Case Study 3

Small scale Incremental upgrading within urban informal settlements: Huruma, Nairobi

Background

Internationally there is a renewed push towards "participatory urban slum upgrading" as opposed to slum clearance and demolition. This is premised on a growing acceptance of informality which it is argued should be seen "as an organic and integral part of any rapidly developing city."[1]

There are two broad approaches to participatory upgrading of informal settlements and slums: those driven from above and those which are driven from below.

Mainstream participatory planning frameworks

UN Habitat has developed a 'community based' upgrading approach which starts from community mobilisation and organisation as a basis for action planning. Implementation is built around micro-finance savings and credit, locally based contracting and monitoring.[2] The approach is premised on externally facilitated processes which enable local people to identify and rank their problems and collaborate on plans to address them. In this setting local government is conceptualised as a key development actor responsible for developing an enabling framework in which informal settlement upgrading can take place. This approach is intended to embody a shift from development control to a more flexible and adaptive facilitation which recognises complexity and builds from local capabilities and assets.

This approach is anchored by target 7.4 of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. It was subsequently branded as the 'Cities without Slums MDG' by UN Habitat. The formulation of this goal has been criticised as it has subsequently been misinterpreted by many as calling for slum eradication or elimination as evidenced by mass evictions in Zimbabwe in 2005, in Abuja, Nigeria in 2006 and through the tabling of provincial slum elimination legislation proposed in South Africa in 2007.[3]

Earlier approaches to participatory development planning held that "participation cannot be imposed but must be developed through a process of joint analysis and constructive dialogue between the relevant actors.'"[4] The original advocates of participatory planning approaches in urban areas argued for a blend of top-down and bottom-up planning which would enable development actors to meet each other "halfway". From the government perspective local authorities "provide local groups space to manoeuvre" and play an important role in "regularising land rights" and establishing constructive dialogue. In this conception "the process is driven, at least initially, by outsiders."[5]

In practice the approach of the state and the attitudes of development professionals are shaped by received wisdom[6] and dominant narratives[7] about informality and the capabilities of informal dwellers. At worst this can result in the "forcible imposition of State simplicities in place of the practical knowledge of urban

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[1] (AMPCHUD 2010: 1)
[2] (AMPCHUD 2010: 3)
[3] (Huchzermeyer 2008)
[4] (Mitlin and Thompson 1994: 4)
[5] (Wratten 1994)
[6] (Leach and Mearns 1996)
[7] (Roe 1991)

dwellers"[8] or alternatively "reduce 'the room for manoeuvre'... in thinking about new alternatives or different approaches."[9]

As the other case studies indicate clearly, planning from above is often infused with modernist and technicist thinking which tends to emphasise results at scale and which can result in the rushing of processes leading to unsustainable outcomes. At best planning from above pays scant attention to important social dimensions of the planning and development process and at worst it can slide into authoritarianism.

PLANNING FROM BELOW

With respect to planning from below there is a long history of shack dwellers initiatives aimed at "retrieving knowledge about the living reality of the homeless poor and using the results to strengthen their position in an antagonistic social order."[10] These set out to counter the notion that the participation of the poor must be confined to the 'invited spaces'[11] in the plans conceived by the experts. They aim to build on the agency, creativity and lay knowledge of the poor who are the experts on living with informality. This is the approach that we explore in the case study which guides Pamoja Trust and the Kenyan slum dwellers movement known as *Muungano wa Wanvijiji* to undertake participatory incremental upgrading in Humera.

While planning from below has important strengths there are also risks that processes may be captured by particular interest groups or local elites which may blur or homogenise the often highly differentiated nature of 'the community' and obscure the relations of power at play in informal settings. "Planning processes from below which may trigger conflicts also has to be able to resolve them without the less powerful members of the 'community' becoming worse off in the process."[12] Poorly managed or partisan participatory processes can accentuate conflict fault lines that ultimately put vulnerable persons at risk.

Overall the case study highlights that incremental participatory upgrading processes "quite simply takes more time than conventional approaches."[13]

URBAN RURAL LINKAGES

Upgrading urban informal settlements also requires us to think about the relationship between urban and rural development. We need to identify the linkages and continuities between rural and urban settings which many informal settlement dwellers will straddle. These may include social networks and shared value sets which bond people across rural and urban spaces. It also requires an understanding of complex migration patterns as in many countries people seeking livelihood opportunities in urban areas may maintain both urban and rural homes[14]

We need to identify the factors that distinguish between deep rural and urban settings such as the nature of the urban economy, the heterogeneity of the 'community' which coalesces in urban spaces, the insecurity of tenure in the frequently 'illegal' nature of the dwellings which people construct together, and the prominence of local government as a key development actor.[15] We also need to recognise that there are complex spaces where urban and rural areas intersect in the form of remote small towns surrounded by areas which may under communal tenure.

