

# INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS HANDBOOK

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## INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Informal settlements are residential areas that do not comply with local authority requirements for conventional (formal) townships. They are, typically, unauthorised and are invariably located upon land that has not been proclaimed for residential use. They exist because urbanisation has grown faster than the ability of government to provide land, infrastructure and homes.

Informal settlements tend to be characterised by:

Infrastructure that is inadequate  
Environments that are unsuitable  
Population densities that are uncontrolled and unhealthily high  
Dwellings that are inadequate  
Poor access to health & education facilities and employment opportunities  
Lack of effective government and management.

They are consequently areas of increasingly high risk with regard to health, fire and crime.

However, informal settlements are also often characterized by:

Significant personal investment in dwellings  
Strong social infrastructure  
Effective community leadership  
Strong linkages with the more formally-housed community

These factors, coupled with insufficient land and finance to “just solve the housing problem” dictate that informal settlements be regarded as places of vitality and opportunity—and not simply as places to be eradicated.

This handbook has been written to encourage the acknowledgement, acceptance and improvement of informal settlements and their communities— for there is no real alternative.

## PURPOSE OF THE HANDBOOK

This handbook has been produced to help local authorities understand and address the issues presented by the growth and increasing density of informal settlements in the Western Cape Province. It has been published by the Provincial Department of Housing and compiled by a steering committee of members of the Department and the City of Cape Town Housing Branch 's

It is a file of resources, written by people from many backgrounds but who have a particular interest in and experience of informal settlement issues. Many are involved in local government, some in provincial government, and others are in private sector or academic positions. It is believed that their shared perspectives are worth recording and making accessible to those who deal with informal settlements on a daily basis.

The Handbook is not intended to be the “last word” on informal settlements - it is more like the “first word”. It has been presented in a file so that its contents can be added to and improved at any time. Not only will revisions of pages and sections be made available, but its structure enables the user to add notes and documents from other sources that may prove useful.

This is *your* handbook, to be used in whatever way is helpful to you. It is hoped that you will not only find it useful, but will be able to contribute your experience to future editions. We need feedback - please send us any interesting and relevant information that could be incorporated in the Handbook. Let us know if something is missing, incorrect or should be expanded. Let us know about *your* experience, and what others may learn from it. And let us have any of your questions that the Handbook might have left unanswered - we will search for some good possibilities for you and either answer you personally or publish them in the next revision.

This Handbook can also be accessed at [www.westerncape.gov.za](http://www.westerncape.gov.za), at which comments and questions can be registered.

Communication may also be made with the  
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Enjoy the Handbook - and please keep in touch!


## HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK

This Handbook has a number of different components:

- A quick guide to dealing with Informal Settlement problems. This suggests what procedure to follow and makes reference to the relevant part of the Handbook.
- This Introduction (Pink)
- The Contents (Green)
- The Index (Orange)
- The text is in 3 Parts, arranged in priority order.

 **Part A (Blue)** provides an understanding of the basic issues, responsibilities and legal framework associated with informal settlements. It goes on to describe the Province's goals with regard to informal settlements and the principles that must guide any action that is taken. **Part A is therefore essential reading - it is the foundation upon which our approach to informal settlements is built.**

 **Part B (Yellow)** provides the tools that can be used in a particular context for involving the appropriate people, defining problems, identifying and prioritising needs and for planning strategically. **This Preparation Part is vital because it enables us to understand an informal settlement before taking specific action.**

 **Part C (White)** is the largest part of the Handbook because it contains details of all the options available to us for making a difference in an informal settlement. It is divided into four components, which match the goals that are described in Part A.

### PLEASE NOTE:-

**Part A** is for reading now - and for thinking about - so that when a crisis happens or an opportunity arises we respond in a manner that will obtain broad support and have a good chance of success.

**Part B** guides us in how to prepare strategically to address a particular informal settlement issue.

**Part C** is a description of how to implement a wide spectrum of strategies.

**Resist the temptation to read Part C first! Ensure that your general approach is correct by first absorbing Parts A and B.**

## THE FRAMEWORK

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theContents(Green)sectionandusetheIndex(Orange).

Wherevertheauthorsbelievethatasectionofthetextrelatestoanother  
sectionacross-referencehasbeengiven.Usersareencouragedtocheck  
theseout.

## THECONTRIBUTORS

The compilation of this Handbook has been made possible by the enthusiastic participation of many people - each with experience in addressing issues related to informal settlements. Most of them have written and/or edited sections of the Handbook. The contribution of the following is therefore gratefully acknowledged:

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