

# Slum upgrading in developing countries: lessons from Ghana and Kenya

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## Abstract

*The proliferation of slums in many cities of the developing countries has been widely discussed in the literature as a great concern to most countries. The complexities of the slum problem make upgrading difficult. To help reduce such complexities, there have been studies focussed on measures put in place by various governments and organisations to help find solutions to the problem. The article analyses some slum upgrading projects discussed in the literature which are deemed to have been successful. The paper identifies common elements in the upgrading programmes in the literature. It assesses two slum upgrading projects from Ghana and Kenya to determine how the elements were factored into the projects' implementation. The article concludes that stakeholders involved in slum upgrading in Africa should consider the common elements identified to ensure sustainable slum upgrading on the continent.*

**Keywords:** Urban slum; Upgrading; Stakeholders; Ghana; Kenya

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## **Introduction**

Cities in developing countries are urbanising rapidly. This situation has been attributed to both natural growth and rural-urban migration (UN-Habitat, 2014). The rate of growth is often beyond the ability of both national and local governments to provide adequate housing and services for the urban population (Grigorovich, 2008). The urban poor are therefore forced to find their shelter in informal structures located in different places, mostly squatting on unoccupied public land, which results in slum growth (Serageldin et al., 2003).

Though it is acknowledged that slum communities are homes of desperation, research has also shown that slum dwellers contribute meaningfully to the urban economy and that they make tremendous efforts to fend for themselves (Grigorovich, 2008, Simone, 2001). Slums play many roles in city life; they are the bastions of low-cost labour which keep various parts of the city working in many different ways (UN-Habitat, 2003). They provide low-cost housing as the first stop for immigrants arriving from the rural areas, allowing them to save money for their eventual absorption into urban life. They are also places where different cultures intermingle, leading to new forms of artistic expression and cultural life (Neuwirth, 2007). It is therefore necessary that slum dwellers are recognised and accorded the opportunity to live in habitable conditions. Many states and organizations have therefore, adopted various measures to upgrade slum communities; either in situ or by relocation to new sites. This article seeks to review some slum upgrading projects in developing countries discussed in the literature and identify areas of concern for future upgrading in Sub-Saharan Africa. The projects reviewed have common characteristics. These elements are discussed in the article as the conceptual framework, using slum upgrading in Ghana and Kenya as model examples to make a case for governments to pursue similar projects.

### ***The Concept of Slum***

The word slum first appeared in the 1820s as part of the London cant (UNCHS, 2003). The term was then used to identify poor quality housing with unsanitary conditions which served as places for activities such as crime, drug abuse, social vices and epidemics (UN-Habitat, 2003). In today's everyday usage of the word, it simply means 'bad' shelter (Gilbert, 2007, p.699). It is used to denote any housing or group of settlements which are not deemed adequate for human occupation. Khalifa (2011) defines it as an umbrella concept for various categories of settlements, including decaying inner-city tenements, squatter settlements, informal settlements and shantytowns.

The UN-habitat also defines a slum as ‘a heavily populated urban area characterized by substandard housing and squalor’(UN-Habitat, 2003b, p. 8). By this definition, the high density and low standard housing characterize the term in the physical and spatial context, whilst squalor characterizes it in the social and behavioural sense. In that same report, an operational definition was given as ‘an area that combines to various extents the following characteristics: inadequate access to safe water; inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure; poor structural quality of housing; overcrowding and insecure residential status (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.12).

Many practitioners still have difficulties accepting the usage of the term slum to describe poor communities (Gilbert, 2007). This is because though the term explains the poor nature of housing and communities, people often misuse it and apply it to the residents in the area, though not all poor communities are characterized by social vices and crime. It is difficult to measure exactly what constitutes slum communities. The Cities Alliance, for instance, chose to measure slums based on two criteria: the proportion of people with access to improved sanitation, and the proportion of people with access to secure tenure (World Bank/UNCHS, 2000 see Gilbert, 2007, p.700). With this definition also comes the issue of secure tenure, because there are many poor communities where residents have secured tenure.

In this paper, we use the word slum to refer to poor quality housing in low-income communities, as well as the absence or poor development of infrastructure in such communities. The word slum in this context has no relationship with the character and actions of people living in these communities. The goal of the paper is to propose measures for better slum upgrading for people who continue to subsist under inhuman conditions within cities of the developing world.

### ***The Demolition versus Upgrading Debate***

Many governments believe demolishing slum settlements is easier than the pain of upgrading them. Hence, the solution to the slum problem in the past was often clearance (Gilbert, 2007). Despite the criticism levelled against such governments by civil society organizations and human rights advocates, others still occasionally demolish slums (see also Davis, 2005). For example, Ghertner (2008) writes that the number of slum communities demolished by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and Delhi Development Authority from 1995 to 2000 rose more than tenfold. Obeng-Odoom and Amedzro (2011) report on the aggressive stance the Accra Metropolitan Assembly had taken to demolish all slums in Accra.

