

**SHARING OF EXPERIENCE ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND SLUM UPGRADING IN  
KENYA AND NIGERIA:  
PROCEEDINGS OF A SEMINAR HELD ON 29 MAY 2013, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

This panel seminar was hosted by the University of Nairobi Centre for Urban Research and Innovations (CURI) and attended by about 40 delegates drawn from university, government institutions and civil society both in Kenya and Nigeria (lecturers and experts from the Centre for Human Settlements and Urban Development (CHSUD), Minna University, Nigeria). The seminar sought to share experiences in urban development and slum upgrading in Kenya and Nigeria. The panellists included Prof. Paul Syagga who is a Professor of Land Economics (UoN), Dr. Luke Obala (UoN), Mrs. Helen Nzainga (UoN), Mr. Jack Makau (SDI), and Salma (Pamoja Trust). Discussions in this seminar were grouped into three key themes: (a) State-initiated slum upgrading and provision of land tenure security, (b) Social housing and impacts for the poor and (c) Community-led slum upgrading which include enumerations, mapping and savings.

**THEMATIC AREA 1:**

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*The importance of community involvement and tenure security has been emphasized in recent years. Particular focus is on the role of communities, what works and what does not work. In addition, what are the major challenges to positive impact through land tenure security approaches and how can these be overcome? This concerns issues of non-affordability, out pricing target beneficiaries through infrastructure investments (especially in case tenure security arrives too late), selling out, difficulties in processes of regularization (especially in case tenure security arrives too early with a change from public tenure to private and community tenure). Or would it be better to first focus on improved living conditions which will in turn increase affordability? In Nigeria all land is owned by the government. It has a leasehold system and can just revoke in cases of public interest (which is very vaguely defined). Tenure security seems not to be very much pronounced in the Nigerian policies.*

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**State-initiated Slum Upgrading and Provision of Land Tenure Security:**

Prof. Syagga while discussing State initiated slum upgrading initiatives in Kenya indicated that it was important to understand the factors that lead to slums (genesis of slums). Many slums, he noted, started as a result of areas transforming into cities, with lack of proper provision of infrastructure and housing. This prompted people to settle in open spaces that were dormant, whether state owned or privately owned. It was more of Influx of people into the city e.g. Nairobi especially after independence. Other slums grew organically from early human settlements. The other dynamic advanced by Syagga was on squatter settlements – places where people have invaded land that was not their own i.e. government or private and Informal settlements – Land could belong to the people but the land has not been planned and lacks services and proper infrastructure and proper development guidelines.

In his discussion, Syagga argued that in the early days of independence the government tried to solve the issue of slums and lack of housing by initiating a number of programs. One of these programs was the site and service schemes where a site would be planned, infrastructure provided, largely off-site

infrastructure, and occasionally on-site infrastructure then issued to individuals to construct their own houses. Conventional housing was also done “build then give the key” whether condominiums or apartments. However, during the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) fronted by IMF and World Bank the government was persuaded to get out of provision of housing and provide employment and create

jobs instead with the assumption that economically empowered people would be able to provide their own houses. This paradigm shift in policy for provision of housing apparently did not secure housing for Kenyans thus the continued proliferation of slums / informal settlements.

So around five years ago, noted Syagga, the government came back to slum upgrading. On this renewed interest Prof. Syagga noted;

*“The momentum that came early was from International community especially World Bank’s in-situ upgrading (don’t demolish more than 10%) so as to provide infrastructure, with the overspill of the demolished resettled elsewhere. On Squatter settlements the question was how to give tenure security with terms for settlement upgrading. In general the question was who gains when the slum is upgraded? Is it the land owner, the structure owner or the tenants mostly leading to a competition between the structure owners and land owners, and a number of law suits especially on terms of tenure were initiated. When dealing with site & service there is provision of individual title or a block title with proper legal backing and documents.”*

Prof Syagga finalized his presentation by noting that currently a number of upgrading initiatives by the government with the help of various donors are ongoing. He singled out KISIP funded by World Bank targeting provision of infrastructure in informal settlements and KENSUP funded by UN-Habitat. However, Syagga argued that some of the approaches adopted are not likely to solve the intended problem e.g. the decanting site housing project by KENSUP which has taken 10 years to provide housing for only 700 households is inappropriate as the amount of money spent in this project would be enough to eliminate the whole of Kibera through In-situ upgrading approach.



