



STREETS AS TOOLS FOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN SLUMS:

A STREET-LED APPROACH TO CITYWIDE SLUM UPGRADING

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FOREWORD



Current processes of spontaneous urbanisation are adversely affecting the future of cities in the developing world. This form of urbanisation generates what we define internationally as slums and where one third of the global urban population lives today. Urban expansion in some parts of the world has become synonymous of this type of unplanned urbanisation that hinders cities in maximizing their role in social prosperity, economic development and wealth generation. As our data suggests, common features of this type of urbanisation are the poor living conditions, inadequate urban basic services and a significant lack of public spaces and streets.

The virtual absence of the most basic urban common good, which is public space, disrupts the liveability, safety, security, mobility and local development of urban areas. This strategy paper on street-led slum upgrading supports this argument with unequivocal evidences drawn from several cities around the world. It illustrates my belief that urban planning combined with a network of streets and public spaces provide a viable solution to start solving the problems of slums. This approach connects and reconnects slums with the rest of the city by opening up space for infrastructure provision and income generation, enhanced security of land tenure and setting the basis for slums to transform themselves into future vibrant neighbourhoods.

As a former mayor and an advocate of good urban planning, I believe strongly in the need to reassert the role of streets in the process of improving the quality of life in slums. By laying streets as part of the urban plan of the area and opening up public space in slums, we are not only delineating public and private domains. We are establishing the basis for people to live a life in dignity, providing them with an address, greater accessibility to public services and creating the opportunities for urban regeneration that ultimately encourages prosperous and inclusive cities.

I am proud to share this publication with the wider public of urban practitioners, policy makers and political decision makers, because it illustrates well our approach towards slums-upgrading. This adopts streets not only as a vehicular road but as a vector for an incremental urban transformation that integrates slums into the overall development strategy of the city. It further underscores the multipurpose function of streets as the social and economic space that constitutes the public domain through which all basic urban services are provided and maintained.

This strategy paper is rich in examples that demonstrate the practicability of the street-led slum upgrading approach that UN-Habitat is advocating for. It showcases the incremental street-led development and transformation of slums that builds on the fundamental notion of streets being the stepping stone in improving the quality of life and living conditions in slums. We acknowledge that this is not a magical pill that cures all the ailments of the society, such as injustice, inequalities and discrimination, but rather a solid contribution of urbanisation to address the pressing needs of the slum population.

I am pleased to read the positive peer-reviews done by world class experts and am confident that the readers of this publication will benefit from the knowledge, experience and propositions that UN-Habitat brings herein.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Joan Clos'.

Dr. Joan Clos,
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW BUT WORSENING CONDITIONS

During the last 50 years, governments have implemented a wide range of slum upgrading projects and programmes of varying scale and scope and with different levels of impact. The lessons learned from these experiences and the knowledge developed by UN-Habitat demonstrate that technically slum upgrading is an easy and straightforward urban regeneration intervention – there is sufficient experience, knowledge, skills and know-how to be drawn upon internationally. But despite the wealth of knowledge and experience available in the world, the growth of slums and the multiplication of informal settlements are only getting worse, particularly in parts of Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Latin America. This is undermining the ability of cities to generate wealth, prosperity, economic growth and human development. Considering the large scale of slums, their consolidation and the number of people they house, ignoring the challenge of slums is a short-sighted and unsustainable political policy for any city or nation.

2. CITYWIDE APPROACH: FROM PIECEMEAL PROJECT BASED UPGRADING TO PROGRAMME SCALE

Undoubtedly the importance of slum issues has risen in local and national political agendas. In many cities, slum upgrading has been brought to citywide scale and in some countries even to national scale. This shift has been represented by some comprehensive and complex programmes, which have significantly been initiated and led by political leaders and implemented with the participation of slum communities. These examples have attracted international attention and many are UN-Habitat best practices. Despite such efforts and achievements, slum upgrading has remained outside mainstream urban planning and management and upgraded slums are rarely looked upon as urban neighbourhoods.

3. STREETS: SHIFTING THE DISCOURSE

slums into the overall city planning and management and fostering urban regeneration.

4. ALIGNING POLITICAL WILL WITH TECHNICAL KNOWHOW AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Slum growth today is rampant and will negatively affect future generations unless a clear vision for the future of our cities is urgently developed and implemented. UN-Habitat is suggesting a change of course that focuses on streets as a business case for overall urban regeneration that can also help cities to play their role as engines of development. The street-led approach to citywide slum upgrading outlined in this paper is a simple, cost-effective and inclusive way of initiating change that is well within existing technical knowledge and experience. However, action can only be taken if leaders such as mayors, ministers and politicians have the political will and determination to act and lead the process and encourage the involvement of residents as well as NGO's, municipal departments, private entities and civil society organisations in the process.

5. STREETS SUPPORT AN INCREMENTAL APPROACH

The implementation strategy outlined in this paper builds on the practical and symbolic role of streets as the key to linking up neighbours, businesses and economic activities situated adjacent to each other and sharing the common public space provided by the streets. This strategy is well-suited for phased and incremental development through strong participatory planning, rather than pursuing the complex implementation of a full-fledged upgrading and urban layout plan as a single-phased approach. The incremental approach based on the prioritization of streets will ensure that strategic choices are made and that the streets selected for improvement or implementation initially are actually the ones that are likely to bring the best outcome in terms of development opportunities, poverty reduction, optimization of land use and generation of wealth as a result of increase in property values. The approach will also ensure that city level concerns for connectivity and mobility are considered. Further, implementation targets can be set and gradually enhanced in keeping with the technical,

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