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Africa on the Move

Sustainable Urbanization: local action for urban poverty reduction, emphasis on finance and planning

INTRODUCTION

When the Brandt Commission published its report in 1980 most of the world's population lived in rural areas, nowhere more so than in Africa. With 3 out of 6 billion people now living in cities and towns, the world is primarily urban. By 2030, Africa will also follow this urbanization trend, and cease to be a rural continent.

Africa is the fastest urbanising continent in the world. In 1980, only 28 percent of the African population lived in cities, today it has risen to about 37 percent. The annual urban growth rate in Africa is 4.87 percent, twice that of Latin America and Asia. Cities and towns in Africa are also growing at twice the 2.5 percent growth rate of the rural population in Africa.

In terms of numbers, currently about 300 million Africans live in urban settlements. This figure is expected to reach about 500 million by 2015. The UN estimates that in the next 25 years, 400 million people will be added to the African urban population, putting tremendous pressure on cities and towns.

NEPAD analysts estimate that by 2015 a staggering 345 million people in Africa will live in extreme poverty – US\$1 a day or less – up from the 100 million when the Millennium Development Goals were first set. If present trends continue, Africa will be the only continent where the problems of poverty, urban as well as rural, will continue to worsen in the next twenty years. If anything, poverty will continue to concentrate in cities, especially if national and local governments do not address the problems of urbanisation and of the urban poor.

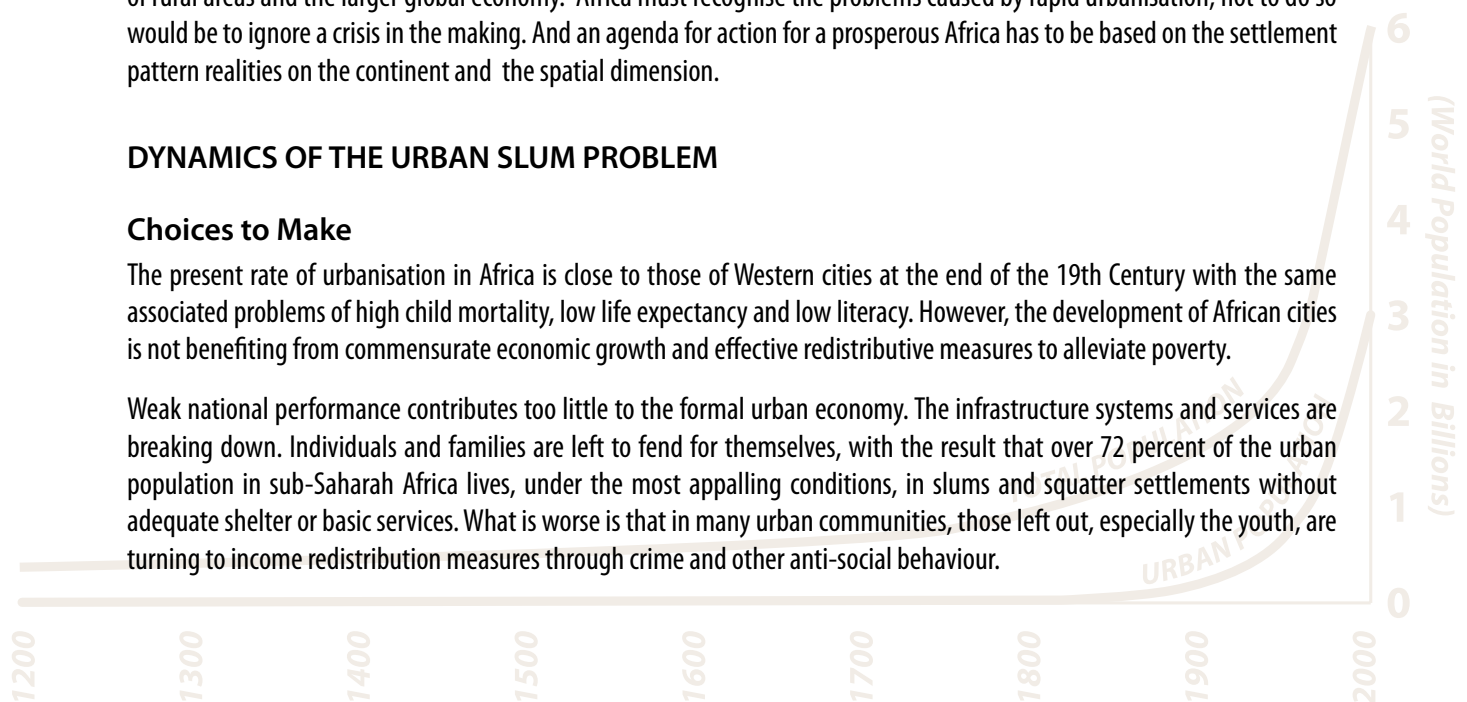
Africa is on the move and the rapid urbanisation of the continent has to be recognised both for its potential problems and its genuine possibilities. Already, and in spite of all the difficulties, urban areas in Africa can be credited with producing 60 percent of the GDP. If managed properly, African cities and towns could provide the critical link between the development of rural areas and the larger global economy. Africa must recognise the problems caused by rapid urbanisation; not to do so would be to ignore a crisis in the making. And an agenda for action for a prosperous Africa has to be based on the settlement pattern realities on the continent and the spatial dimension.