Figure 1; Participant in the Panel Seminar

## THEMATIC AREA 2:

### Social Housing and Impacts for the Poor:

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*In Nigeria there is a lot of confusion about target groups for social housing. The housing policy states that social housing should be provided for the low and no-income groups (with a backlog of 16 million housing units, while planning to provide 1 million housing units per year, which seems highly unrealistic). However, social housing is often too expensive and not affordable for these groups. On the other hand, it contributes to some relaxation of market demand, relief of steeply rising prices, and stabilization of sales and rental prices in the long run.*

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Prof Mustapha Zubairu who heads CHSUD which was started in 2003 in collaboration with UN Habitat (Nigeria) said that planning over the years has been more technocratic and geared towards preparation of Master plans which he argued have not really represented the people's needs. He further noted that CHSUD is currently engaged in innovative research on aspects of human development and advocacy, moving from city to city providing technical advisory service. The center has participated in development of the National housing and urban development policy in Nigeria (became operational in June last year). The professor noted that out of the 168 million Nigeria populations, 100m are technically poor, ½ of this 100m are chronically poor. The center therefore helps create capacity to provide social housing.

Dr. Obala noted that there is hardly any good example of social housing in Kenya. He argued that there are normally two players in the process of provision of social housing i.e the Community and the state and that there is need to

understand the land owner dynamics. As a professional, Obala noted, one needs to change the approach from technocratic to more of negotiation leading to an understanding, especially when dealing with private ownership marred up by wars such as ethnic wars. He emphasized the need for partnerships in the use of urban space. Also commenting on this subject, Madam Nzainga advised that the effect of not providing for the poor leads to lack of order and chaos leading to insecurity, crime and rioting thus lack of peace. She argued that Social housing comes in to provide for the poor.

## THEMATIC AREA 3:

### Community-led slum upgrading:

While discussing this theme, Mr. Jack Makau noted that the lessons learnt in Kenya are not directly transferrable to other contexts because of difference in socio-economic and political environments. The best way is to allow the community accept those ideas, own those ideas and finally adopt those ideas. The ideas should be more sensitive to the community. Mr. Makau argued that when an upgrading program is community led the community actually provides at least much of the [about 90%] resources for slum upgrading thus reducing the use of resources by other players and releasing resources within the community. According to Jack, community led initiatives start when such communities start



forming organization within them. The definition of the organization varies e.g. for SDI it starts with saving schemes, a mode also preferred by Pamoja Trust as alluded to by Salma who further said that communities

prefer the use of saving schemes from the believe of Kenyans that 'where your money is, is where your heart is'. The community members actually start appreciating involvement of other players like the universities e.g. the appreciation of GIS maps where they actually add value to the exercise of mapping. The amount of informed decision making that happens in a community-led initiative is great. Most community led initiatives are collaborative – where the role of the community within planning is actually highlighted with a definite role of the professionals which can't be replaced.

## CONCLUSION:

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*For the no-income and very poor the most viable option seems community-led incremental upgrading and/or building, either or not in combination with provision of accessible micro-finance mortgage arrangements with interest rates sharply below the market price for special target groups (3%). However, longer term impacts at the household level rather than built units have not been researched in depth. Participatory enumerations by slum inhabitants have proven to be important in slum upgrading practice. Recently there has been an increased emphasis on combining enumerations with mapping and surveys for increased accuracy and aggregation of data, often in partnership with universities or other professional organizations. This session focused on sharing the main experiences and challenges in combining enumerations with mapping and surveys and how these challenges can be overcome. Challenges include differences in perspectives, accuracy of data, controversial figures of slum inhabitants, etc.*

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Prof. Syagga noted that some years ago the government of Kenya was viewed as over-bearing. It actually led to a period where civil-societies grew and became strong and led to a multi-party Kenya. He further noted that the constitution is rights-based thus providing a better ground for involvement and participation of the civil society. He argued that civil-society should seek to go beyond tinkering of projects and programs of slum upgrading. The issue of slums, he emphasized cannot survive on the small projects that exist today, or that depend on donors here and there. Nonetheless, the professor held the opinion that comprehensive slum upgrading can only be achieved through government involvement and coordination of all other actors. He suggested the conversion of civil-society approaches into programs so as to provide affordability and scale. He argued that there is reluctance to accept what's right, who's in charge, in collaboration, to accept what works, reluctance on whose money to use and reluctance on who is to benefit. While supporting this proposition, Madam Nzainga, said that there is need for the governments to take slum upgrading and the issue of slums as a national issue and make it a national vision to deal with slums. There is need for persistence on the issue. Moreover, she advised that there is also need for educating the community being upgraded to prepare the people for change, seek strategic alliances, partnerships and corporations and finally listen to other stakeholders.

*Prepared by James and Olale*

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