



MAURITIUS: BEAU BASSIN-ROSE HILL URBAN PROFILE



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UN-Habitat Regional and Information Offices or directly from:

P.O. Box 30030, GPO 00100 Nairobi, Kenya.

Fax: + (254 20) 762 4266/7

E-mail: unhabitat@unhabitat.org

Website: <http://www.unhabitat.org>

This Mauritian report and project was prepared and managed by Sareeta Sintah – Ag. Deputy Chief Town and Country Planning Officer, National Focal Point for Mauritian Urban Profiling, Ministry of Housing and Lands; Yan Hookoomsing – Coordination Analyst, office of UN Resident Coordinator for Mauritius and Seychelles; Vijay Bangaroo – Head of Planning Department, Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill; K. L. Santokhee – Head of Planning Department, Municipal Council of Port Louis; M. Bundhoo – Planning Officer, Municipal Council of Port Louis; Ashwini Rughoodass – Welfare Officer, Black River District Council; C. Rughoobur – Director of Statistics, Mauritius Statistics; K. Pang Kin Lam – Project Officer, Ministry of Housing and Lands; N. Seenauth – Principal Planner, Ministry of Housing and Lands; K. Jayeprokash – Police Sergeant, Police Headquarters, Police Planning Reform Unit; Y. Hosenally – Head of Planning Department, Black River District Council; A. Ghoorah – Environment Officer, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development; Mary Coopan – Local Government Facilitator, Gender Links; Sarah B.G. Soobhany – National AIDS Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office; F. Moothia – Project Coordinator, National Empowerment Foundation; K. Moutou – Analyst, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development; Pynee A. Chellapermal – Director General/Consultant, Alternet Research and Consulting; Kirsten Koop – Consultant, University of Grenoble; Dr. J. Claude Lau Thi Keng – Associate Director/Consultant, Alternet Research and Consulting; Lindsay Morvan – Managing Director/Consultant, Alternet Research and Consulting; Vahy Ravoajanahary – Consultant, Alternet Research and Consulting; K. Valaydon – Programme Manager, National Empowerment Foundation; P. Boojharut – Protection Officer, Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development, and Family Welfare; and N. Thannon – Technical Manager, National Housing Development Company.

This report was also managed by Kerstin Sommer, Alain Grimard, David Kithakye, Mathias Spaliviero, and Doudou Mbye in Nairobi.

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FOREWORDS



According to research published in UN-Habitat's¹ 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, reading 'Joan Clos'.

Dr. Joan Clos

Executive Director, UN-Habitat

¹ UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme



The Municipality of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill is pleased to be a party to the Urban Profiling project under the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme for Mauritius. The Urban Profiling is Phase One of UN-Habitat's Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme. It is a programme that will reinforce and

improve the urban management and governance systems at the municipality level. Informal settlements, poor housing, poor living conditions, and lack of respect for the environment and for the social amenities are among the urban issues that the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill has to tackle to address urban poverty. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme is a laudable initiative by UN-Habitat to mobilize partners and resources in order to contribute to the following:

- urban poverty reduction;
- identifying urban capacity needs, and
- identifying investment priorities. For the municipal council, the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme is an opportunity to consolidate and widen the council's partnerships with national institutions and other stakeholders working within the municipality.

The programme is not confined to profiling the twin towns, but also makes provisions for the identification of realistic projects within each thematic issue. The development of action-oriented projects is important for mobilizing the communities and local NGOs working within the municipal area. In this context, the choice of Barkly as a pilot area is both a challenge and an opportunity, as that area faces various problems. The municipal council hopes that the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme will contribute to making Barkly a reference point for sustainable urban development, not only for Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, but for the whole of Mauritius. The municipality would like to assure UN-Habitat and the Ministry of Housing and Lands of its commitment to engage in the development and implementation of the thematic projects as a fully fledged partner.

We would like to formally express our appreciation UN-Habitat, the Ministry of Housing and Lands, other ministries/government departments/institutions, Alternet Research and Consulting, the Commissioner of Police, participating NGOs, and municipal staff for their efforts, for sharing their experiences, and for providing the necessary information for the elaboration of the urban profile of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill.

We look forward to Phase Two and hope that our partners at the local, national, and international level will contribute, as in the first phase, to moving the process forward.

Norbert Froget

Mayor of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



BACKGROUND

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme aims to mobilize partners and resources in order to address urban poverty reduction. The Municipality of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill has seized the opportunity to engage itself in this multi-stakeholder process.

