

# Rapid Impact Assessment

of NMTT's work in  
Imizamo Yethu, Cape Town,  
from 2003 to 2005

Niall Mellon  
Township  
Trust



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Summary Report

“

**A man is  
not a man  
until he has  
a house of  
his own. ”**

**NELSON MANDELA**

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# Executive Summary

Although the 1996 South African Constitution states that access to adequate housing is a right for South African citizens, there are still approximately 4.3 million people currently living in shacks in South Africa<sup>1</sup>.

These people are living without toilets or running water in their homes, and are highly susceptible to rain, wind and fire. While the government has employed various strategies to provide formal housing for the poor, it has not been able to deal adequately with the severe backlog. The Niall Mellon Township Trust (NMTT), established in 2002 aims to assist with the major housing problem in South Africa and began its house-building operations in the township of Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay, Cape Town. Between 2003 and 2005 the NMTT built 448 houses in this township, and has since then expanded its work to other sites across the Western Cape.

This report presents the findings of a rapid impact assessment of the NMTT's work in Imizamo Yethu (IY) from 2003 to 2005, focusing on the quality of life impacts for direct beneficiaries (those living in NMTT-built houses). The study was conducted using a rigorous qualitative design, including numerous participatory focus groups with beneficiaries, using the Most Significant Change (MSC) story-telling method, as well as interviews with various stakeholders. The findings revealed that there have been major positive changes in beneficiaries' lives as a result of living in an NMTT house rather than in a shack. The seven key domains of change, as identified through the beneficiary's stories and then verified in a second round beneficiary focus group, were:

- 1. Health:** Protection from rain, damp, wind and fire has resulted in a reduction in fevers, burns and common illnesses such as impetigo<sup>2</sup>, gastroenteritis and flu, while lessening the severity of asthma and tuberculosis. Running water and private indoor bathrooms have also increased hygiene levels and reduced exposure to germs and infection.
- 2. Education:** Students' books and school clothes are now safe from rain and fire and they have a

quiet and warm space to study with less disruption and adequate lighting.

- 3. Dignity:** Strong feelings of pride and triumph have developed from living in a house, which have led to a heightened sense of self-worth, identity and confidence.
- 4. Safety and security:** Beneficiaries are protected from shack fires, rain, water seepage and wind, and feel that their families and belongings are safer from crime.
- 5. Psychological wellbeing:** A house has resulted in reduced stress about fire, rain and the safety of one's children. This has impacted positively on people's states of mind, reduced levels of stress and increased good social interaction. Owning a house has also resulted in a general sense of increased hope and motivation.
- 6. Enablers:** A variety of convenience factors such as having a geyser, a household electricity supply, running water and a home street address have enabled some of the other described outcomes to occur.
- 7. Having a home:** A house has provided roots and a sense of stability which has improved family cohesion. It has also provided more living space and allowed the beneficiaries to have privacy.

NMTT's work has also had impacts for indirect beneficiaries. Small business owners have been able to start enterprises from their new homes, using the amenities in the house, without which they would not have been able to operate at the same level. Contractors and labourers have gained valuable skills through their work during the NMTT construction, and have also gained valuable income which had a positive impact on their lives. Impacts for the Imizamo Yethu community as a whole have been the formalising of the neighbourhood, the building of community facilities and the personal input (sponsorships and

<sup>1</sup> TNS Research Surveys (2007)

<sup>2</sup> Impetigo is a skin disorder caused by bacterial infection and characterised by crusting skin lesions. Impetigo is most common in children, particularly children in unhealthy living conditions. Medline Plus: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000860.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000860.htm)

## Executive Summary (continued)

bursaries) of Irish volunteers in the community. The work has also increased integration in the greater Hout Bay area, with more people from the white community now feeling safe to enter Imizamo Yethu. NMTT has also had some impact on the new housing sector and on government, particularly regarding creating new standards in, and new policies for, the sector.

The Imizamo Yethu experience resulted in a few unintended negative outcomes, which the NMTT have learnt from and which have informed their work since. For example, there is a perception amongst some stakeholders that the provision of houses encouraged an influx into the community, resulting in serious overcrowding, and that the project could have been better planned to incorporate the whole community rather than a pocket of beneficiaries. There is also a perception that the NMTT worked with only one set of community representatives through the allocation and building process, while others were neglected, resulting in the marginalisation of some groups. In addition, because NMTT built the houses first and dealt with the administration later in Imizamo Yethu, this caused a backlog in recouping government subsidies. As a result of these lessons, NMTT has since professionalised many of their operations and processes, adjusted their model of housing provision, reduced their post-build presence in communities and strengthened relationships with partner organisations.

The significant positive impacts that the NMTT houses have had on beneficiaries' lives have been clearly confirmed by the findings of this report. Moreover, the NMTT work has already had a ripple effect into the Imizamo Yethu community, the Greater Hout Bay area, NMTT itself and into the new housing sector in South Africa as a whole.



# 1. Context

## 1.1 Housing in South Africa

Section 26 of the Constitution of South Africa (adopted in 1996) states that everyone has the right to have "access to adequate housing". It is therefore the responsibility of the government to have suitable legislation and housing policies in place, whilst providing housing within its resources to those citizens who are unable to obtain housing without assistance. The South African government has been able to build more than 2.3 million houses since 1994, yet there are still at least 4.3 million people (approximately 11% of the South African population) still living in shacks.<sup>3</sup> To meet its target of eradicating informal settlements by 2014<sup>4</sup>, the government has incorporated various strategies for housing provision since 1994, from contractor-led development projects to community-based approaches such as the People's Housing Process.

## 1.2 Housing in the Western Cape

The state of housing in the Western Cape is above the national standard, with approximately 2.7 million people living in brick houses, and 286 000 residing in shacks.<sup>5</sup> However, according to the City of Cape Town there is still an ever-increasing backlog of 350 000 houses, partly due to the constant population influx into the Western Cape.<sup>6</sup> Statistics for the City of Cape Town show that 136 000 families are residing in informal settlements in the Cape Town area.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.3 Housing in Imizamo Yethu

Imizamo Yethu - situated in Hout Bay, Cape Town - was effectively established in 1991, after five separate groups of shack-dwelling people, each squatting in different areas of the Hout Bay valley, were brought together on 18 hectares of government land on the current IY site. The government began servicing the area, but these 455 black families remained in shacks on the new land as formal housing was not provided.

The Greater Hout Bay community, along with the "original families", were engaged in a participatory planning process for the development of the newly formed township.

The 'Offisiële Koerant van die Provinsie Die Kaap die Goeie Hoop'<sup>8</sup> P.N 383/1993 on 23 July 1993, stated that the land was designated to be developed as a less formal settlement, with 18 hectares to be used for residential purposes. However, formalisation of the area was slow, which allowed the rapid growth in the population of Imizamo Yethu.

