



# MBALE URBAN PROFILE



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## FOREWORD



According to research published in UN-Habitat's flagship report, *The State of the World's Cities 2010-2011*, all developing regions, including the African, Caribbean and Pacific states, will have more people living in urban than rural areas by the year 2030. With half the world's

population already living in urban areas, the challenges we face in the battle against urban poverty, our quest for cities without slums, for cities where women feel safer, for inclusive cities with power, water and sanitation, and affordable transport, for better planned cities, and for cleaner, greener cities is daunting.

But as this series shows, there are many interesting solutions and best practices to which we can turn. After all, the figures tell us that during the decade 2000 to 2010, a total of 227 million people in the developing countries moved out of slum conditions. In other words, governments, cities and partner institutions have collectively exceeded the slum target of the Millennium Development Goals twice over and ten years ahead of the agreed 2020 deadline.

Asia and the Pacific stood at the forefront of successful efforts to reach the slum target, with all governments in the region improving the lives of an estimated 172 million slum dwellers between 2000 and 2010.

In sub-Saharan Africa though, the total proportion of the urban population living in slums has decreased by only 5 per cent (or 17 million people). Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, and Rwanda were the most successful countries in the sub-region, reducing the proportions of slum dwellers by over one-fifth in the last decade.

Some 13 per cent of the progress made towards the global slum target occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean, where an estimated 30 million people have moved out of slum conditions since the year 2000.

Yet, UN-Habitat estimates confirm that the progress made on the slum target has not been sufficient to counter the demographic expansion in informal settlements in the developing world. In this sense, efforts to reduce the numbers of slum dwellers are neither satisfactory nor adequate.

As part of our drive to address this crisis, UN-Habitat is working with the European Commission and the Brussels-based Secretariat of the African, Caribbean

and Pacific (ACP) Group to support sustainable urban development. Given the urgent and diverse needs, we found it necessary to develop a tool for rapid assessment and strategic planning to guide immediate, mid and long-term interventions. And here we have it in the form of this series of publications.

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme is based on the policy dialogue between UN-Habitat, the ACP Secretariat and the European Commission which dates back to the year 2002. When the three parties met at UN-Habitat headquarters in June 2009, more than 200 delegates from over 50 countries approved a resounding call on the international community to pay greater attention to these urbanization matters, and to extend the slum upgrading programme to all countries in the ACP Group.

It is worth recalling here how grateful we are that the European Commission's 9th European Development Fund for ACP countries provided EUR 4 million (USD 5.7 million at June 2011 rates) to enable UN-Habitat to conduct the programme which now serves 59 cities in 23 African countries, and more than 20 cities in six Pacific, and four Caribbean countries.

Indeed, since its inception in 2008, the slum upgrading programme has achieved the confidence of partners at city and country level in Africa, the Caribbean and in the Pacific. It is making a major contribution aimed at helping in urban poverty reduction efforts, as each report in this series shows."

I wish to express my gratitude to the European Commission and the ACP Secretariat for their commitment to this slum upgrading programme. I have every confidence that the results outlined in this profile, and others, will serve to guide the development of responses for capacity building and investments in the urban sector.

Further, I would like to thank each Country Team for their continued support to this process which is essential for the successful implementation of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Clos', with a long, sweeping underline.

**Dr. Joan Clos**

Executive Director, UN-HABITAT





The annual urban growth rate in Uganda is 5.2 percent and it is projected that by 2050, at least 50 percent of the country's population will be living in urban areas. From the national statistics, 60 percent of the urban population lives in slums and in informal settlements with inadequate

housing, poor health care services, lack of access to education, lack of access to safe drinking water, lack of security of tenure, and lack of infrastructure.

All the above problems are being precipitated by rural urban migration of people in search of employment opportunities in the urban areas. Most of these people move to the informal settlements which they can afford to live in.

Mbale Municipality is one of the most competitive and attractive business centres in Eastern Uganda. This has further been aided by its close proximity to Kenya. Mbale's status as a business hub has resulted in high rates of migration into the town as many people flock to Mbale in search of livelihood opportunities. This has led to high population growth and which has caused a strain on the town's social infrastructure and led to the mushrooming of slums such as Kikyafu, Kisenyi, Mooni, and Namatala /Malukhu among others.

It's against this background that the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development in partnership with UN-Habitat, the lead agency for implementing the MDG 7, Target 10 (reducing the number of people without access to safe drinking water), and target 11 (achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020), undertook an urban sector profiling study in Mbale as part of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Program.

This study covered the following nine critical thematic areas: Disaster Risk, Safety, Environment and Climate Change, Governance, Slums and Shelter, Land, Basic Urban Services (BUS), Local Economic Development (LED), and Gender and HIV/AIDS. These issues guided the analysis of the Mbale Urban Profile.

The idea behind the urban profiling study was to help Mbale Municipality formulate urban poverty reduction policies through a participatory, holistic and action oriented assessment of needs. It also aimed at enhancing dialogue and awareness of opportunities and challenges with a view of identifying response mechanisms as a contribution to implementing the Millennium Development Goals.

The Mbale Urban Profiling was undertaken with the participation of both national and local authorities within Mbale Municipality. The profile findings were basically hinged on the various desk- studies and interviews with key urban actors and stakeholders.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, UN-Habitat, the European Commission, the ACP (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) Secretariat, Makerere University, and all the stakeholders who contributed to the success of the Urban Profiling process.