DYNAMICS OF THE URBAN SLUM PROBLEM

Choices to Make

The present rate of urbanisation in Africa is close to those of Western cities at the end of the 19th Century with the same associated problems of high child mortality, low life expectancy and low literacy. However, the development of African cities is not benefiting from commensurate economic growth and effective redistributive measures to alleviate poverty.

Weak national performance contributes too little to the formal urban economy. The infrastructure systems and services are breaking down. Individuals and families are left to fend for themselves, with the result that over 72 percent of the urban population in sub-Saharan Africa lives, under the most appalling conditions, in slums and squatter settlements without adequate shelter or basic services. What is worse is that in many urban communities, those left out, especially the youth, are turning to income redistribution measures through crime and other anti-social behaviour.



Corruption now permeates all levels of city life including institutions meant to enforce law and order such as the police and the judiciary. This slowly but surely undermines the credibility of formal governance institutions at all levels before an ever increasing urban population. To continue on the current path can only lead to the deconstruction of African cities.

The alternative path is one that builds on Africa's traditional community strengths and values, leading toward reconstruction of African settlements. It means turning inherited post-colonial systems of centralised governance upside down, allowing people to participate as equal partners in defining problems, exploring solutions and allocating resources. It also means investing in innovative financing mechanisms for decent housing and other urban infrastructure that capture the small but significant savings of ordinary citizens so that the poor can contribute to improving the living conditions of their cities.

It is the argument of this submission that, with commitment and investment, the African city can be a culturally vibrant, healthy, safe, stimulating and prosperous place to live and work. Furthermore, a network of such cities and towns can spearhead the future development of the continent. To invest in the development and better management of African urban areas is to ensure the progressive development of the region and to tackle the urbanization of poverty, which is a reality.

A rapidly urbanising continent

In 1800 the world urban population was only 2 percent; in 1950, it rose to 30 percent; in 1980 it was 39 percent. It now stands at about 50 percent and is expected to rise to 57 percent by 2025 and 67 percent by 2050.

In the last five decades the world has witnessed an unprecedented rate of population growth, at about 1.2 percent per annum, accompanied by an urban explosion. While urban growth has stabilised in North and South America and Europe, with about 75 percent of the population living in urban areas, the developing countries of Africa and Asia, with 37.3 percent and 36 percent urban populations respectively, are in for a major demographic shift.

In 1950, the urban share of the total population in sub-Saharan Africa was only 14.5 percent; in 1980 it increased to 28 percent and to 34 percent in 1990. It is expected to reach 50 percent by 2020 and 60 percent by 2025.

In 1960, Johannesburg was the only city in sub-Saharan Africa with a population exceeding 1 million, in 1970 there were four, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Kinshasa and Lagos. By the late 1980s, the list included Abidjan, Accra, Addis Ababa, Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Durban, East Rand, Harare, Ibadan, Khartoum, Luanda and Nairobi. By 2010, it is estimated that there will be at least 33 cities of more than 1 million inhabitants.

By 2015, Lagos is expected to have a population of about 23 million, making it the third largest mega-city in the world, after Tokyo and Mumbai. Equally startling is the fact that in Kenya between 1962 to 1999 the number of urban centres increased from 34 to 177.

