neglect and failure to pay taxes are examples of crimes. The term crime is derived from the Latin word "crimen" meaning offence and also a wrong-doer. Thotakura (2014) adds that crime is considered as an anti-social behaviour. There are several causes which make an individual turn into a criminal. The main causes of crime may be social, economic, psychological, biological and geographical cause.

The study also found that crime is an issue as SANCO leadership explains the impact of crime in these areas. They pointed out that:

"these areas do not have Police Stations and the nearest ones are far and this has left these communities vulnerable to criminals, gangs, and drug dealers." They add that "there are cases where residents go to work and on their way back their houses are broken into and the content emptied (Interview 29 June 2018)."

Their accounts seem to suggest that the high levels of insecurity in these areas as a challenge. The finding reveals that since the residents are unemployed, some turn to the opportunistic crime through which they take advantage of the socio-economic conditions and extort their neighbours. The poor houses make them vulnerable for criminals to break in and steal in their houses.

The study found that crime is an issue as many areas do not have Police Stations and the nearest ones are far. This has left these communities vulnerable to criminals, thugs, and drug dealers. This finding implies that many residents are experiencing high levels of crime due to congestion leading to high rates of robberies, housebreaking, and rape.

This finding is in line with Astrid (2009) who reveals that these conditions are the drivers of social pathologies like violent crime, domestic violence, Gender-Based Violence, and murder. The author adds that the absence of services and the social situation in these areas is contributing to violent crime. Astrid (2009) adds that congestion the absence of infrastructure and services is breeding social pathologies like a drug-related crime which is associated with deteriorating socio-economic conditions.

## Floods

The study also found that most of these areas are located in low-lying areas where in the event of rains the area is flooded. The SANCO leadership explains that:

"These floods affect the residents and due to the poor construction material the houses are easily swept away, leaving the residents stranded (Interview 5 June 2019)."

Despite these challenges during the winter of 2019, the city of Cape Town cognisant of the magnitude of these problems embarked on awareness messages as seen below. This is indicative that the city is aware

of the plight of these low-income areas, for example, in the flood-prone townships and informal settlements in the city to raise awareness of these flood challenges. This project might have cost the city millions of Rands, but these resources could have been invested in upgrading existing areas in the city. While this has been going on for decades little has been done to address these challenges.

The study revealed that the population of these areas is growing, but many remain trapped in regular flooding due to both natural and man-made causes. The implication is that flooding is leading to many losing their Identity Documents, houses, and lives.

This finding is supported by existing literature by de Risi et al. (2013); Juisto & Kenney (2015) which point out the impact of flooding. Few (2003) notes that flooding impacts on services and urban infrastructure and erodes the assets of these residents. Furthermore, Josipovic (2015:18) explains that the impact of the flood is due to the force of the water itself and also the quality of the soil where facilities are built. Josipovic (2015) adds that the area is made up of sand-dunes and this leads to blockage of bucket toilets and communal toilets. Josipovic (2015) explains that in these areas, floods always carry sand and block toilets due to the sandy nature of the area.

Josipovic (2015:18) expands that these toilets need to be serviced regularly to ensure usability and hygiene standards are maintained, but flooding sometimes prevents municipal service providers from accessing and maintaining them. The author adds that in areas without flushing toilets, many residents use pits or buckets as toilets and when it floods the water spreads waste exposing residents to bacteria and contaminating the households like in Khayelitsha.

## **Fire**

Another theme that emerged in the study was the issue of shack fires as the SANCO leadership explains the effect of these fires. They noted that:

“it ravages these communities as it burns their houses, livelihood, and even humans.” (Interview August 2019).

Therefore shack fires contribute to the destruction of livelihood and negatively impact poverty in these areas.” They explained that: “in 2018 alone, there were three major fires in Taiwan, BT and AT.” Also, poor construction materials like plastics, discarded wood, and cardboards easily get inflamed in the event of a fire. The closeness of these structures leads to fires spreading to neighbouring houses. The table demonstrates how fire is impacting these areas.