The towns of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill are twin towns in one. Rose Hill is more urbanized than Beau Bassin. The twin towns are situated in the western part of Mauritius, in the lower part of the inland district of Plaines Wilhems. Beau Bassin-Rose Hill was established in 1896, and the town council was made a municipal council at independence on 12 March 1968. The township covers an area of about 20.2 square kilometres. The residents of the town total about 110,000.

The town has evolved as a residential area with a high density of businesses. It remains an attractive place to live and work. However, it has lost ground to other towns and a new vision is now required for Beau Bassin-Rose Hill.

LAND TENURE AND MANAGEMENT

Most land in Mauritius is owned by sugar industry operators, and land in Beau Bassin-Rose Hill is unavailable. The National Development Strategy provides a strategic framework for national land use planning. Outline Planning Schemes translate the national strategy to the local level. But the absence of a consistent planning database and the shortage of human resources in this field means that the Municipality of

Beau Bassin-Rose Hill has not been able to control land use functions.

The municipal council should be consulted as an urban stakeholder when land is allocated within the municipal boundary, as any land development has an impact on existing infrastructure. Councillors, civil society organizations and other inhabitants should have the opportunity to express their opinions on these developments. This approach will assist the municipality in coping with new developments and servicing the newcomers.

GOVERNANCE AND URBAN PLANNING

The local authorities in Mauritius fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands. The Local Government Act of 2011 governs the existing councils of the local authorities. However, Mauritius remains highly centralized. The Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands has maintained control over key decisions such as the yearly approval of the budget of the municipal council, any borrowing for capital projects, and the provision of an annual grant.

The municipality nevertheless has wide-ranging responsibilities and operates within a well-defined institutional and legal framework. However, there is need for more delegation of power and a mechanism for multi-stakeholder dialogue at the municipal level.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND BASIC URBAN SERVICES

According to the Local Government Act of 2011, the municipal council has the mandate to provide and manage urban infrastructure and services such as road maintenance, drainage infrastructure, refuse collection, provision of pre-primary schools, street lighting, municipal gardens and green spaces, and sanitary conditions. However, the municipality does not have any responsibility for or influence over water and electricity.

Service delivery is not always effective due to a shortage of staff and a lack of discipline on the part of the inhabitants (e.g. littering in public). Each suburb has infrastructure for meetings and cultural and sport activities, but the municipal council is not responsible for all of it. There is a need for inter-institutional coordination and a participatory system of management in order to encourage more participation from the inhabitants and create ownership.

MUNICIPAL REVENUE COLLECTION

The financial affairs of the Municipal Council of Beau Bassin-Rose Hill are conducted in accordance with the Local Government Act of 2011. The main source of revenue is the central government grant in aid. This amounted to 68 percent of the total budget in 2011. The balance of the budget is provided through the following sources of income:

- (1) general rate,
- (2) trade fees,
- (3) permit and rental,
- (4) publicity and posters, and
- (5) any applicable local rate.

and working. New economic activities have flourished, but access to land for economic development in the municipal council area is a critical issue. Most land is in the hands of the private sector.

There is a need for the municipality to negotiate for land in order to develop small business estates with proper transport facilities in certain suburbs. In addition, it is necessary to have an effective coordinating mechanism for the poor who want to engage themselves in micro-enterprise. In this context, a local chamber of commerce and industry under the aegis of the municipality must be investigated as a mechanism for the promotion of the local economy and for dialogue.

HOUSING AND DEPRIVED AND VULNERABLE AREAS

The development of housing estates has resulted from the policy of successive governments to rehabilitate vulnerable groups through social housing. But most of these housing estates suffer from overcrowding, poor maintenance of housing infrastructure, and poor living conditions. However, the municipal council mandate is confined to the specific maintenance of roads, green spaces, and so on. The responsibility for improving living conditions in slums rests with the Ministry of Housing and Lands and with the Ministry of Social Integration through the National Empowerment Foundation, and more inter-institutional coordination is required.

The government, through its various agencies, is facing serious challenges responding to the housing needs of the very poor. As the poor often have unstable incomes, they cannot benefit from the existing housing schemes. This situation very often leads to squatting on land or house-sharing (and thus overcrowding). There are now opportunities for the private sector to support and invest in the national housing programme for the poor and new government housing schemes.

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