In countries fraught by conflict the figures are even more dramatic. In the next few years, for example, Kinshasa, capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is expected to become one of the world's 30 largest agglomerations. From a population of 50,000 inhabitants in 1940, it will have risen to 23rd place with some 10 million inhabitants.

In most countries, cities account for a large proportion of all economic activity, and Africa is no exception. A city like Abidjan with an estimated population of 3.3 million which is 40 percent of the total population of the country, accounts for 33 percent of national GDP. Nairobi, with a population of about 2.6 million has only 5.2 percent of the national population, but accounts for 20.1 percent of the GDP.

Premature urbanization

What Africa is going through now is only what the developed world experienced in the 19th Century. This was the time when cities like London went from a population of about 800,000 in 1800 to over 6.5 million in 1900. During the same period, Paris grew from one half to over 3 million; and by 1900 New York's population had swelled to 4.2 million.

According to economic theory, urbanisation in the developed world was closely linked to an increase in productivity of agriculture, which forced people off the land and into the labour markets of the newly developed industries. Agriculture

is the so called residual employer. With little or no increase in agricultural productivity, or even its outright decline due to environmental deterioration, and with insufficient formal employment opportunities in cities to absorb the exodus from the country side, it is clear that Africa is going through premature urbanisation.

Though long-term migration to cities is unstoppable and part of the process of industrialisation, it is clear that African urbanisation is being fuelled by a number of factors. These includes the failure of agricultural policies including poor marketing services, pressure on the land through population growth and the failure of land reform and, finally, the increasing number of regional and civil conflicts.

People are moving from rural to urban areas, but without an expanding industrial base to accommodate them. In many African countries, nascent industries have been destroyed by globalisation, liberalization and corruption. Working capital can be quickly consumed by illegal demands for payment at each step on the way to start-up. What is worse is that local authorities are ill equipped to manage the process, the result is poorly managed cities and a short fall in housing, shelter and urban infrastructure.

Housing, land and the failure of housing finance

In most African countries, a wide gap exists between housing needs and housing supply. One of the most stark cases is Nigeria which has a backlog of 4 million housing units and is only able to supply, through the formal housing sector, 10,000 units per annum. In Kampala, Uganda, there is a backlog of 70,000 housing units with a national supply of only 5,000 units annually. In Tanzania, it is estimated that there is a national shortfall of over 2 million housing units.

The failure to deliver enough houses is not just a social problem, it has huge repercussions in terms of economic development. In most countries, the construction industry makes significant contributions to the economy. In many countries in the South, major construction activities can account for about 80 percent of total capital assets, while investment in the sector yields benefits to national development: something that is severely lacking in many African countries.

If houses have been in short supply, the land market seems to be moribund. It is estimated that in all of Africa, less than 15 percent of the land has been officially registered with title deeds, and in the case of sub-Saharan Africa it is only 1 percent of the land, most of it being titled for high-level income groups.

An example of the failure to register urban land is provided by Dar es Salaam, which received 243, 473 applications for plots between 1990 and 2001 of which only 8,209 plots were formally allocated. The failure of most African governments to tackle large scale land reform has meant that this problem is becoming ever more critical especially as populations are expanding and there is more pressure on available land. Land ownership is caught between customary law and so-called modern statutory systems of land tenure. In the case of land in urban areas, little progress has been made in providing access to land for pro-poor housing.

In many countries the problem is compounded further by a complete lack of financing mechanisms for housing. Though many countries once had nascent building societies and housing funds, most suffered from stringencies caused by structural adjustment and collapsed. An example is the Tanzania Housing Bank, which closed its doors in 1995. Since then, there has been no formal housing finance scheme in that country.

Recently, some countries have made some effort to establish credit mechanisms, but few are of any scale, and their impact and effect remains minimal. For example, in 1990, it was estimated that the ratio of mortgage loans to total investment in housing stock was only 0.13 in Africa as opposed to 0.9 in developed countries.

The failure of investment in housing and infrastructure together with the lack of related policies governing land and property administration, and security of tenure means the poor are increasingly occupying marginal derelict land such as on hill slopes, flood prone areas, near land fills and along railroads and power installations leave ways. This land is not only potentially hazardous, but with the rise in urban property values, slum populations live under constant threat of eviction.