By 2003, there were approximately 7874 people living there<sup>9</sup>. Up until this time only a few houses had been built in the community. The growth of the area was further complicated by the change in local political leadership, with a moratorium being placed on the eviction of any new dwellers by new authorities and a lack of commitment to community agreements made with previous local authorities.

<sup>3</sup> TNS Research Surveys (2007)

<sup>4</sup> Department of Housing. Housing Statistics. (2007)

<sup>5</sup> TNS Research Surveys (2007)

<sup>6</sup> City of Cape Town. (2007)

<sup>7</sup> City of Cape Town (2007)

<sup>8</sup> Government Gazette (1993)

<sup>9</sup> Development Action Group (2003)

## 2. Project Description

The Niall Mellon Township Trust was established towards the end of 2002 by Niall Mellon, using personal funds.

### 2.1 Project objectives

In NMTT's inception stage, the primary implicit aim was to build as many houses in Imizamo Yethu as quickly as possible. The following objectives, while not formally documented at the time, were also implicit in NMTT's work:

- To help those living in poverty to achieve the basic human right of adequate shelter
- To build capacity in these communities by training unskilled workers
- To improve the living conditions of the poor in a sustainable way and thus reduce their dependency on aid
- To increase the spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy by attracting people from all walks of life to become involved in the project.

### 2.2 Project activities

Niall Mellon initially became involved in Imizamo Yethu by providing education bursaries to some of the students. After further interaction with the community and an assessment of their needs, he set up the Niall Mellon Township Trust (NMTT) to address the housing situation in the community. NMTT worked with the community's civic and housing organisations through their leaders and representatives, and took over the facilitation of the housing development process from the Development Action Group (DAG) and Habitat for Humanity - two housing non-profit organisations who had begun work with the community.

NMTT decided to adopt the Habit for Housing model, in which beneficiaries receive an interest-free loan to add to their housing subsidy for the building of their new house. Half of the cost of the house was borne by NMTT, while the remainder was covered by the beneficiary and the government subsidy together. Those eligible for NMTT houses needed to own a serviced site, be entitled to a government housing subsidy, and have saved R300 per month for six months to demonstrate their ability to pay instalments on the interest-free loan. To get the process started, NMTT began building houses for beneficiaries without the presence of an actual title deed, but rather on the receipt of payment for the application for a title deed,

paying all the costs upfront with a plan to recoup the subsidies retrospectively. To date, the NMTT is still in the process of recouping these subsidies.

Labour for construction was sourced directly from the community, as well as from Irish volunteers participating in building 'Blitzes' held each year. The Blitzes presented an opportunity for Irish volunteers to impart construction skills to local labourers and contractors, as well as provide partial funding for the construction by raising money in Ireland before arriving in South Africa for their volunteering effort. Between 2003 to 2005, the combined efforts of the local labour force and the Irish volunteers have resulted in the building of 448 houses in Imizamo Yethu, ranging in size from 38m<sup>2</sup> to 72m<sup>2</sup>:

Year	Number of houses built
2003	73
2004	146
2005	229
<b>Total</b>	<b>448</b>

Table 1: Number of houses built by NMTT in Imizamo Yethu

### 2.3 Beneficiaries

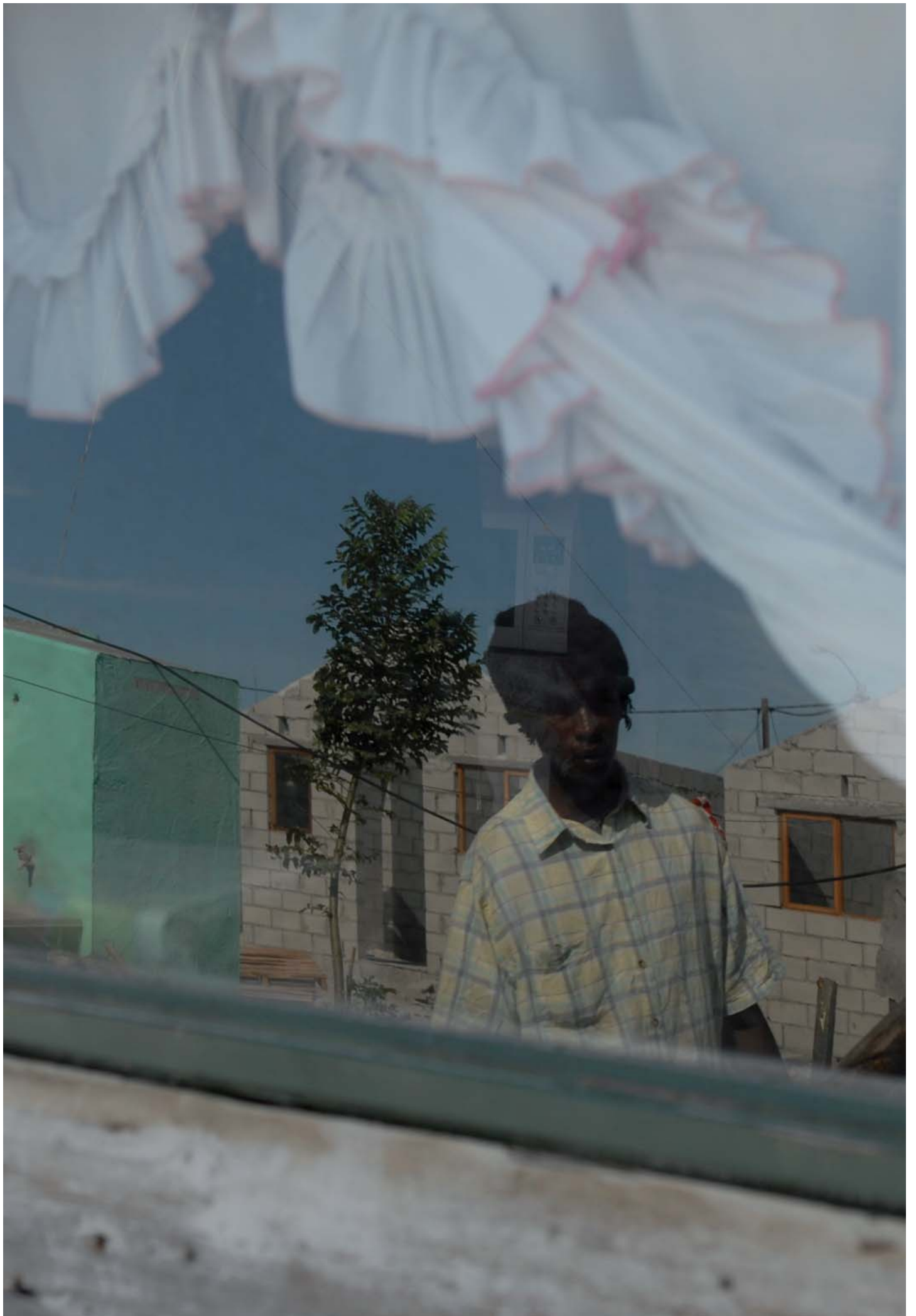
Direct beneficiaries of the Imizamo Yethu project are:

- inhabitants of Imizamo Yethu who received houses
- the general community of Imizamo Yethu
- those who received skills training and/or jobs as a result of the building (eg construction workers)
- Irish and South African volunteers.