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[8] (Corbridge, Williams et al. 2005: 17)
[9] (Clay and Shaffer 1984; Sutton 1999: 11)
[10] (Bolnick and Patel 1994: 23)
[11] (Miraftab 2009)
[12] (Wratten 1994: 84)
[13] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005: 69)
[14] (Smit 1998; Oucho 2007)
[15] (Mitlin and Thompson 1994: 6)

Rural	Urban
Economy premised on agriculture, natural resource use and urban remittances	Informal economy combines informal survivalist enterprises mainly run by women which generate incomes below the poverty line[16], micro enterprises employing most family members, casual labour, domestic and contract work. Survivalist enterprises may have rural economic linkages
Households form part of more settled communities embedded in space	Informal settlements deeply heterogeneous but with social pockets clustered by rural social origins
Dwelling and land tenure secured by legislation or through living customary law	Dwellings frequently illegal and tenure deeply insecure. High vulnerability to evictions in period preceding informal settlement regularisation
Government agencies more remote and diverse	Preeminence of local government as regulatory and service delivery agent

NAIROBI AND HURUMA SETTLEMENT CONTEXT

Nairobi is a city with a legacy of segregationist colonial planning. The city was zoned into racially exclusive areas which were founded on highly skewed land distribution which differentiated between areas set aside for European, Indian and African occupation. Today this unequal division persists but now reflects class rather than racial divisions. Currently high income households which account for less than 10% of the city's population occupy 64% of the land, while low income households which make up 55% of the population are crammed onto just 6% of the land.[17]

Since Independence in 1963 Kenya has launched numerous initiatives to try and manage urbanisation. These include:

- slum clearance and provision of public housing (1960 – early 1970's)
- site and service schemes (1970's)
- attempts to improve tenure security and undertake physical upgrading (1980s)
- promotion of private sector and NGO housing improvement schemes (1990s) as part of an 'enabling approach' to housing promoted by the World Bank where the State was encouraged to step back from its delivery role. This era was shadowed by demolitions, alleged land grabbing and rising levels of violence.[18]

These initiatives have failed to keep pace with rapid urbanisation. Between 1995 and 2000 1.8 million people moved from rural areas to the cities in Kenya[19] where the majority live in dense informal settlements.

The Huruma case study in Nairobi draws on the work of the Pamoja Trust and the slum dwellers movement known as *Muungano wa Wanvijiji.* It examines their approach to incremental informal settlement upgrading[20] and reviews the process by which the residents in the settlement obtained enhanced tenure security while strengthening their negotiation power and voice.

State responses to the rise of informal settlements have been varied but are frequently coercive, involving evictions and demolition. While the approach to improving the lives of people living in informal settlements associated with the MDG seeks to acknowledge the urban poor as "active agents of development" there is

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[16] IOD (2000) in Von Broembsen (2008)
[17] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005: 6)
[18] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005: 12-13)
[19] (Landau and Vigneswaran 2007)
[20] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005)

little evidence that this approach is informing practice with the exception of small pilot demonstration projects.[21]

Pamoja Trust was founded in Nairobi in 2000 to "facilitate community led solutions" which address "the absence of the voice of the people in decision making."[22] This approach is built on an awareness of power relations in informal settlements where 'absentee' slum-lords or structure owners often collect rent from a large number of slum dwellings and enjoy the protection of powerful political figures.[23]

In Nairobi one of the most persistent challenges to upgrading initiatives is the conflicting interests of landlords and tenants and contestation over access, rights and tenure security. Pamoja takes the position that both landlords and tenants have rights and seeks to facilitate agreement between actors with conflicting interests.

ACTORS
Both local and international actors feature in the actor network supporting Muungano wa Wanavijiji members. Key local actors include:

- Muungano wa Wanavijiji is built on the foundations of numerous small membership based groupings within particular localities. The movement emerged out of was originally organised to mobilise slumdwellers against evictions and demolitions in the early 1990s. This led to the formation of the Land Caucus in 1995. Subsequent linkages with similar movements in South African and Asia led to formation of the International network Slum/Shack Dwellers International in 1996. Affiliates to this network started to develop a community of shared practices, or 'rituals' which are discussed further below.
- Pamoja Trust was formed in 2000 to provide technical and policy support to Muungano wa Wanavijiji and helps organise the multiple small groups which make up the membership into a larger Federation. Pamoja also helps negotiate the interface between Muungano wa Wanavijiji groupings and state development actors.
- Akiba Mashinani Trust (AMT), an entity established by Pamoja Trust that offers loan finance to savings schemes for onward lending to their members.
- University of Nairobi TECTA consultants.
- Nairobi City Council.
- Nairobi Informal Settlements Coordination Committee.
- Residents in six informal settlements which make up Huruma ward.
- Shacklords and tenants