Lastly, I wish to encourage all parties interested in the sustainable development of Mbale Municipality to take keen interest in this report and I pledge my full support to the implementation of the Action Plans agreed upon by the stakeholders in this report.

For God and My Country.

**Mafabi Mutwalibi Zandya**

Mayor  
Mbale Municipality

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) is an assessment of needs and capacity building gaps at City, Municipality and Council levels. It is currently being implemented in 30 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme uses a structured approach where priority interventions are agreed upon through consultative processes. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme methodology consists of three phases;

Phase One; consists of participatory urban profiling of urban conditions in the three medium towns of Mbale, Mbarara and Kitgum which are studied to provide a representative sample of other such towns in the country.

Phase Two; builds on priorities identified through the workshops and develops detailed capacity building and investment projects.

Phase Three; implements the projects developed during the earlier phases with an emphasis on priority areas which have been chosen.

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme focuses on nine thematic areas; Risk, Safety, Environment and Climate Change, Governance, Slums and Shelter, Land, Basic Urban Services, Local Economic Development, and Gender and HIV/AIDS.

## BACKGROUND

Mbale is a Municipality in Mbale District in the eastern part of Uganda. It began as a commercial centre for Arab slave traders and later attracted Indian traders who had come to East Africa to build the railway line. Eventually, Mbale became the Uganda Government's administrative centre for the Eastern Uganda region. The major challenges facing Mbale town are growth of informal human settlements, poor land records, lack of serviced land, poor land tenure system, outdated structure plans, political interference in decision making, outdated laws, high urban population, and inadequate human resources.

Mbale Town is located on the foot of Wanale ridge of Mt. Elgon which is 8,000 feet above sea level. It covers a geographical area of 2,435 hectares. Mbale's central location makes it attractive, competitive and a business hub in the region. Further its location and multiple entry points and its close proximity to Kenya makes it accessible to all regions and provides opportunities for enhanced trade activities that attract local investment necessary for economic development. Mbale town is experiencing typical problems associated with urban areas such as high population growth and unemployment, lack of basic urban services and inadequate waste management.

## GOVERNANCE

Mbale town is governed through a system of decentralization as per the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. Through this system, Lower Local Governments are empowered to run their day to day affairs. Mbale is governed by the Mayor who forms the Executive Council, and the Speaker who is the head of legislation. Four members of the Executive are secretaries of the different Sectoral Committees of the council, which are; Finance and Administration, Social Services, Works, and Gender and Community Development. There is also a Technical Department headed by the Town Clerk who is the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the Council.

## DISASTER RISK

Mbale Town is prone to disaster risks due to its location on the foot of Mt. Elgon. These include landslides, earthquakes, floods, and droughts among others. Mbale Municipality however lacks the capacity to manage their periodic disasters.

## SAFETY

Security in Mbale is provided by different security organs which include the Uganda Police, Uganda People Defence Forces (UPDF) and local security agencies. As a growing town, the most prominent crimes include common theft, burglaries, robbery with violence, and drug abuse. In Mbale Town, most crime offenders reside in slum settlements.

## ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Serious environmental issues are being faced in Mbale Municipality. These include poor waste disposal, poor sanitation, pollution of water sources, and deforestation. The Municipality also faces various challenges as a result of climate change. These include recurring floods, landslides and drought. The uncontrolled dumping of waste and chemicals has had a negative impact on the town's environment and human health.

## LAND

There is shortage of land in Mbale Municipality because the demand is higher than the supply. The high rate of population growth in the Municipality has resulted in poor land use practices on the existing land. The main challenges facing land in Mbale include lack of land owned by the municipality, haphazard developments on the existing land, over population, and pollution.

## BASIC URBAN SERVICES

Mbale Town is experiencing inadequate basic services provision due to inadequate financial resources. The major challenges in the Municipality include poor drainage system, lack of solid waste management facilities, poor sanitation, and inadequate water supply.

## LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mbale is strategically located in Uganda which makes it attractive and competitive. It is surrounded by a rich agricultural region which provides the Municipality with agricultural produce. Its close location to Kenya provides the town with opportunities for various economic activities and trans-border trade. The main economic activities carried out in Mbale include trade, transport services such as boda-bodas, telecommunication services, restaurants, lodges and hotel services, and food processing industries. In slum areas however, there are high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth.

## SLUMS AND SHELTER

In Mbale, informal settlements are on the increase and are caused by rural-urban migration. Slum areas are characterized by absolute poverty and they include: Kikamba, Barracks, Mutukula, Kiteso, Bulago, Bujoloto, Namatala, and Kikaramoja.

These slum areas are also characterized by inadequate services and shelter, inadequate waste management, lack of essential infrastructure, and inadequate access to clean water, safe sanitation facilities, and services. Slum residents need to be provided with secure land tenure in order to facilitate redevelopment and investment programs.

## GENDER AND HIV/AIDS

Women in Mbale Town constitute the higher population of the unemployed and are mainly active in the informal sector. Women face the highest health risks and they don't have access to health services. According to the Mbale Municipal Alliance of Mayors and Municipal Leaders Survey, the HIV/AIDS infection rate in Mbale Municipality stands at 5.3 percent.

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