Other indirect beneficiaries include local businesses, shebeen owners, township tour companies and arts and crafts sellers.

### 2.4 Project stakeholders

Project stakeholders for the Imizamo Yethu project included NMTT staff, community structures and organisations, South African government representatives, local and Irish volunteers, other donors and partner organisations in housing. A stakeholder map can be found in Appendix 1.





# 3. Research Description

## 3.1 Purpose of the research

The primary aim of the research was to evaluate the impact of the NMTT's work in Imizamo Yethu, specifically examining direct quality of life outcomes and impacts on direct beneficiaries. Secondary aims were to investigate outcomes and impacts for indirect beneficiaries, impacts for NMTT itself, and impacts for other stakeholder groups.

### Reasons for the evaluation

Some of the stated reasons for the evaluation from NMTT staff were:

- To prove anecdotal evidence of health and educational benefits of housing
- To learn from the process and inform future planning
- To broaden knowledge
- To demonstrate the benefits of funding NMTT
- To motivate for more houses in the community
- To identify any unintended negative outcomes
- To demonstrate the project's "value for money"
- To ensure transparency in NMTT's work
- To inform the development of the monitoring system and long-term impact study.

## 3.2 Research design, tools and participants

This rapid assessment evaluation used a qualitative, case study approach which sought to investigate beneficiaries' perceptions of impacts. It is important to note that while attempts to verify these perceptions have been made by using a triangulated approach<sup>10</sup>, no quantitative verification has been used in this particular study.

The evaluation research was conducted in two phases:

### Phase 1

Separate focus groups for students (grade 11s), primary care-givers, income-earning adults and senior citizens were held. An adaptation of the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique was employed in these focus groups in order to elicit the impacts of the NMTT houses by allowing each participant to tell their own story of how the house has changed their life. This was a purposeful attempt to allow the beneficiaries to tell the researchers what the most important changes were, without the research team pre-supposing any quality of life changes. The resultant stories were analysed by the research team, and the most significant stories and dominant themes of change (or 'domains of change') were identified.

### Phase 2

Interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders (see Table 2 below) were conducted, as well as a further beneficiary focus group with a sample of all first phase groups wherein findings from the first phase focus groups were verified.

PARTICIPANTS	METHOD	TOTAL COUNT
Phase 1		
Direct beneficiaries	4 MSC focus groups	70
Phase 2		
Direct beneficiaries	1 focus group	16
Indirect beneficiaries	2 focus groups	22
Other stakeholder groups	3 focus groups	22
Government and partner organisations	Interviews	9
IY community leaders	Interviews	5
NMTT staff	Interviews	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>147</b>

**Table 2:** Research participants and methods

<sup>10</sup> Research triangulation aims to enhance credibility and validity of qualitative results by multiple data collecting, sources, procedures and strategies and the analysis of data through collaborating with other researchers.

“

**Niall Mellon is like Moses from the Bible who released the Israelites from persecutions in Egypt and took them to Canaan, to a world of milk and honey.**

”

“

**I feel like I'm in heaven. I have found my heaven on earth with my new house.**

”



# 4. Findings

## 4.1 Impact on direct beneficiaries

### 4.1.1 Most significant change stories

The most significant change stories were filtered through a beneficiary small group selection process to get four stories per focus group and then through a selection from the research team to choose one story per focus group. The two beneficiary stories presented below are the two that have been finally chosen as the most significant stories overall by NMTT management. These particular stories were chosen primarily because they represent the range of issues that arose in the MSC stories. The other two stories chosen by the research team can be found in Appendix 2.

All stories were translated from Xhosa to English by the Xhosa-speaking facilitators. The MSC stories provided rich detail of impacts for beneficiaries. However, what cannot be presented here is the level of emotional intensity with which many of the stories were relayed in the focus groups and the deep appreciation for the houses that were relayed to the research team by the research participants. In addition, beneficiaries expressed appreciation for the research itself and the space to tell their stories.



# Story 1

“

I was born in a shack. I have stayed there all my life, bridging electricity<sup>11</sup> from other people, toilets that were too far from the home and were not safe to go to night. In 2004 our shack was one of the shacks that burnt to the ground.

We had to stay at my mother's workplace - in the back room, all 6 of us in one room. The room was also leaking and had asbestos roof, which is where I picked up chest problems. We also had to contend with the boss's moods.

2005... My mother then bought a 1 ¼ bungalow [single-roomed timber shed] and put it up at Westlake [Tokai]. We stayed for a year and came back when we heard about the Mellon project. However there were other people living in my mother's plot so we had to rent space to put the bungalow. Once more we were all cramped in the bungalow. During winter, it would rain and all our clothes would be soaking wet. We had nothing to wear to school so we did not go.

Gerald helped my mother and the people who were staying on our plot were moved. Then my eldest sister passed away and we had no place to have the funeral. We had it at my aunt's house which was brick house. After that we lost our cousin. On the other hand they had started building our house. Then heavy rains came in June and we couldn't take the flooded place anymore. We moved that same night into our Mellon house which was not finished. The stoep [verandah] had not been erected, there were no floors and we had to borrow a key from someone to get in. People tried to talk us out of moving in to an incomplete house, they said we would get sick but we did not care.

The following day the people from NMTT also came and said we were not supposed to be there, but there was no way we were going back to the flooded shack. They later came back to finish up and fix the house. There were more of us now, with two of late sister's children having come from the Eastern Cape.

Life improved as soon as we moved into the Mellon house. My mother started buying furniture for the house and this created a lot of tension and jealousy from neighbours. This did not dampen our happiness about having a home at last- especially since we did not even have what you could call a family home back in Eastern Cape to talk of. My mother had given us a home at last.

Unfortunately we lost another sister in 2006. This makes me sad in that we all struggled together in a small shack, and today when we finally have a big and comfortable home - our family members cannot be there to enjoy it with us. I know it may sound bad, but I believe that if there had never been that fire in 2004, maybe we would not have had these houses built for us. Some good came out of something bad."

”

<sup>11</sup> Practice of diverting electricity from a house or shack into other shacks using extension cables.

## Story 2



I arrived in Hout Bay in 1972 at the height of apartheid. I raised my all my children and some have their own homes today. Life was very hard then, we lived in plastic shacks .We would go to work and not know if our homes would be there when we got back. Bulldozers would destroy the shacks, all our belongings and food destroyed.