The slum challenge and the urbanisation of poverty

Until recently there was no common definition of slums. But based on recent pioneering work by UN–HABITAT, a slum household is one that lacks any of the following five elements: Access to improved water or sanitation; security of tenure; durability of housing and sufficient living space. In combination, these deficits occur most often within ‘informal’ settlements or slums, those for which the municipality does not often consider itself to be legally responsible for providing services.

Based on these criteria, in sub-Saharan Africa it is estimated that 71.9 percent of the urban population lives in slums, variously known as shanty towns, bidonvilles, hurumas, and fondouks. At the same time, in the 34 LDCs located in Africa, it was as high as 82 percent. In some countries like Chad and Ethiopia, virtually all the population living in cities and towns is considered to be a slum household. Forty countries out of 51 on the continent had more than half of their urban populations living in slums.

In 2001, it was estimated that, in sub-Saharan Africa, in total, about 166 million people are living in slums. In terms of density alone, one can infer the extent of slum conditions. In Nairobi, about 60 percent of the population lives on 5 percent of the land. For example, in Kibera, the largest contiguous area of slum settlements, about 750,000 to a million inhabitants live on less than 225 hectares of land. This makes Kibera the largest most crowded and appalling slum settlement in Africa.

At the same time, living conditions are made worse by the lack of basic services. Though official statistics confidently assert that urban dwellers are well provided with water and sanitation in comparison to rural areas, this disguises the harsh reality on the ground. For example, official statistics optimistically state that in Kenya, 87 percent of the urban population has access to clean water; 96 percent has access to improved sanitation and in Nigeria it is 81 percent and 85 percent.

However, for many slum dwellers, such statistics belie the actual conditions on the ground where up to 500 people have to share one toilet or a communal tap. City level data of 43 African cities showed that in fact 83 percent of the population lacked toilets that were connected to sewers. In Mahira, a section of the Haruma slum in Nairobi, there is one self-help toilet with ten units and two bathrooms for a settlement of 332 households or 1,500 inhabitants.

Furthermore, statistics rarely give a comparative analysis of services in different parts of the city. For example, in Africa, even though only 48 percent of urban households have a water connection, in informal settlements it is only 19 percent. Though only 31 percent of urban households are connected to the sewerage system, in informal settlements only 7 percent are connected. It is estimated that in Africa 150 million urban residents do not have clean water and up to 180 million lack adequate sanitation.

The lack of clean water and adequate sanitation has a direct bearing on the mortality rate of children in slums. For example, in Nairobi slums it has been estimated that there are 91 infant deaths in a population of 1,000, while it is 75.9 in rural areas and 56.6 in the rest of the urban areas. The under five mortality rate is 150 out of 1,000 in slums, 113 in rural areas, and 83.9 in the rest of the urban areas.

Finally, and most dangerously, recent research shows that, whereas the national average for the incidence of HIV/AIDs in a country like South Africa is 15.6 percent, in the slums it is 28.4 percent as opposed to 15.8 percent in the formal urban areas, 11.3 percent on farms and 12.4 percent in tribal areas.

Crime and unemployment

The cities of Africa are also fast becoming centres of crime. This is caused in large part by the high rate of unemployment, especially amongst young people. In Kenya, those aged 20 to 29 represent 65 percent of the total unemployed. In Lagos state, Nigeria, 70 percent of the unemployed are between 15 and 29.

The number of street children is also increasing at an alarming rate. For example, between 1991 and 1994, the street children in Zambia doubled from 35,000 to 70,000. while in Nairobi, during the same period, the figure jumped from 4,500 to 30,000, many of whom are AIDS orphans.

When unemployment statistics are combined with weak local authorities and failed policing mechanisms the scenarios are disastrous. For example, according to the South African Police Service, in 2000/2001 alone there were over 21,400 cases of murder, nearly 540,000 cases of rape and over 116,700 cases of serious robbery.