Key international actors include:

- Shackdwellers International.
- A partnership between the Center for Sustainable Urban Development (CSUD) at the University of Colombia and the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) at the University of Nairobi

HURUMA AT A GLANCE
Huruma ward is just over four acres in extent and is comprised of six informal settlements. These settlements combined are home to around 7000 people (2300 households) at a density of over 600 houses per acre. Sixty seven percent of the population has lived in Huruma for over 15 years. A typical household in Huruma lives in a 10' x 12' shack built with corrugated iron sheets, mud and wattle walls and mud floors. Most households have

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[21] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005)
[22] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005: 2)
[23] (Mutillah 2003: 11)

one room which is part of a larger structure of multiple families. There is one toilet for every 500 Huruma residents. Huruma is best known for its goat slaughtering sector.[24]

PROCESS

Muungano wa Wanavijiji members with the support of Pamoja Trust utilise and contribute to a membership based but community wide planning and incremental upgrading process developed by SDI affiliates. Its intent is to provide a foundation for strengthening social relations, building local organisation, leadership and vision as a prerequisite for collaborative in situ upgrading. Horizontal exchanges between membership groups and national federations play an important role in developing attitudes and skills necessary to address the complexity of informal settlement upgrading.

The broad process is illustrated below although Pamoja cautions against a neat linear reading of the diagram.
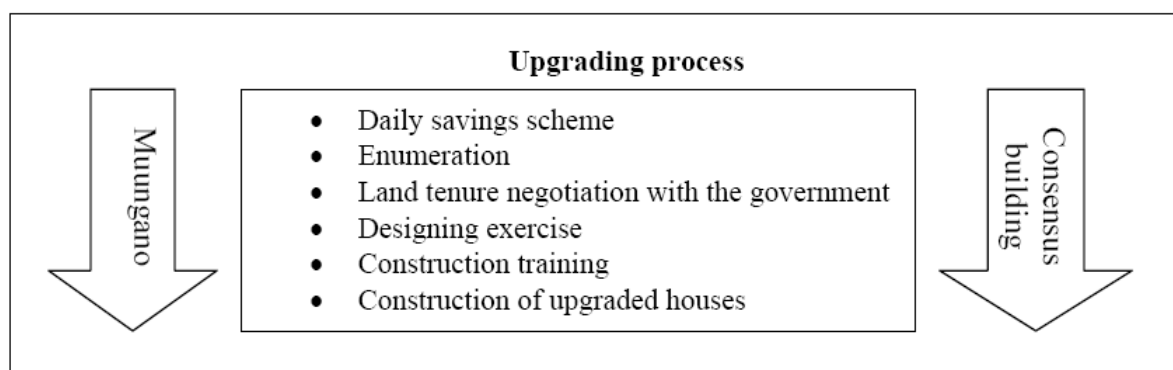

Upgrading process

Muungano →

- Daily savings scheme
- Enumeration
- Land tenure negotiation with the government
- Designing exercise
- Construction training
- Construction of upgraded houses

→ Consensus building

FIGURE 1: SOURCE ALAM, A AND BALIGA ET AL (2005: 13)

However as the case study illustrates participatory informal settlement upgrading, whether from above or below, is an inherently messy and slow process.

TABLE 1: ADAPTED FROM ALAM, A AND BALIGA ET AL (2005: 26)

Year	Event
2000	Savings groups established in five settlements in Huruma with 46 members
2001	Enumeration of all five settlements with support of Pamoja Trust
	Beginning of upgrading negotiations
2002	Designation of land into special planning area
	Urban settlement planning
	House modelling
2003	Artisan training
	Approval of settlement plan
	Identification of beneficiaries for first housing units
	Demolition of dwellings in designated construction area and temporary accommodation of residents
	Construction of first 34 houses begins
2004	Construction continues
2005	Construction of first 34 houses complete

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[24] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005: 25)

Savings

The savings and loans activities are meant to provide an indicator of individual member commitment and contribution to the group. Where these are successfully and transparently managed they can help develop essential trust and reciprocity between their members. They also provide a means to accumulate capital to loan for upgrading activities at a later stage.