If it wasn't that it would be the rain or a fire. We were moved from squatter to squatter until we came to Hout Bay - near Disa River. I must say that in the midst of our suffering, we enjoyed the clearest, purest water from the mountain.

It was heartbreaking to realise that we left our homes in the Eastern Cape for a better future in the Cape and ended up living in terrible conditions, not fit human beings. You would be ashamed to have people visiting you from home [Eastern Cape]. You would be a laughing stock because they couldn't understand how you could leave your home in the rural areas to stay in a shack. We were ashamed to have visitors, every year the shack needs fixing, sealing the leaks, plastering,

If we were having babies, the midwife would not be able to find your home because there was no address in Disa River.

The health problems (chest and legs) I have today are as a result of years of wet and cold in the shacks. I moved into the Mellon house in 2003. I am overjoyed that after so many years of suffering in the shacks I have a proper house today. Today we are like other people - proud of our homes. We are no longer living like pigs, which is the case when you live in a shack, because no matter how often you clean, it is always dirty. Today we are not ashamed to have visitors

coming to our houses. We are enjoying hot water, the security of locking your house when you leave. My health is much better than it was before."

Today I when I go to work, I lock my house and know that it will be safe. Even when I come back wet from the rain, I know I can get into a hot bath. Today even when I work as a domestic worker, I look at my madam's house and say "mine is just like this -with electricity and hot water". Today I do shopping like the madam. I get 'Windowlene, Handy Andy..' [household cleaning products], the same.

When my boss is renovating her house I know I will get good things I'll be able to put to good use in my new home. Some of us have washing machines in our homes today. Of course there are problems, but we are very happy and grateful to have proper houses over our heads.

**Mellon has given us our dignity, pride and self respect back. No one ever thought that black people would stay in Hout Bay."**



#### 4.1.2 Domains of change

Seven key "domains of change" were identified through the beneficiary focus groups, each representing significant changes that had occurred in beneficiaries' lives as a consequence of living in a NMTT house, as outlined in Table 3 below:

<p><b>1. Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No longer wet and cold: less sickness and fever</li> <li>▪ Improved asthma and chest problems: less damp</li> <li>▪ TB less severe</li> <li>▪ Own toilet: less exposure to others' germs</li> <li>▪ Have house address so house can be found easily in emergencies</li> </ul>	<p><b>5. Psychological Wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hope</li> <li>▪ Motivation</li> <li>▪ Dreams come true</li> <li>▪ Less stress - about safety and shelter, fires, rain etc</li> <li>▪ Less stress about children being unsafe</li> <li>▪ Less stressed, treat others better</li> <li>▪ Less quarrels with neighbours</li> <li>▪ Children happier</li> <li>▪ Fresh mind - ability to focus on future</li> <li>▪ Less tension in house</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Books and school clothes safe from rain and fire</li> <li>▪ Geyser and running water: easy to get ready in the morning so not late for school</li> <li>▪ Space in house: privacy, less disruption, can study in peace</li> <li>▪ Electricity in house: lighting to study</li> </ul>	<p><b>6. Enablers</b></p> <p>Convenience factors that enable other outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Heated water: don't have to fetch water</li> <li>▪ Don't have to take illegal electricity supply</li> <li>▪ Get ready for work and school easier so not late</li> <li>▪ Electricity: light for studying</li> <li>▪ Can be found easily at my house, have a street address</li> <li>▪ Can relax after work</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Dignity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pride</li> <li>▪ Self-respect</li> <li>▪ Confidence</li> <li>▪ Self-worth</li> <li>▪ Triumph and success</li> <li>▪ Sense of identity</li> </ul>	<p><b>7. Having a home: roots, stability and privacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stability</li> <li>▪ Family cohesion, inc having all children under one roof and being able to accommodate guests</li> <li>▪ Private space</li> <li>▪ Feeling of security with own plot - a shack could be moved/destroyed</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Safety And Security</b></p> <p>Safety (shelter) from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shack fire</li> <li>▪ Rain and water seepage</li> <li>▪ Wind that blows shacks down</li> <li>▪ Fire because no paraffin and no bridging of electricity</li> </ul> <p>Security from crime:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Children are safe</li> <li>▪ Furniture is safe</li> <li>▪ Safe from violent crime (rape, mugging)</li> <li>▪ Don't have to walk to toilet</li> </ul>	

**Table 3:** Key domains of change, with descriptions, as verified by beneficiaries

### 4.1.3 Rating domains of change

The 16 Phase 2 beneficiaries were also involved in a participative rating exercise where they were asked to rate the effect of **having a house** on each theme of change, and the effect of **not having a house** on each domain. Table 4, below, displays the outcome of this exercise, showing the number of participants who reported a negative, neutral or positive effect of having, and not having a house, on each domain of change:

	Health			Education			Dignity			Safety/ Security			Psychological well-being			Enablers			Stability/ Roots		
	-	0	+	-	0	+	-	0	+	-	0	+	-	0	+	-	0	+	-	0	+
<b>Without house</b>	14	2	0	13	3	0	11	5	0	12	2	2	14	1	1	16	1	0	13	0	3
<b>With house</b>	0	2	14	0	2	14	0	0	16	0	3	13	2*	0	14	0	1	16	1*	1	14

**Table 4:** Results of the Domains of Change rating exercise

Table 4 gives an overall picture of the impact of houses on participants' lives. The results clearly show that living in a house has an overall positive impact on every domain of change for beneficiaries. For example, for "Health", 14 participants stated a negative impact on health **without** a house, two stated no impact, and none stated a positive impact.

For the case **with** a house, none stated a negative impact, two stated no impact, and 14 stated a positive impact.

There are only two entries where the negative (red) intersects with the "With house" row (indicated with an asterisk): in the domains of stability/roots and psychological well-being. This lack of significant change between living in a shack or living in a house were indicated by people who are living in the NMTT houses as tenants, but who don't actually own them. This has meant that these particular beneficiaries have not experienced the same sense of emotional security or a significant feeling of "having a home" as those who are living in the house that they own.

#### 4.1.4 Domains of change: A closer look at outcomes and impacts

A closer analysis of the domains of change follows, informed by the beneficiary focus groups and interviews with other key stakeholders:

### Domain 1: Health

Dry and clean houses have meant that there is less illness and a lower spread of the infection that comes with unhygienic and cold conditions. No longer having to live in the cold and wet has had important health outcomes:

*"I have children who use to get sick all the time because of the wetness, but now I don't take them to the clinic as much as I used to. I also don't get sick as I used to".*

Beneficiaries with TB also noted that they felt much better since moving into a house and the incidence of rashes were reported to have decreased.