A victimisation survey of Dar es Salaam, carried out by UN-HABITAT, found that, with 43 percent reporting some kind of house burglary within the last five years, the city had very high rates of household burglaries as compared to other African cities. Robbery defined as theft involving violence had a much lower rate at 14 percent. Nearly two thirds of the respondents felt that crime had increased over the past few years and felt unsafe in their residential areas after dark. In a similar citywide victim survey in Nairobi conducted in 2001, 7.6 percent of respondents claimed that they had been victim of hijacking during the past year. Of this group, 60 percent of the victims were taken hostage; 35 percent were released immediately and were unharmed; 48 percent were first robbed before being released; and 10 percent were raped and in 2 percent of the cases one or more hostages was killed.

Much of this violence is being fuelled by the millions of small arms that are circulating in the countries of Africa. For example, it is estimated that between 500,000 and 1 million weapons were imported into Mozambique alone during its civil war, while only about 190,000 were collected during the UN peacekeeping operation in 1993-95.

The role of local authorities

All over the world, the management of cities is the direct responsibility of local authorities. This is local democracy at its best with city authorities being held directly accountable to the local populace. However, in Africa, history and circumstance have worked against successful local governance. Historically, there is considerable evidence to suggest that most colonial authorities expected to keep Africans in rural areas. This was where the colonial state drew its authority with the result that "the Native" was only allowed entry into towns when he was willing to minister to the needs of the white man. Controlling the African urban presence was essential for peace of mind as town life was held to have a corrosive effect on identity and behaviour. This strategy did not shift until the 1930s in the Belgian Congo and after the Second World War in the British Colonies. But even then the emphasis was on controlling the rate of migration with a call to repatriate those who could not work.

Accompanying this antipathy towards the social aspects of urbanisation was a corresponding neglect of infrastructure and services in African township. If the African's true home was rural then improving urban conditions was pointless.

In parallel to this was the rise of local authorities that were exclusively concerned with managing their cities for the benefit of a small elite. To this day, the statutes and bylaws in most local authorities are out of date and do not reflect the realities of their time. In other words, in Africa, local authorities, which can and should be the most immediate form of transparent accountable and inclusive democratic governance, still tend to be exclusive and unaccountable, despite some recent efforts in local government reforms.

African local authorities are also seriously hampered by a lack of resources. With city populations doubling within a couple of decades, city authorities do not have the funds or the necessary professional staff to manage the process. A recent survey shows that in cities of highly industrialised countries, total local government revenue per person is 9 times that of the average for cities in the developing world, 18 times higher than that of Latin American cities and 39 times that of African cities.

In the age of globalisation, the role of local authorities has been further eroded. Caught between the demands of the international economy, where city bids against city to attract international capital, many local authorities are ill equipped to negotiate the best terms of investment with multi-nationals. With liberalisation and the privatisation of public services, few government officials know how to ensure that private companies do not only take into account the interests of their international shareholders but also deliver pro-poor investments in infrastructure. The result has been increasingly divided cities.

THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The Habitat Agenda

Recognising the urgency of the urban explosion, the international community convened the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul. At Habitat II – commonly known as the City Summit – 171 Governments agreed to adopt the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration, normative instruments of policy and action that champion the world's cities.

The acceptance of the Habitat Agenda marked a turning point in international efforts to promote socially and environmentally sustainable cities. At Habitat II, governments rejected the notion that cities are problems for which no solutions can be found. Instead they searched for experiences and best practices that demonstrate practical ways of meeting the challenge of urbanisation and the twin goals of achieving adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. With reference to Africa, a number of paragraphs the Habitat Agenda specifically calls upon the international community to help solve the crisis of urbanisation in the continent through a range of activities that include capacity building and access to financial resources in order to promote investments in shelter and infrastructure (Habitat Agenda, para. 201, 202)

The Millennium Development Goals

In addition to the Habitat Agenda, in 2000, the international community highlighted the problems of urbanisation by specifically targeting slum dwellers in the Millennium Development Goals. Apart from the fact that most of the MDGs concerned with poverty reduction are linked to the living conditions of the urban poor, under Goal 7, which is on environmental sustainability, target 11 is specifically committed to improving the conditions of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

At the World Summit for Sustainable Development, in the Johannesburg Declaration, the international community accepted that Goal 7 Target 10, which is concerned with halving the number of poor people without clean water and adequate sanitation, is also closely linked to the state of human settlements.

Shelter was added on the list of priority sectors in the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation, namely, water, sanitation, energy, health agriculture and biodiversity.

