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SOLOMON ISLANDS: GIZO URBAN PROFILE



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FOREWORD



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". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Joan Clos

Executive Director, UN-Habitat

¹ UN-Habitat - United Nations Human Settlements Programme



The population of the Pacific is relatively small by world standards, but it is facing a fast rate of urbanisation and high population growth. The 2009 national census revealed that almost 20% (102,030) of Solomon Island's total population lived in urban areas. But population growth is rapidly

increasing, with the annual rate of 4.7% urban growth, it is projected that by 2020, 26% of the country's population will be living in urban and peri-urban areas if the present trend continues.

In the Solomon Island, urban growth is often negatively perceived as unemployment and environmental degradation have increased and poorly serviced informal settlements have continued to develop. These trends have been exacerbated by weak planning, management and governance and national policies which have prioritised rural development over urban development. Consequently, it is hoped that this Urban Profiling study will assist in mitigating these unfortunate trends.

Gizo is the provincial centre for Western Province and is located approximately 370 kilometres from Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands. It serves as the main economic link between Honiara and the rural villages in the Western province. Gizo has a population of 7,177 and has grown rapidly over recent decades to become the second largest town in the Solomon Islands.

Gizo is renowned for its lagoon and prime diving sites and is a major tourism destination in the country. But, in spite of this favourable economic condition, Gizo still experiences incidents of poverty as reflected in the rapid growth of sub-standard housing, inadequate water supply and a lack of amenities (sanitation and solid waste management in particular). The major concerns for the Western Provincial Authority (WPA) are: (1) good governance and effective town planning and management of informal settlements and land mobilization to meet the demands of the growing town population and, (2) the provision of quality urban

environmental services. The Gizo Urban Profile examines five key areas (governance, informal settlements and housings, the urban-rural economy, urban safety and resilience, and land and planning issues) which have highlighted the ineffective town administration and poor urban planning and management partially due to a lack of technical and experienced human resources, limited financial support from the central government, poor internal revenue, and bad governance.

This study intends to assist Gizo authorities to identify development needs and capacity issues that will support them to design enabling policies and regulations focusing more on poverty reduction at the provincial and rural levels. This is an important contribution towards the Solomon Island's national efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 7, Target C (reducing by half the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water) and Target D (achieving significant improvements in the lives of at least 100 million people living in informal settlements by 2020). As part of the government's efforts to achieve the MDG 7 (Target D) the Ministry of Lands Housing and Survey has included in their Corporate Plan a policy intention to regularise Temporary Occupation Licences to more secure fixed term estates by 2020 (MLHS, 2010).

On behalf of the Western Provincial Authority and the residents of the city, I fully endorse the Gizo Urban Profile and look forward for further engagement with UN-Habitat to support the efforts and plan to improve the image and progress of our city.

George Lilo
Premier, Western Province

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 it is currently being implemented in over 30 African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries. PSUP 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. PSUP in Solomon Islands encompasses a national profile, as well as profiles for Honiara, Auki and Gizo, each published as a separate report. This is the Gizo report and it constitutes a general background, a synthesis of the five themes; governance, informal settlements and housing, urban-rural economy, security and resilience, and land and planning.

BACKGROUND

Gizo is the provincial centre for Western province and is located approximately 370 kilometres from Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands. It serves as the main economic link between Honiara and the rural villages in the Western province. Gizo has a population of 7,177 and has been growing rapidly over the recent decades to become the second largest town in the Solomon Islands.

Gizo is renowned for its sparkling lagoon and prime diving sites and is a major tourist destination in the country. But, in spite of this favourable economic condition, Gizo still experiences high rates of poverty as reflected in the rapid growth of sub-standard housing. Inadequate water supply, lack of amenities (sanitation and solid waste management in particular), and a rise in informal settlements are key features of Gizo. The major concerns for the Western Provincial Authority¹ (WPA) are: (1) good governance, effective town planning and management of informal settlements and land mobilization to meet the demands of the growing town population and, (2) the provision of quality urban environmental services.

GOVERNANCE

The Western Provincial Authority is mandated under the Provincial Government Act (PGA) and the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) to provide town

¹ Western Provincial Authority (WPA) and Gizo authority are used interchangeably. They refer to the provincial executive or government that heads the provincial administration.

planning and urban management to the urban and rural population on behalf of the central government. The capacity to deliver better services and good governance are the main concerns that the Western Provincial Authority faces as it tries to respond to new challenges after years of neglect and political interference. The Authority is under-resourced, poorly equipped and lacks skilled human resources. It is further constrained by the dependence on (limited) central government grants and poor internal revenue, which is currently addressed through the operation of the Provincial Government Strengthening Project (PGSP).

Public participation in civic issues affecting the welfare of citizens is weak. The setting up of the Gizo Town Committee (GTC) and a Local Business Group (LBG) in Gizo may provide the entry point for better governance. It will also require coordination by the Western Provincial Authority to improve communication and meaningful participation from various stakeholders in Gizo.

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND HOUSING

About 25 percent of Gizo's population (7,177) resides in four informal settlements and pockets of temporary housing located on crown land. Informal settlements are situated on vulnerable locations such as on steep slopes and swampy areas. The residents of these settlements lack water, sanitation, health services, power, security, garbage collection facilities, and security of land tenure. They are at risk should the Commissioner of Lands give the land to property developers. The quality of houses in these settlements is poor as they are erected from bush materials. Residents of these settlements depend entirely on informal economic activities for their daily survival.

Gizo Authority is unable to effectively address the increased demand for better infrastructure and services in these settlements. The Authority does not have a policy to manage or upgrade informal settlements or the resources and personnel to implement an action plan. The key challenge for Gizo authorities and physical planners is to improve planning and effectively implement a strategic action plan that better manages informal human settlements.

THE URBAN-RURAL ECONOMY

Gizo Authority relies on three main sources of revenue for its budget; internal revenue (fishing, logging, business licenses, land rent, property rates, and transport levies), which contribute 45 percent, annual grants from the central government (42 percent) and the remaining 13 percent from the Provincial Capacity Development Fund (PCDF). Internal revenue collection has improved from 47.5 percent in 2009 to

75 percent in 2010. Businesses contribute 38 percent of Gizo Authority's total internal revenue, followed by return from investments (36 percent). There is a need to diversify the economic base, to build proper road networks and improve inter-island shipping to encourage more rural people to participate in the local economy.

SECURITY AND RESILIENCE

Law and order is provided by the Central Government through the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF). The Gizo police station is manned by 34 staff who work with few resources under poor working conditions. The security situation in Gizo is described as peaceful except for minor incidences relating to drinking beer in public. The major challenge for the police is to contain drinking beer in public places and to provide effective policing as the population in Gizo increases.

URBAN RESILIENCE

Gizo town is located along the coast and is vulnerable to sea level rise. The Titian and Fishing Village are located less than ten metres from the shoreline and are the most vulnerable settlements on Gizo Island. Climate change and natural disasters are a growing concern with the increased frequency and intensity of weather events (earthquakes, landslides and storm surges). However, people continue to build their houses on steep gradients, along the coastal and low-lying areas. The key challenge for the Gizo Authority and the central government is to relocate the most vulnerable settlements and to ensure zoning and development controls are in place to prevent future construction on steep sites and along the coast in the future.

LAND AND PLANNING ISSUES

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