Primary school teachers reported a difference between learners in houses and those in shacks: "For those living in the shacks, in winter they got wet, their clothes are wet when they come to school. And the books too. Or they have no uniform because it is wet". In addition to the reduction of cold and damp, formal houses provide a cleaner living environment with running water. Those who live in houses now have more control over the conditions of their living space, which has allowed people greater control of their own hygiene and health:

*"We lived in filth [in the shacks] - the streets were dirty, the toilets were so dirty that I couldn't go in"*

**"Having a private toilet and running water means that we don't have to share a toilet with other people and pick up germs. As a result our health has improved"**

A head nursing sister at one of the clinics noted that:

*"Prior to the building of the houses, we had impetigo<sup>12</sup> due to the lack of running water, and we had lots of gastroenteritis... These cases have reduced... There is a definite decrease in gastro(enteritis)' - we don't see those at the rate we used to see."*

Teachers confirmed these observations, saying:

*"The children are cleaner, they don't have fleas any more, or scabies, or lice... We used to see lots of children with sores. We very seldom see*

*children with sores in their heads...It's been better across the board. I don't know when last I saw a child with a sore on his head."*

The local nursing sister also noted that burn cases, particularly in younger children, had reduced over the last few years. *"We used to get burns every day in winter - but now we have had only a few this whole winter. These are not statistics - they are just things I have noticed"*. The overall health benefits are especially important, according to a local community health worker, because of the high incidence/ prevalence of HIV in Imizamo Yethu, with an estimated minimum of 2000 IY residents living with HIV/AIDS and about 500 on ARVs. The houses allow health workers to access residents more easily and to provide better care for them because the houses have the amenities they need. This means that they can reach more beneficiaries and therefore provide more comprehensive healthcare in the community.

### Domain 2: Education

The primary outcomes for students, because of their houses, have been improved school attendance and time-keeping, which are essentially enabling factors. Leaking shacks often lead to wet school uniforms and damaged school books, preventing some students from attending school or studying. Students also frequently lost their uniforms and books when their shacks were destroyed by fire or strong winds. Now they have a safe clean space to store them:

*"Another big problem in the shacks was the fires that often destroyed everything. We students suffered the most because our books and uniform would be destroyed and because of this learners would lag behind in the studies. Some would not write their exams and they would fail."*

*"During winter, it would rain and all our clothes would be soaking wet. We had nothing to wear to school so we did not go."*

Another enabling factor noted is the improvement in studying conditions for learners, as they have space, electric light, warmth and quiet.

*"With sufficient rooms in the house, learners can study much easier and this has improved our performance at school."*

*"I can now study in peace - unlike in the shacks, where there was always noise because of the shebeens all over the place. My life is much better than before."*

<sup>12</sup> Impetigo is a skin disorder caused by bacterial infection and characterised by crusting skin lesions. Impetigo is most common in children in unhealthy living conditions. Medline Plus: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000860.htm](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000860.htm)



Fetching and heating water in the morning is often the duty of a younger member of the family and this duty often resulted in learners arriving late for school. This problem has been eradicated as those who live in a house now have a geyser and running water. There were a few reports from different sources that children are forming study groups and studying together in their peers' houses, which means that more children are enjoying educational benefits from the houses than the direct beneficiaries. In addition, there are also reports of children from shacks spending time and weekends at the houses of their friends, thereby also extending the benefits to other children.

Primary school teachers have noticed a difference in the quality of projects produced between those learners who have more access to facilities (eg computers) from living in a house rather than a shack.

### Domain 3: Dignity

Dignity and pride was one of the most pervasive themes amongst all beneficiary groups, appearing in some form in most of the MSC stories. Beneficiaries and other stakeholders noted that there has been a restoration of dignity to the people of Imizamo Yethu and particularly to those who own homes.

Beneficiaries *"are no longer ashamed of where they live"*, are able to buy things for their home and are proud to be owners. Many noted that they feel a sense of confidence and self-worth and that they finally feel *"like a human being"*. Living in shacks had a significant negative affect on individuals' sense of dignity and pride, while living in a house transformed people's sense of worth:

*"Mellon has given us our dignity, pride and self respect back. No one ever thought that black people would stay in Hout Bay."*

*"I am now not ashamed to invite my relatives from Durban, Jo'burg ... to visit me because now I have enough space to accommodate them. Before I was never able to invite them to come over because I was ashamed about the shack I lived in and there was no space to accommodate other people. I now feel proud and very boastful about my house. I always keep it clean."*

*"I am overjoyed that after so many years of suffering in the shacks I have a proper house today. Today we are like other people - proud of our homes."*

Teachers have witnessed this sense of pride in children, which they believe can lead to important impacts. They noted that learners do not get teased as much as they used to when they lived in a shack because they are cleaner and can have friends around to their houses.

### Domain 4: Safety and security

The houses have provided shelter to beneficiaries, which affords them protection from the elements. Shacks are often destroyed by fires caused by overturned and unattended paraffin stoves and candles. The provision of houses with electricity and geysers has eliminated the need for paraffin and candles and hence reduced the potential fire hazard.

*"Since I got the house I can now buy beautiful furniture that I like because I know I'm staying in safe place and do not have to worry about fire. Our furniture was never safe in the shack - because you would come back and the shack would have burnt down."*



In addition, houses protect residents from rain and wind. Those who are living in houses also note that they, their families and their possessions are far more secure:

*"Today I'm able to lock my house when I go somewhere and not worry about burglars. When I stayed in a shack, even if you locked - criminals could still tear a side of the metal and go in."*

*"Even if my wife is not home, I can leave my children and know they are safe in the house."*

*"I used to be scared going to the toilet because it was far from my house and it was used by everyone."*

Although many beneficiaries feel that there is reduced crime, other stakeholders felt that the houses had attracted more people (and criminals) into the area, which has increased crime levels. A few beneficiaries felt that people with houses have bought more possessions worth stealing, and therefore attracted criminals.

## Domain 5: Psychological well-being

One of the outcomes of having adequate shelter is being "liberated" from anxiety, fear and stress. In the focus groups, it was evident that much of the trauma that people experienced while living in informal housing has been eliminated. There were quite a few emotional moments when research participants began talking

about their past experiences.

