



# MALAWI: MZUZU URBAN PROFILE



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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

REGIONAL AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION DIVISION

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## FOREWORDS



According to research published in UN-HABITAT's<sup>1</sup> 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 horizontal line underneath.

**Dr. Joan Clos**  
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

<sup>1</sup> UN-HABITAT - United Nations Human Settlements Programme

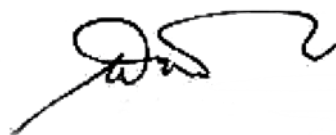
Poverty reduction is the Malawi Government's overriding development objective as espoused in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy. In line with this, the government recognizes the critical role played by the cities and other urban centres in the socio-economic development of this country. Thriving and well functioning cities will in turn lead to thriving national economic development.

Our cities and other urban areas which are growing rapidly face a number of challenges, key among them is that of urban poverty that is characterized by, among others, poor housing, poor access to water and sanitation as well as unemployment. The cities also face environmental challenges that are in part heightened by poor urban planning and environmental degradation.

The Government therefore welcomes the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) that is coordinated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and is being implemented in all the four cities of Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu, and Zomba. The urban profile for Mzuzu City, prepared under the programme is an important document that sets out the key challenges faced by the city in the areas of governance, land and housing, slums, basic urban services including water and sanitation, local economic development, gender and HIV/AIDS, energy, disaster risks, environment, and waste management.

Through a consultative process of city stakeholders, the city council has identified the priority actions to be carried out in support of efforts to achieve sustainable urban development and reduce urban poverty. The challenge is now to move forward to implement these priority actions that seek to improve the quality of life of the urban poor. In this regard, the Government of Malawi will continue to support the city council under the decentralized framework in achieving the poverty reduction goals. Mzuzu City Council will need to redouble its efforts and ensure that more resources are allocated to pro-poor activities in the city. The goal of ensuring sustainable urban development and poverty reduction cannot be achieved by the efforts of central government and the city councils alone. More importantly, it will need the concerted efforts of all stakeholders involved in the development of Mzuzu City including the private sector, the civil society, political and community leaders, development partners, and city residents.

The Government of Malawi would like to thank UN-HABITAT<sup>1</sup>, the European Union and the ACP<sup>2</sup> Group of States for the technical and financial support towards the formulation of this profile. The commendable role of Mzuzu University (MZUNI) in facilitating the process of the urban profile formulation as well as that of the chief executive, the PSUP city focal point, and management of Mzuzu City Council is appreciated. Special mention is made of the first National Coordinator of the PSUP in Malawi, the late Mr. Dalitso Mpoola who dedicated his time, skills and efforts to ensure the successful implementation of this phase. May his soul rest in peace.



**Kester E. Kaphaizi**

Principal Secretary for Local Government  
and Rural Development

<sup>1</sup> UN-HABITAT - United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
<sup>2</sup> ACP - Africa, Caribbean and Pacific





The Mzuzu Urban Profile focuses on the findings of a desk study and interviews with key informants and institutions as part of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP).

Through a consultative process, participants resolved to address the dominant

urban issues including Governance, Local Economic Development, Land, Gender and HIV/AIDS, Environment, Urban Disaster Risk Management, Slums and Shelter, Basic Urban Services, Urban Safety, and Waste Management as challenges that negatively affect sustainable urban development. A consensus was also reached on priority interventions in the form of programmes and projects to be implemented in the short and long term.

I wish to acknowledge the technical and non-technical contributions made by individuals, institutions and all other stakeholders that have enabled Mzuzu City Council to prepare this report which will form the basis for planning various city developments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Richard C.Z. Hara**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Mzuzu City Council

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) is an accelerated and action-oriented urban assessment of needs and capacity-building gaps at the city level. The programme is supported by funds from the European Commission's European Development Fund and is currently being implemented in 23 African countries, 59 African cities, 4 Pacific countries, 3 Caribbean countries, and 21 Pacific and Caribbean cities. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme uses a structured approach where priority interventions are agreed upon through consultative processes. The PSUP methodology consists of three phases: (1) a rapid participatory urban profiling at national and local levels, focusing on Governance, Local Economic Development, Land, Gender, Environment, Slums and Shelter, Basic Urban Services, and Waste Management, and proposed interventions; (2) detailed priority proposals; and (3) project implementation. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme in Malawi encompasses a national profile, as well as profiles for Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba, each published as a separate report. This is the Mzuzu report and it constitutes a general background, a synthesis of the seven themes; Governance, Local Economic Development, Land, Gender, Environment and Urban Disaster Risks, Slums and Shelter, and Basic Urban Services; and priority project proposals.

## BACKGROUND

Mzuzu City, with a population of 133,968 and growing at 4.2 percent per annum, is one of the fastest growing cities in Malawi and is the third largest urban centre after Lilongwe and Blantyre. It is the hub of government administration, business, industry, commerce, and services for the northern region of Malawi, and it serves a hinterland with a population of 1,708,930. Originating from a Tung Oil Estate in 1947, the city has grown from 23km<sup>2</sup> to 143.8 km<sup>2</sup> in 2008 and was declared a city in 1985. However, the city lacks adequate infrastructure

## GOVERNANCE

Mzuzu City Council was established under the Local Government Act of 1998 and is composed of councilors headed by a mayor and the secretariat headed by the chief executive officer. The council makes by-laws, policies and decisions and the secretariat provides technical guidance on policy making and implementation of council decisions. The council is facing a number of governance challenges such as lack of elected councilors since 2005, inadequate and outdated development policies and plans, a weak secretariat, weak financial management capacity, and uncoordinated and conflicting multiple land administration systems.

## LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The main economic activities in Mzuzu include trade, manufacturing, agriculture, and informal business activities. The city is currently in the process of drafting comprehensive urban management policies and updating the land use plans. Once implemented these will steer local economic development and reduce poverty in the city. Mzuzu's economy is growing at a rate of 5.8 percent per annum and the city has an estimated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of MK<sup>2</sup> 6,000,000,000. Poverty rates in Mzuzu are currently at 34 percent. The timber industry is growing very fast and is a major source of employment and livelihood for many residents of Mzuzu.

## LAND

Land is the most basic resource in Mzuzu and its sustainable management and administration is fundamental for ensuring equitable access to land for all its citizens. Currently the city council owns and manages 50 percent of all commercial land and 40 percent of all industrial estates in Mzuzu, as well as the Traditional Housing Areas (THAs). The city council is confronted

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