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HOUSEHOLD AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSES TO THE ABSENCE OF ELECTRICITY SUPPLY IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN JOHANNESBURG: A CASE STUDY OF MSAWAWA AND KYA SANDS

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Abstract

The South African Constitution gives every citizen the right to basic services, namely housing, water and sanitation. Electricity is excluded as a basic right from the South African Constitution. However, other pieces legislature for example the Department of Energy recognises electrification as basic right through electrification categories document provided for informal settlements dwellers. The majority of households in informal settlements live without electricity. This research is a case study of Kya Sands and Msawawa informal settlements, two informal settlements on the north western outskirts of Johannesburg that are not connected to formal electricity supply. It explores how their communities respond to the absence of electricity. The study took a qualitative approach based on interviews with residents, business owners and leaders of Msawawa and Kya Sands informal settlements.

The finding is that household responses differ across the two informal settlements, in part depending on the strategy adopted by the informal settlement community and the leadership, and in part determined by the sources of energy or fuel in the area. This research reveals a variety of energy sources, and questions the common perception that all informal settlement dwellers have informal electricity connections.