*"I no longer worry about fires, and winds that used to blow our roofs away, and floods."*

*"When it's been raining, I just see when I go outside in the morning. No more worries, anxiety about rain and fire like it was in the shack."*

*"I would be sitting while cooking and would suddenly hear people shouting "kubomvu" [its red] and would leave everything, like my cooking, and flee. I lived like that under these trying conditions. I am now happy and am no longer on the run."*

In addition, the reduced anxiety that arose from the vastly improved safety and security has allowed people to focus their minds elsewhere, for example on work and education:

*"I can now go to work and concentrate without having to worry that your shack is being destroyed."*

*"I am saddened by my time I have wasted [living in a shack] as I would not think about anything constructive. I would really like to be educated now that I think more positively. My mind feels fresh. Now I am living a good life. I can achieve. There is light. My only wish is to have an education."*

A major impact reported by beneficiaries has been their change in outlook and mood, and the subsequently impact on their families and neighbours:

*"For me the change that is important is in my heart. I am less stressed and feel good. I now speak with grace unlike before where I used to be talking all the time due to the stressful life I had."*

*"It felt like a new life. I could sleep well. Life just got better even with the children. I used to be a very temperamental person because of the life of living in a shack. I knew that this was not good - the way in which I used to speak. Things got better and it felt good. I also noticed that the children were happier because we now live well."*

Having a house, particularly such a big and luxurious one, is a dream for many people and therefore the reality of owning a house has been the fulfillment of dreams for many people: *"I never thought that I would get a house in my life. Now I know things can happen."* This sense of achieving one's dreams is a huge motivation and has provided beneficiaries with renewed hope for what one can achieve in life.

## Domain 6: Enablers

Beneficiaries were very clear that living in a house as opposed to a shack has allowed them to experience a level of convenience that some of them had not experienced before. These enablers, mainly of convenience and comfort, are:

- " A solid roof over their head, which means that the rain can not get in and they do not need to place buckets and basins all over: *"It was difficult living in shacks, the rains would create a lot of trouble, leaking and flooding in the house"*
- " Hot water: *"We don't have to heat up water anymore"*
- " Electricity: *"Today we have our own electricity, we don't have to fight with neighbours - bridging their electricity"*
- " An indoor bathroom which means that they do not have to go outside in the cold and dark and they can take a bath or shower in private
- " Space to have vegetable gardens or to plant flowers.

The convenience factor is applicable for all groups, but, in particular, the above outcomes have meant that it is much easier for learners and working

individuals to get ready for work or school as they do not have to fetch water, heat the water and wait to use shared ablution facilities etc.

*"As a working person - the biggest convenience has been having everything in the house: hot water, the toilet. Getting ready in the morning is not a hassle anymore".*

*"Living in a brick house has been a blessing to us as learners. In the past, getting ready for school was such a mission. We had to heat water in a pot to wash and then wait to take turns to wash. This would make us late for school. The new houses have a geyser - with hot water ready on tap."*

Beneficiaries are more likely to reach their destinations on time, they are able to stay clean and are less susceptible to illness, which assists with confidence and work/school attendance respectively.

## Domain 7: Having a home - stability, roots and privacy

Having a home contributed strongly to a sense of stability and having roots.<sup>13</sup> Having a house has allowed beneficiaries to feel stable. Many of the beneficiaries had to move from place to place before getting their houses - either losing their shacks to the elements or being cast out of others' homes:

*"The biggest change in my life has been getting my own home, after so many years of suffering and waiting... Having a place of my own means so much to me."*

*"Our shack was burnt down and a lady who goes to our church offered us a place to stay in her shack... We were 6 people all living in a 1-roomed shack... There was no privacy. We had to ask the children of the house to give us privacy if we wanted to take a bath and they would refuse and say this was their home not ours."*

*"I even experienced my shack being blown away by strong winds."*

Beneficiary families can now live together and bond as a family, while still having their privacy: "I was also able to gather all my children to stay with me and I never have to worry about my children being scattered all over."

<sup>13</sup> The word 'roots' is used here as a direct translation from isiXhosa

## 4.2 Impact on indirect beneficiaries

The NMTT project has had impacts on a number of indirect beneficiaries, as outlined below:

### 4.2.1 SMME owners

Owning a house has the potential to assist nascent small business people in certain sectors. For example:

*"Getting a Niall Mellon house enabled me to start a catering business... enjoy... bigger and cleaner space to work from, with all the amenities inside the house. I would never consider starting this kind of business if I was still in a shack, because no one would buy food from someone who stays in a shack. They would consider it as dirty and unhygienic. Now I get a lot of business from all over Hout Bay, catering for functions, meetings and workshops. I also make African meals for tourists, which I would not have been able to do in shack. I make a reasonable profit and have started saving to buy my own cooking and catering equipment. My life has changed for the better."*

Another beneficiary noted that the NMTT house and its amenities provided the basis for her life-long dream of opening a crèche: *"If it wasn't for the big house I could not have opened the crèche. In a shack there are no toilets and running water."*

The increased tourism in the area due to the media attention, Irish volunteers and the presence of the houses has resulted in the development of a few micro industries such as township tours and local crafts. Shebeen (informal tavern) owners also cited definite increases in the patronage of tourists. For a few spaza shops<sup>14</sup> operating out of shacks, the impact of the houses has impacted negatively because other shops are operating from houses and therefore offer a better service. This has put some of the smaller, local shop-owners out of business.

### 4.2.2 Contractors

Most of the contractors who built the NMTT houses in Imizamo Yethu had some existing skills, but a few reported learning new building skills, such as bricklaying, beam-filling and plumbing. One contractor learnt valuable skills that lead him into working for himself outside of the construction industry: *"I learnt how to do a personal budget. I also learnt engineering on the project - and I use this skill also to learn a living, fixing TVs, cars etc."* For two participants, the NMTT construction work provided the skills and experience to allow them to move from a labourer position to a contractor one.

The income that contractors and labourers received during their involvement with the NMTT construction has had a significant positive effect on their lives and the quality of life improvements from the income have been transferred to their families: *"Having a job at NMTT improved my living conditions. I could afford things for my family."* Although many went on to work for NMTT in other areas, most do not have steady work.

## 4.3 Impact on broader IY community

### 4.3.1 General impacts

The high quality houses that NMTT have provided in Imizamo Yethu have lifted the façade of the area, making it look more like a suburb and less like a "slum". The increased attention in IY and the formalisation of the area has also meant that more people from the greater Hout Bay community are entering Imizamo Yethu as is no longer perceived *"a dangerous place for whites to go"*.<sup>15</sup> It is also more accessible for people who want to assist the community.

### 4.3.2 Additional support to the community

NMTT's involvement in the community has extended beyond the building of houses; they have also built community facilities and provided bursaries: *"Niall did not only build houses in HB, but he helped to build the nation as well"*.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the Irish volunteers themselves funded the building of a library at the primary school and provided sponsorships for sporting equipment, schoolbooks and some bursaries for learners. *"The arrival of the Irish volunteers was a highlight in the lives of children of IY. Social events were organised, the Mellon staff came to play with children - it was such a happy occasion."*<sup>17</sup>

### 4.3.3 Income generation

For many people, the renting of rooms and shacks is a primary source of income for themselves and their families. Some home-owners rent out their houses and then live in a shack in the back yard or somewhere else, while others rent out a room or two in the house and share the space with tenants.