However in Huruma there were concerns about that the savings led route was "inherently exclusive as the poorest and most vulnerable members of the informal settlements are unable to save and hence are unable to receive emergency loans and upgraded housing."[25] There is also the question of how to maintain savings momentum and expand reach beyond the initial small group of savers.

Savings and loans schemes depend on transparent and corruption free management and require particular accounting and financial management skills. Where these are in short supply the integrity of savings schemes is quickly compromised.

The management of loans and the setting of sustainable repayment limits requires a mix of technical expertise and knowledge of local livelihood and affordability characteristics. In Huruma there were concerns expressed about the affordability of expected loan repayment levels. Unsustainable repayment levels can precipitate default and the subsequent collapse of the scheme.

Enumeration

Enumeration involves a process of self survey, mapping, measuring and recording existing dwellings across the settlement as a whole which if well conducted can provide the people staying in a particular settlement with accurate and up to date information about the number of dwellings, their occupants and the current availability of services. It also provides insight into functioning of the informal economy. In Huruma the enumeration highlighted the existence of livelihood linked neighbourhoods such as a brewery neighbourhood and a slaughter neighbourhood and signalled the need to "accommodate multiple uses of resident structures in the new design"[26]

Enumeration processes are enormously sensitive and may be contested as the processes frequently threaten vested interests of landlords and other political centres of power. In Huruma "the experience of the enumeration process was unique for each village. Residents reactions ranged from curiosity, suspicion and sometimes even resistance."[27] It took a almost six months before sufficient confidence could be built for people to divulge information.

They can also be exclusionary where people deemed to be hostile to the grouping conducting the enumeration can be left out. Enumeration processes also have to be carried out when people are at home to avoid undercounting. In areas characterised by transient populations people get left out of enumeration processes which may later compromise their rights. A subsequent externally managed research survey found that between 62% and 77% of those surveyed said that they had been enumerated, depending on the village. Control over the lists which result from enumeration processes represents a significant source of power which if abused creates opportunities for people to manipulate names in exchange for payment.

The key question however is how long the data collected can be regarded as reliable, as informal settlements are dynamic spaces where people and power are constantly shifting and the only certainty is rapid change. "The concept of mobility – a moving target has to feature highly in thinking...and practical planning."[28] This suggests a need for "multiple and regular verifications given the frequency and volume of people's

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[25] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005: 45)
[26] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005: 45)
[27] (Alam, Baliga et al. 2005: 45)
[28] (de Satgé 1997:18)

movement."[29] However these carry high transaction costs and require a major time investment for people who would otherwise be earning a livelihood.

Negotiating tenure

This is the critical phase as it regularises informal settlements and formally recognises the rights and entitlements of its occupants. It is also frequently the prerequisite for the upgrading process. In the case of Huruma ward Pamoja Trust was able to successfully negotiate an agreement with Nairobi City Council to turn Huruma into a Special Planning Area with relaxed building codes. The memorandum of Understanding increased the "perception of tenure security" in that "people felt confident that the government had given them the right to live on the land."[30] This in turn provided the basis for people in the settlement to get "direct access to resources and services."

Central to this process is the delicate negotiation of the relationship between structure owners and tenants within the settlement. In the case of Huruma it was found that that Pamoja Trust was able to bring these contesting interests together and find common ground.

Design and construction

The remaining phases focus on the mechanics of the upgrading process itself and involve residents in a participatory settlement planning exercise which allows them to discuss and jointly imagine the settlement of the future. This includes discussions about land allocation and the construction of model houses out of wood and cloth to illustrate dimensions and to ensure that diverse needs are addressed as far as possible within the limitations of settlement density, prevailing plot sizes and limited finance.

PLANNING PARADIGM, ACTOR ROLES AND COLLABORATION APPROACHES

The Huruma Case Study highlights processes of locality based planning from below. However the completion of the process requires elaborate actor collaboration and sustained communication:

- within and between the settlements;
- between shacklords and tenants;
- between members of Muungano wa Wanavijiji who are involved in savings groups and those who are not;
- between neighbourhood leadership and supporting professionals outside the settlements;
- between settlement representatives Pamoja Trust and government;

ASSESSMENT

Incrementalism is slow and prone to setbacks. It has to balance depth of process with relative speed and scope of results. The planning from below approach promoted by SDI and Pamoja Trust is heavily dependent on the quality of local leadership and their ability to navigate the micro-politics and power relations of informal settlements. Adherence to SDI 'rituals' is a strength as it creates a community of practice and enables horizontal exchanges to share learning and experience. The SDI linkage helps create some negotiation leverage with government and provides access to competent external support - both strategic and technical to enable people to engage with government to regularise the informal settlement and find ways to secure their tenure as a basis for further investment.

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