International institutional response

In parallel with all these international meetings and commitments, it should be noted that in 2001, the General Assembly, especially the members of the G77 and China, were so concerned about the impending urban crisis in developing countries that, in an unprecedented move, it promoted and transformed the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements to a fully fledged United Nations Human Settlements Programme. UN-HABITAT has subsequently been invited to participate in high level coordinating committees, including the S-G's Chief Executives Board, on an equal footing with other UN agencies.

Apart from these major international initiatives, the work of UN-HABITAT has been increasingly reinforced by the work of other UN agencies. For example, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights had appointed a Special Rapporteur on Housing Rights whose mandate is to promote all aspects relating to housing rights as a component of the human right to an adequate standard of living enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

The 12th UN Commission on Sustainable Development, held in April 2004 reinforced the notion that meeting the Millennium Development Goal on Water and Sanitation was inextricably linked to upgrading slums and human settlements. This is to be followed up at the 13th UN Commission on Sustainable Development in 2005 focusing on water, sanitation and human settlements.

Meeting the challenge: The inclusive city

Confronted by the challenge of slums and the problems of rapid urbanisation, UN-HABITAT has been working with all Habitat Agenda partners – Governments, local authorities, the private sector, nongovernmental organisations and communities – to determine the best way to implement the Habitat Agenda and to meet the MDGs.

With considerable operational experience gained since it was established in 1978, and particularly under the dynamic leadership of its new Executive Director, UN-HABITAT has radically altered the way it works in human settlements development and has raised the profile of the urban poor on the global stage.

Gone is the assumption that central governments will provide housing for the poor. The traditional welfare state model has given way to partnership and participation. This is specifically articulated in the Habitat Agenda which calls for new forms of partnerships to implement the Habitat Agenda. "Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Habitat Agenda. Governments as enabling partners should create and strengthen effective partnerships with women, youth,... communities, local authorities, the private sector and non-governmental organisations in each country." (Habitat Agenda, para. 213)

Consequent to the adoption of the Habitat Agenda, UN-HABITAT has been working with donor agencies and with its partners in African cities to design innovative models that will change the way urban areas are managed. The aim is to provide local authorities with the skills and confidence to encourage greater participation of ordinary citizens in the day-to-day management of their cities and towns.

The operational agenda: Bringing back participatory governance

The normative agenda has been critical in raising the profile of urbanisation within the continent. Everywhere there has been an increased awareness of the problems and possibilities of cities and towns.

Already a number of cities in Africa have shown what can be done if governments and local authorities can be persuaded to change the way they manage their cities. This is even more true when resources are made available to provide local authorities with the necessary skills and capacity to make their governance more inclusive.

Examples show that urban Africa is already adapting traditional values and knowledge to practical schemes for credit, land distribution, health delivery, education, sanitation, combating HIV/AIDS and a number of other issues. The irony is that urban Africa, faced with survival strategies to cope with a milliard of challenges, as it moves toward sustainability, is learning from traditional Africa so that local authorities re-learn communal values, indigenous knowledge and the importance of good urban governance and community solidarity.

However, the urbanisation of poverty and the slums of Africa will not disappear without a concerted strategy of operational projects and programmes, enhanced by international support. Below are some examples which are provided to give a sense of what can be achieved and the kinds of work that could be supported to help Africa meet the MDGs.

Mapping the cities of Africa

Where resources are as scarce as they are for Africa's cities, it is all the more urgent that priorities for action and expenditure be set. Deciding on what is most important or on what will produce the most leverage or greatest multiplier effect depends upon accurate assessment of conditions and trends as well as upon the development of accurate predictive models for development.

Through its Global Urban Observatory (GUO), UN-HABITAT is supporting a network of Local Urban Observatories (LUOs) in order to build urban learning and analytic capacities around the world. A LUO can be a local planning department, a university, NGO or any other entity that gathers and synthesizes policy-relevant information, making it available to both citizens and authorities for their mutual work to improve cities.

The GUO network is now focused on the bundle of urban related targets of the MDGs, helping national and local authorities in assessing the magnitude and condition of their cities and slums. The immediate outcomes of this work are databases and images that are being transformed into local poverty maps that can be used to help formulate comprehensive pro-poor policies and set programme targets.