### 4.3.4 Potential unintended negative impacts

While the impact on the Imizamo Yethu community has been positive on the whole, a few unintended negative outcomes have occurred. One of the major problems in Imizamo Yethu has been the influx of people into the area and the subsequent overcrowding. There is a perception amongst some stakeholders that the provision of housing in the

<sup>14</sup> Small retail store operated from a shack or house

<sup>15</sup> Interview with community organisation member

<sup>16</sup> Interview with IY community leader

<sup>17</sup> Interview with IY community leader



community contributed to the influx of people attracted by the possibility of receiving a house. Whether this is indeed the case, or whether the same rate of influx would have occurred without houses is not verifiable. In addition, providing a house for one family on one plot has meant that the other families who had shacks on that plot have been displaced.

Another unintended consequence of the project has been that the political tensions and divisions that exist within the Imizamo Yethu community have been intensified. While NMTT ensured that it worked through community leaders and organisations at all times, there were some political tensions between community civic organisations (mostly divided along political party support lines) that they were not aware of. By working with particular organisations and neglecting the others, there was a perception by some that NMTT was being partisan. As a member of one of the "marginalised" community groups noted:

*"I was one of the people who sat with Niall in the beginning. He didn't have a good understanding of what was going on... We were a bit concerned that he didn't consider other organisations. He was already so far in the process so he didn't want to stop".*

There are strong allegations from a number of different sources that the community group that NMTT entrusted to lead the housing project had other agendas that they were limited to the provision of houses to beneficiaries. There were claims that plot-owners who did not share their political views were mysteriously left off the housing lists and plots were illegally sold to 'new-comers' into the community (who allegedly did share the leaders' political views). Although NMTT were not aware of these dealings and did not support them in any way, there was a responsibility for them to monitor the community leaders with whom they entrusted key project responsibilities and to ensure that the leaders chosen were representative of the whole community. In their work with other communities, NMTT now has a more formal and representative process for community liaison.

## 4.4 Impact on greater Hout Bay

### 4.4.1 Community integration

Because of the houses and subsequent formalisation of the area, the white community of Hout Bay have started entering IY as they now feel safe enough to drive into IY. Although it is slow, the Hout Bay community is becoming more integrated in this way. There are even reports of white people living in Imizamo Yethu. In addition, the quality of the houses provided by NMTT have allayed the fears of some of

the white Hout Bay residents that the presence of the township would mean that their property prices would drop. This means that there is less resistance to the area and therefore less animosity between groups in Hout Bay.

### 4.4.2 Possible unintended negative impacts

#### **Community planning**

Representatives from the greater Hout Bay community all noted that they are very pleased that adequate houses have been provided for the Imizamo Yethu residents, but did express concern that the area has not been holistically planned, as they were attempting to do prior to NMTT's project. The lack of planning for people displaced after the houses were built resulted in them moving up the mountain, onto national park land, where they cannot be serviced by government. Therefore, these shack-dwelling residents do not have ablution facilities, leading to sewerage running down from the shacks and polluting the Hout Bay river. In addition, the reservoir situated on the mountain, that services the whole of Hout Bay, is being used as an open sewer. This problem was reported by various stakeholder groups.

#### **Marginalisation of the Hangberg community**

As "*the original people of Hout Bay*" who are also living in conditions of poverty, the Hangberg community feel that they are generally side-lined when any assistance is given to Hout Bay and that this happened again with regards to the house-building. The Hangberg community does have more amenities (eg schools, sports fields etc) and some formal housing but there is a sense that "there is nothing done for them". The high school teachers confirmed this division; they felt that any hostility between the communities was more from the side of the students' parents, but that this did filter down to the children and there was some hostility between learners when the NMTT houses were brought up.

## 4.5 Impact on NMTT

Imizamo Yethu was the first project that the NMTT ever ran in South Africa and they have learned numerous valuable lessons from the experience which they are implementing in their current work.

### 4.5.1 Professionalising NMTT operations

*"It was a very valuable experience, it created more focus, we established better ways of doing things."*<sup>18</sup>

NMTT have formalised their operations by appointing more staff, setting a strategy with documented aims



and objectives and they have expanded their work into new areas. In addition, they have bought out two other local contractors and taken over the building operations of these two companies. Importantly, NMTT have also developed clear operational policies and processes regarding the identification of beneficiary communities, land (adhering to government's 'Breaking New Ground' policy) and community representatives, as well as procedures in order to fulfill government criteria in the housing process. All these 'good practice' measures serve to minimise potential negative impacts on communities and on NMTT itself.

#### 4.5.2 Changing the model of housing provision

In Imizamo Yethu, the Habitat for Humanity housing model was used, in which beneficiaries pay back an interest-free loan. NMTT has realised that this is not a realistic model for the people with whom they want to work - ie the poorest of the poor. Thus, they have moved to a managed PHP model in other communities, thereby enabling communities to access NMTT services without having to raise funds for them and also increasing the community empowerment aspect of their work. In addition, NMTT now works according to a more holistic community development model.

#### 4.5.3 Post-build presence

NMTT staff also learnt that keeping an NMTT office open in IY has led to the home-owners being more dependent on them than they would like. NMTT now vacates the site office once the final houses are finished: *"Our new approach is to go in, finish the houses and move out. We do capacity building whilst we are there, but we do not create a culture of dependency. This means that we leave a stronger community, with houses."*

#### 4.5.4 Building relationships with housing partners

NMTT has gone some way to building relationships with role-players in the housing sector. They have

established a working relationship with DAG and are working with them in other areas in Cape Town. This relationship benefited from the experience in Imizamo Yethu because they realised the need to formalise their partnership. In addition, NMTT works closely with local housing authorities.

## 4.6 Impact on government and the housing sector

NMTT's work is helping with the government housing backlog. However because of the huge backlog, there is little noticeable impact on the sector in terms of numbers as yet. NMTT has also contributed to raising awareness of the housing problem in South Africa through their work. There have been two documentaries shown internationally, as well as news reports on international media organizations such as Sky News and BBC. Media interest in South Africa and especially in Ireland has also been prominent. The quality of the NMTT houses has also led to the demand for better standards in low cost housing in general.

Although there is no outright evidence, it is perceived that NMTT's lobbying, and close interaction with national and local housing authorities, has led to some of the new housing policies that have been adopted, for example, the 'Breaking New Ground' policy that has an increased minimum house size and increased subsidy provision to achieve this. In addition, recent legislation has been passed that requires all commercial property developers to dedicate 20% of their building activity to social housing. This is a policy that has been in place in Ireland since the late 1990s and one that NMTT has actively promoted to the national housing department.

Finally, local government representatives noted that the promotion of philanthropy is very important and is essential if the housing targets are ever going to be reached. NMTT's work has shown people that they can all become involved in helping to solve the crisis.



