

## **Mapping the lives of the elderly in informal settlements: A case study of Fairyland, Paarl**

Although a large body of literature regarding informal settlement dwellers exists, researchers agree that deeper research into the lives of the elderly in informal settlements is required so that opportunities for their needs can be addressed and policies guiding social and urban planning can improve their quality of life. In attempting to answer this gap in literature, this research project was conducted among elderly settlement dwellers in the town of Paarl in the Western Cape, South Africa during 2015. The study found that the number of elderly people surviving in informal settlements in the region is unpredictably high and growing, a reality which has generally escaped the notice of local authorities, social development practitioners and researchers. Living for the most part '*under the radar*' a number of elderly people are surviving in marginalised circumstances, often frail, impoverished and alone. Acknowledging the high illiteracy rate of elderly informal settlement dwellers, this research paper argues that education plays an integral role in the improvement of wellbeing. This research discusses why increasing numbers of people of advanced age are living in informal settlements, tracing the steps that brought them there. It describes the realities of informal life and the livelihood strategies adopted for survival in these risk-prone environments, concluding with suggestions for future research.

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