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UNISA



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Mofolo Park, Soweto: Engaging the Community to create a sustainable urban park - A Community Dialogue Approach



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INTRODUCTION



- Green spaces are critical for the wellbeing of communities, ecosystems and the economies of cities.
- There is a big drive to preserve and upgrade green spaces in JHB, especially in townships.
- Mofolo Regional Park in Soweto is one of these areas.
- Currently there is a joint project between UNISA, City Parks and JHB Zoo to upgrade this park.



CONTEXT

- Mofolo was established as a residential area in 1954 named after Thomas Mofolo, a Sotho author and educator.
- Currently the population is 33 000 or 7 000 households.
- 51% Male 49% Female.
- Working class with unemployment.



Study Site



- Mofolo Regional Park is located in Mzilikazi Street, Zone 3 Mofolo Central, Soweto.
- The Mofolo Regional Park is used for numerous activities - cultural and sporting activities, religious gatherings and music festivals.

Partnership



- Community dialogue sessions were conducted with the Mofolo residents.
- These dialogues are part of a joint partnership between UNISA and Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo.
- The aim of the dialogues was to determine the communities opinion on the parks upgrade, food gardens, urban forests, recycling and environmental issues in general.
- These dialogues were conducted by a facilitator with UNISA staff members present as well as a City Parks reps.

Dialogue Sessions



- Three community dialogue sessions were conducted for the residents of the Mofolo area:

- » 15th November 2014 – Mofolo Park Library
- » 22nd November 2014 – June 16th Memorial Site
- » 29th November 2014 – Bhukulani Secondary School



- Attendance was relatively low (+-74 people)

Park related findings



- Park related issues from dialogues;

- Residents are **very positive** about Food Gardens.
- Some don't want food gardens located at the park.
- **Rodents** were a serious concern for residents.
- **Vandalism, illegal dumping and security were** also serious concerns.
- The lack of **toilet facilities** were a major problem for the residents.
- **Mixed feelings towards trees.**

Non park related findings



- Residents used the dialogues to air their concerns around:
 - Ongoing sewerage leaks, in streets, gardens....
 - Government and government organizations over promise, under deliver.
 - Overcrowding, poor building maintenance...leading to the emergence of slums.
 - Presence of foreigners in the township.



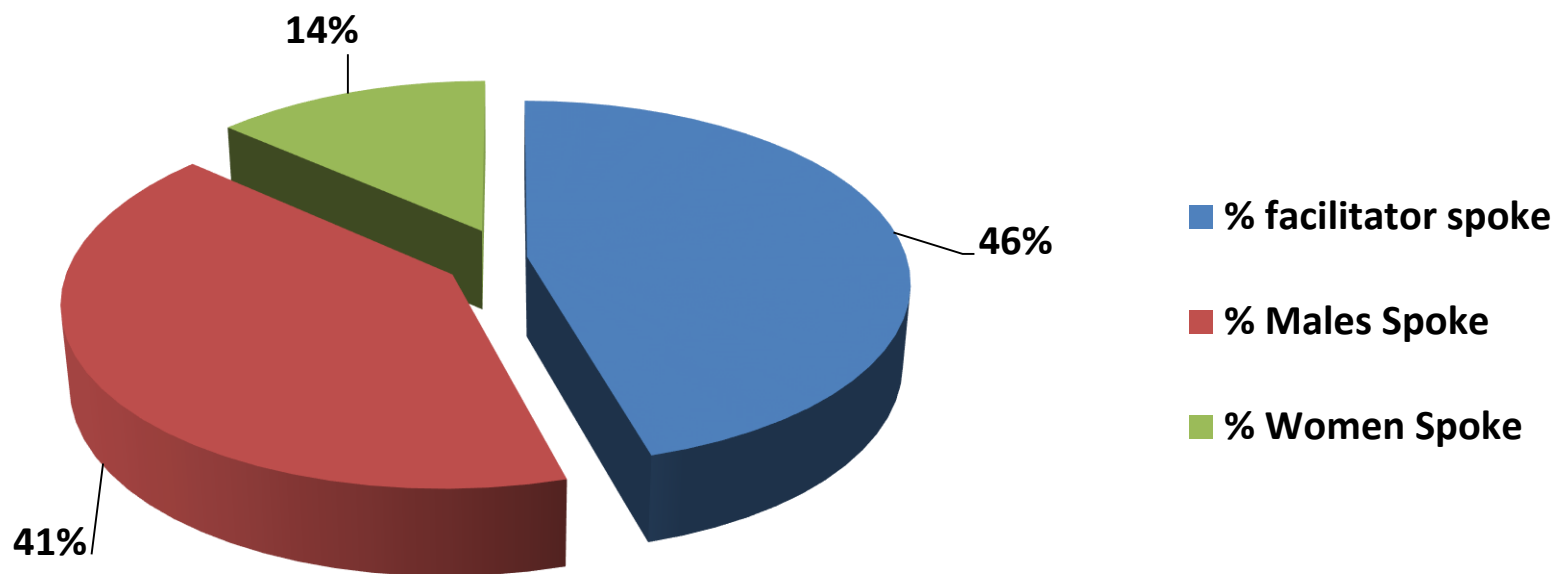


Attendance skewed towards men

	Number of men present	Number of women present
Dialogue Session 1	11	6
Dialogue Session 2	14	10
Dialogue Session 3	19	18
Total number of people	44	34



Whose 'voice' are we hearing??





For how long did people speak?

	Time Males Spoke	Time Females Spoke	Time Facilitator Spoke	Total DVD Time
DVD 1	23 min	3 min	22 min	49 min
DVD 2	20 min	7 min	32 min	59 min
DVD 3	21 min	1 min	31 min	53 min
Total	1 hr 4 min	13 min	1 hr 25 min	2 hrs 42 min

Times have been rounded





Particular individuals dominate

	Men Who Spoke More than Once	Women Who Spoke More than Once
Dialogue Session 1	6	1
Dialogue Session 2	3	2
Dialogue Session 3	5	1
Total # of people	14	4

Challenges with dialogues...



- Facilitator was too involved in the process.
- Gender bias....men dominated.

– Reasons:

- Cultural – a global problem (Tannen, 1990).
- Poor facilitation?
- Failure to have separate dialogue sessions for men and women.





Challenges

- Mofolo residents are more concerned about unemployment, sewage, etc. than the upgrading of the park.
- The community doesn't have uniform needs with respect to the park.
- More agreement around food gardens, rodents and poor water quality.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Residents of the areas do not agree on park related issues.
- But when speaking about non park related issues they are more united;
- Must deal with the gender bias, challenges wrt facilitation and dominance of some individuals.
- Need to deepen the community engagement to determine what the community feels is really important regarding the park.
- Conduct a household survey using random methodology.
- Conduct an audit of the park to determine what is there.