# 5. Conclusion

The NMTT has made a significant, and overwhelmingly positive, impact on beneficiaries' lives in Imizamo Yethu. The quality of life benefits that emerged from the beneficiaries themselves during the research process confirms the previously assumed positive impact of housing.

One of the reasons for the research was to prove the anecdotal evidence of health and educational benefits of formal housing. This rigorous qualitative study demonstrates that these benefits do indeed exist for beneficiaries. While the provision of houses reduces the very real threat of illness and disease, it also acts as an enabling factor which assists learners in their educational endeavours.

Besides health and education impacts, beneficiaries have experienced an increased sense of dignity, improved safety and security, improved psychological well-being, convenience factors that enable others and a strong sense of stability and roots - of finally having a "home". Many of these impacts are complementary and together improve the overall quality of life of beneficiaries.

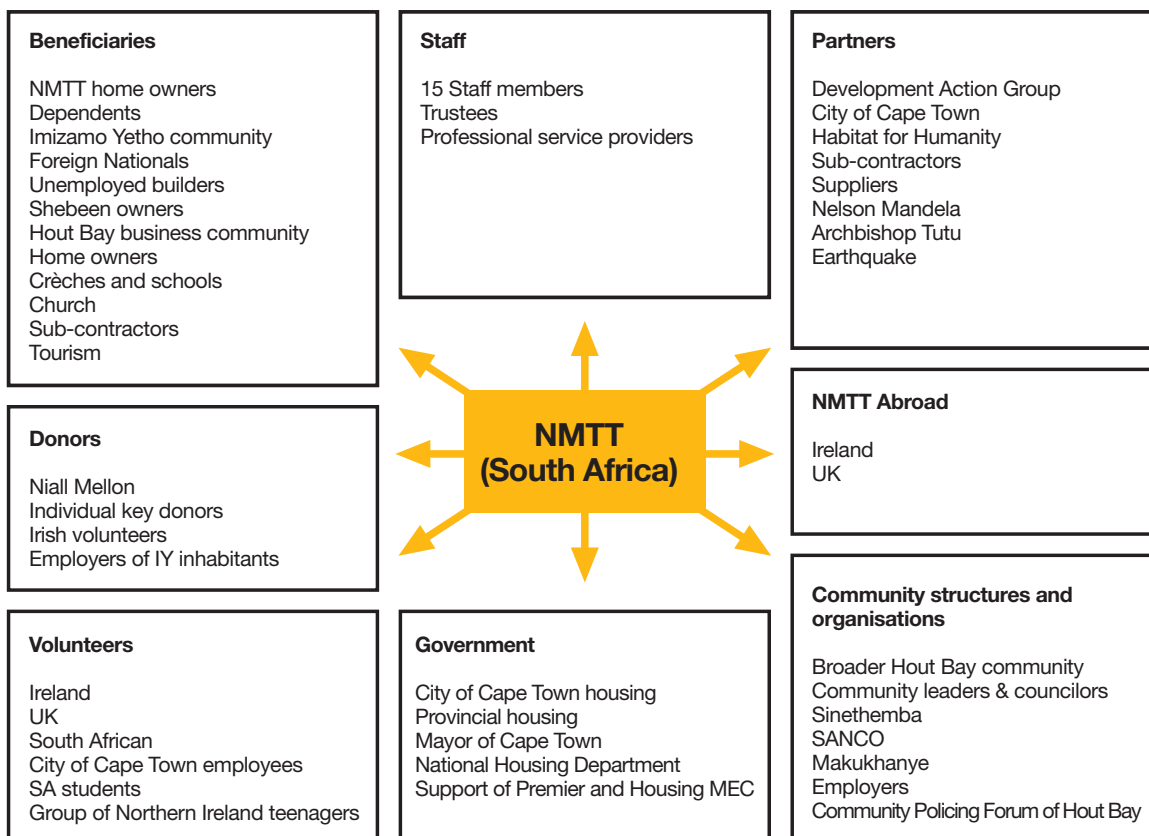
NMTT houses have also made a positive impact on indirect beneficiaries such as local small business owners and building contractors, as well as the broader Hout Bay community. Furthermore, NMTT has made an impact on the housing sector in South Africa by raising the profile of the housing crisis and by assisting in the development of government housing policies. This study has also revealed how NMTT has learned from the consequences of the unintended negative impacts of its work in Imizamo Yethu, by incorporating these experiences into programme design and planning. Strategically and operationally, NMTT operates far more professionally than when it set about work in IY in 2003. If the organisation continues to learn from its work and develop relationships within the sector, it will continue to make a significant impact on the sector, as well as in the lives of the disadvantaged in South Africa.

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## Appendix 1: Programme Stakeholders

The figure below displays the various stakeholder groups during the Imizamo Yethu phase, as identified in the evaluation planning workshop on 21 August 2007.



## Appendix 2: Other chosen MSC stories

### Story 3

"I arrived in Cape Town in 1990 and stayed at Princess Sea Products. Our shacks were burnt to the ground in Dec 1990. In 1991 we started Mandela Park. We stayed in tents, then in zinc shacks. Later we were allocated plots and the name changed to Imizamo Yethu. There was a development of plots and we were allocated plots. Niall Mellon arrived and built us houses. I got onto the list and I moved into my brick house in April 2004.

When I moved in I sang the song "Masibulele kuYesu" (Let us give our thanks to Jesus), because I felt like Mellon was another Jesus. I feel like I'm in heaven. I have found my heaven on earth with my new house.

When it's been raining, I just see when I go outside in the morning. No more worries and anxiety about rain and fire like it was in the shack. We used to close the holes with Sunlight soap. I am so happy in my new house. I have children who use to get sick all the time because of the wetness, but now I don't take them to the clinic as much as I used to. I also don't get sick as I used to.

There are some problems as my house was left unfinished. There are cracks on the wall and it's very damp and this damages our clothes."

### Story 4

I came to Cape Town in the 60s. We are the people that started Mandela Park. I didn't benefit personally from the Niall Mellon houses but I have seen how the project has improved the lives of our people.

The biggest change has been that, because of Mellon, the government had to speed up the process of providing housing for people. The way the Mellon houses were built also showed the government about the type of house that was suitable for people - not the current RDP houses (also known as oVezinyawo - 'show your feet'). So Mellon has helped the government change their vision. Today the government is speaking a different language about the type of houses to build for the people.

This township used to be known as the Toilet Township cause that's all you could find. Today it is beautiful like other places. People have houses of a high standard. This has reduced victims of fire and homelessness - people sleeping in church halls because their houses are destroyed. Today people can buy expensive furniture, knowing that they will be safe in their homes.

Schoolchildren used to suffer when the shacks were destroyed by rain or fire. All their schoolbooks and uniforms would be destroyed and they would not be able to write exams. Having these new homes is helping them fulfil their dreams and bring back their self worth. People can express themselves. They are confident to invite their friends without being ashamed of their homes.

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