Sustainable Cities

A joint programme between UN-HABITAT and UNEP, Sustainable Cities Programme aims at providing local authorities with the capacity to change the urban environment through consensus building and the democratic setting of priorities.

In the case of one of the earliest cities to adopt the programme, the Sustainable Dar es Salaam Project, turned a mismanaged town, with open piles of garbage, pot holes and increasing slums into a well managed capital city.

The process began with a cross-sectoral consultation that called upon all stakeholders to provide ideas on what they perceived were the urgent needs of the town. This was followed by a communal process to establish priorities and strategic plans. The aim was to encourage partnership.

However, in the case of Tanzania, this meant changing laws to allow for participation of the private sector and non-governmental organisations in, for example, the cleaning up of the central business district. At the same time, most of the implementation strategies, such as garbage collection, were specifically designed to encourage labour-based technologies. The benefits of this included the generation of employment and development of skills that directly contributed to poverty alleviation. These strategies resulted in the empowerment of communities and trust amongst the collaborating stakeholders. Best of all, it led to more credibility for local authorities and the city hall. The success of the Sustainable Dar es Salaam project led to many more cities in Tanzania adopting the approach. The programme is also active in Nigeria and in other countries in Africa. It has also influenced the way urban planning is being taught in universities in the region.

Cities without Slums

Many African local authorities have understood the urgent need to improve and upgrade slum settlements in their cities. Dissatisfied slum populations are a potential source of conflict; equally important, satisfied slum dwellers are not only an important resource to mobilize for productive activities but also could be an important source of votes for those seeking political office.

Governments and local authorities are beginning to understand that successful slum upgrading cannot be handled piecemeal. It needs to be part of a comprehensive citywide slum upgrading strategy. To encourage such overall planning, UN-HABITAT in collaboration with the World Bank and a number of bilateral donors under the Cities Alliance Programme, has been working with a number of local authorities to map slums, to analyse the range of existing policies including the legal framework underpinning security of tenure. The aim is to rationalise the system and introduce a new policy mix that encourages some form of security of tenure for the poor which will, in turn, encourage more pro-poor investment from international financial institutions and regional development banks, donor agencies as well as from commercial banks and the private sector, as well as the poor themselves.

From Mozambique to Mombasa, from Dakar to Durban, there are many slum upgrading projects in the making. Amongst the most ambitious projects of this kind was the South African People's Housing Process which delivered over one million housing units.

Financing human Settlements development in Africa – The case for a Slum Upgrading Facility

There is not enough money in the world available to upgrade all the slums in Africa. In a recent simulation it was estimated that meeting the MDG Goal 7 Target 11, of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020, could cost anywhere between an estimated \$70 billion to over \$100 billion over 17 years.

Clearly, such figures are prohibitive. No aid mechanism could begin to provide enough resources. In fact, it has been estimated that in recent years, the total combined overseas development assistance, public and private investment set aside for low income housing in developing countries and related infrastructure is estimated to be less than \$4 billion.

But Africa is not seeking charity. What is required is the design and innovation of financing mechanisms that allows for the full participation of slum dwellers, the private sector and the international community.

Alarmed at the rate of slum formation in the developing world including Africa, in 2001 the UN General Assembly, while transforming UN-HABITAT into a fully fledged programme called upon its Executive Director to revive and revitalize the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, established since 1974 as a Global Shelter Facility but regrettably to date yet to be capitalized.

As a follow up to this GA decision, UN-HABITAT has launched a pilot slum upgrading facility, SUF, to field test workable models for pro-poor housing and urban infrastructure development finance. Established through funding from the United Kingdom and Sweden, the new initiative offers technical assistance and limited bridge financing to scale up the innovations slum dwellers and banks. Specifically, it seeks to develop financial instruments that can help make slum upgrading projects more attractive to private investors.

The SUF will draw from emerging innovations by slum dwellers in the form of daily savings associations and self-help groups to show that even the poor can help finance their own progress and development. After all, it is a well-known fact that the poor pay more, per square metre for a room. They pay between 10 to 100 times more for water and are known to spend up to 15 percent of their monthly incomes on accessing toilet facilities. UN-HABITAT rental studies in the slums of Nairobi have also established that those who invest in slums and own the shacks rented out to the poor make excessive profits. The payback period for slum real estate investors in Nairobi was established to be only 9 months on average.