Table 2

year	Khayelitsha area	Number of deaths	No. of shacks burnt	No of people displaced
2013 1 January	BM	5	800	4000
2018 May 7	Taiwan	8	4	22
2018 October	SST Section	1	200	660
2018 December	Tsepe Tsepe		35	100
Source: Authors' research 2018				

The table details how on new year's eve 1st January 2013, according to the Ward Councillor (WC) a wildfire supported by strong winds ravaged 800 houses in BM killing five people and displacing 4000. The WCs add that these people were relocated to the Oliver Reginald Tambo hall where they were promised formal houses. But this has not materialised rather the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Gift of the Givers has constructed informal houses around the hall to house them.

The WC adds that on the 7th of May 2018, another fire flared up in Taiwan, killing eight people and erasing four shacks, and displacing 22 people. WC adds that the third fire was in SST on the 20th of October which killed one person erasing 200 shacks and displacing 660 people.

The councillors again explain that in December 2018 in Tsepe Tsepe area fire flared up erasing 25 shacks and displacing 100 people. These fires reveal that shack fires are disastrous.

The study also found that fire is a major challenge in these areas as it negatively impacts on the communities. The finding implies that addressing shack fires can save lives in these areas.

The finding is in line with Shelton et al. (2004) who agree that fire has emerged as the secondary cause of death in the city but this has been overlooked by its officials. Also, the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) (2008) highlights that residents in these areas use faulty electrical appliances, faulty electrical connections, smoking, heating appliances, and improper disposal of wood ashes are the main causes of shack fires.

This is rampant as these areas are not reticulated with electricity and some residents resort to illegal connections, others turn to candles, but when they fall off at night it leads to fires. These fires have emerged as an everyday occurrence in these areas as they lead to deaths and injuries (Bull-Ksamanga et al., 2003).

This finding is similar to Tlou (2011) who agrees that many affected residents suffer stress which affects their psychological behaviour. The author explains that fires have a socio-economic impact as it can result in reduced quality of life as livelihoods are disrupted as families and properties are shattered. Also, these fires lead to study materials, uniforms, and furniture being burnt and children missing school, and parents missing work due to the loss of Identity booklets.

## **Conclusion And Recommendations**

This article has examined the challenges of low-income areas in Khayelitsha. The study revealed the importance of these areas in urban areas as they provide housing for low-income urban dwellers and provide them with networks to gain employment in the cities and support their precarious livelihoods. But these areas also produce enormous challenges like overcrowding, health challenges like AIDs/HIV,s crime, fire, and flood. Flowing from these challenges the research suggests that the city should upgrade them with infrastructures like electricity, water, and sanitation.

Also, the city should address these issues emanating from each community separately as each community has its specificities and not the traditional approach of employing one model to address all their problems. This is vital as the upgrading of these areas and the formalisation of housing would eradicate informality, reduce poverty, and inequality. These challenges necessitate the city to design integrated and comprehensive policies to tackle these areas.

The study also made some salient recommendations as it revealed that a shift in policy is vital as the previous local and national government policy towards the Upgrading of Informal Settlement Program (UISP) of 2014 has not improved these areas. Therefore, there is a need for a new policy framework that will upgrade these areas with formal houses reticulated with electricity, water, sanitation, and waste removal services with drainage infrastructure. This action will substantially transform the socio-economic well-being of these communities and alleviate poverty and also contribute towards sustainable human development in these areas. These changes will usher in social change in services and these changes if well manage can substantially reduce these health problems. Its effect could reduce social crime, gang violence, and Gender-Based Violence, and also improve labour productivity, and the welfare of women, children, the aged, and disabled.

## **Declarations**

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## Figures

### Figure 1

Legend not included with this version

Source: Authors' research 2018



Figure 2

Toilet facilities and non-existent facilities during night

Source: Authors' Research 2018



Figure 3

Flood-prone townships and informal settlements – annual occurrences

Source: Authors' Research 2018