With 80% of slum dwellers in Nairobi as tenants this is not small business and slum landlords own several hundred shack units! This does not only expose exploitation of the poor and resistance to slum upgrading by those who stand to lose their huge profits, but also shows that decent rental or cooperative housing could be organized provided there is political will to do so by getting initiatives like the SUF off the ground and to appropriate scale.

Clearly, initiatives like the SUF, if they are to mobilise and capitalise on savings from the poor will need to tackle complex issues of land, housing, water and large-scale infrastructure investments. But with legislative reform, it is possible to encourage banks to take a larger role in lending to slum upgrading projects.

The slum upgrading facility is part of a larger series of actions that UN-HABITAT is taking to establish trust funds and financing mechanisms to fund slum upgrading initiatives. For example, much of the funding for Water for African Cities reviewed above is now coming from a trust fund established specifically for the purpose of supporting investment in water and sanitation projects.

One of the most innovative solutions to human settlements problems in urban areas was a recent and unprecedented debt for land swap brokered by UN-HABITAT. Briefly, the Kenya government was forgiven debt by the Government of Finland on condition that they provided public land for the specific purpose of housing the urban poor. To ensure that the land goes to the target group, land was allocated to the slum upgrading programme in trust to the eventual beneficiaries. This could provide an excellent model for future debt swap that could directly benefit the homeless.

Concluding remarks

Judging from UN-HABITAT's experience and what is being written and done around the continent, Africans are waking up to the possibilities offered by urbanisation.

- Countries like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Uganda and South Africa have launched national Campaigns on Urban Governance and Secure Tenure in countries. This has led to changes in policy and practice.
- In Nigeria, the Federal Government is seeking to strengthen its 36 state governments and 774 local authorities by giving them greater fiscal autonomy and greater support through a newly created Ministry for Urban Development.
- In Burkina Faso the government is promoting the regularisation of land tenure and promoting a poverty reduction strategy within urban areas.
- In South Africa, a partnership between the Government, local authorities and NGOs like the South African People's Federation has been working hard to find solutions to problems of inadequate housing and landlessness. Through a policy mix of security of tenure, public savings schemes and community participation, the South African government has

managed to provide over 1 million houses, while the community water supply programme has also increased its delivery of water connections from 62,249 in 1995 to over 6 million in 2000.

- More recently, the Kenya Government has embarked on the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme which is targeting slums nationwide and includes upgrading Kibera, one of Africa's most notorious slums. This initiative is based on a strategy that includes the provision of land and security from the government, capacity and personnel from UN-HABITAT, financing from agencies like Cities Alliance, other bi-lateral donors and, finally, savings schemes involving the poor themselves. The project, which is being designed in phases will begin with the provision of basic infrastructure especially clean water and adequate sanitation.
- In Mozambique, amongst a number of projects, the government has committed itself to establishing a post conflict strategy that addresses the needs of all urban communities. Efforts are underway to prepare a Territorial Planning Policy and a Housing Policy that will complement the existing Land Law and Autarchic Law. This exercise includes researching into the existing land tenure and land market options with a view to designing locally relevant forms of security of tenure and market access to land. In terms of national urban planning, it will also include integrated solutions linking urban and rural settlements.
- In Tanzania a Cities Without Slums Initiative has been launched under the Cities Alliance Framework and linked to the World Bank financed urban upgrading initiative.
- Under NEPAD, African governments and local authorities have understood the urgent need for viable and sustainable urban development. There has been a growing consensus that effective national governance begins in the communities of Africa. Strong local governance, decentralisation and systems of community decision making can create more open, responsive and effective means for enhancing representation.

Examples of enablement, empowerment, community-based development, participatory decision-making -- decentralization in myriad forms -- testify to a general awakening by governments, local authorities and all Habitat Agenda partners of a communal spirit that is committing itself to overcoming the problems of rapid urbanisation.

Therefore, national leadership must decide to take all measures necessary to reconstruct Africa's urban settlements and then adopt policy measures to galvanize resources and energies in that direction. The role of the international community, such as the Commission for Africa, will then be to learn, encourage, facilitate, and support a continent that is on the move and to help avoid a crisis in the making.

A submission to the Commission for Africa
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