There are similar examples in the literature about slum clearance in Kenya. Macharia (1992) and Klopp (2008), for instance, give vivid descriptions of the demolition of Nairobi's Muoroto and Kibagare Slums in 1990. Otiso (2003) further affirms that the number of demolitions by city authorities in Kenya increased tremendously in the 1990-2000 decade. These examples show that most states operate from the modernist mind-set in which planners and urban policy makers believe slums should be replaced with the erection of highly sophisticated buildings to show the glamorous side of city life. What the 'demolishers' forget is that in many cases, demolishing the structures also crushes the social structure and livelihoods of the residents. Many advocates of slum upgrading have called on states to institute programmes that address the root cause of the slum problem, rather than just the outcome. Slum conditions are better improved when upgrading is done in-situ than when slum communities are relocated to newer sites. As Turner long suggested, most slum residents gradually better their homes and living conditions as their environment improves, when they are encouraged by security of tenure and access to credit (Pugh, 1990 see Werlin, 1999, p. 1523).

### ***The Complexities of Slum Redevelopment***

For about four decades now, many states in the developing world have sought solutions to slums by embarking on upgrading programmes. The approaches employed have however not always been successful. The shortcoming in the upgrading efforts is that they are implemented with centralized planning and top-down execution, which has made it difficult to replicate successful pilot projects (Das and Takahashi, 2009; Otiso, 2003; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Bassett and Jacobs, 1997).

Apart from dealing with the top-down approach to slum development, there are other issues which need to be addressed by states in their attempts to upgrade slum communities: the makeup of slum communities varies from one place to the other, making it difficult to design absolute measures to solve the problem (Gilbert, 2007); definitions of what constitutes a slum differ across the world, and what is unfit in one country might be perfectly fit in another (Gilbert, 2007); there is no homogeneity in the needs of slum communities, so that whilst some communities need land tenure security, others need improvement in housing, and still others, infrastructural development. The question of whose interests are served by slum (re)development also needs to be addressed since there are communities where the owners of slum structures are different from the people living in those structures (Midheme, 2010).

Despite these complexities, there is a consensus on what needs to be factored into slum upgrading. At the top of the list is the bottom-up approach to slum upgrading. What is now presented as 'best practice' by the United Nations is participatory approaches where slum residents play a leading role in improving their communities, assisted by state agencies, NGOs and other actors. The review of the literature has

identified common factors which mostly feature in slum upgrading programmes deemed successful. They are referred to as ‘common elements on slum upgrading’ in this paper. The common elements identified which form the conceptual basis for analysis in this article are: land tenure relations, local specificity as against mere replicability, partnership with social inclusion, as well as government and civil society involvement.

## **Common Elements that Characterised Slum Upgrading**

### ***Land Tenure Relations***

People’s investment in housing construction or improvement is usually predicated upon tenure of land. Land tenure can be defined as the mode by which land is held or owned (Payne, 2001). Full titles are however not the only means of achieving acceptable levels of security (Payne, 2001). Lack of secured land and housing prevents the urban poor from accessing livelihood opportunities such as credit facilities and sound minds to pursue other opportunities. Secure land tenure in developing countries has been described as a necessary foundation for the urban poor to improve their living conditions (Berger, 2006). UN-Habitat sees tenure security as ‘the right of all individuals and groups to effective protection by the state against forced evictions’ (UN Habitat, 2004, p.4).

Commercialisation of land was largely introduced in Africa during the colonial era (Berger, 2006). Research indicates that large-scale commercialisation of land and housing markets was observed in most African countries from the late 1960s (Payne and Britain, 1997). Since then, land tenure policy in many African countries has increasingly reflected the desire for individualised private tenure systems in place of collective or customary ones (Payne, 2001). Nevertheless, the individualisation policy in most parts of Africa did not completely succeed in eradicating the communal ownership of land which prevailed before colonial invasion. In many countries, there is a co-existence of the two systems of landholding, which operate at different levels where they sometimes interfere with each other.

With respect to land stewardship, the communal land ownership system raises important issues of effectiveness and accountability (Toulmin, 2009). The individual land titling, on the other hand, has in some cases threatened the sustainability of slum upgrading programmes. Specifically, some individuals readily sold their land for higher income after securing the title during upgrading and moved to other slum areas. To curtail the problem of easily disposing of secured lands by the poor to middle income people owing to market pressures, several innovative landholding models like the Community Land Trust (CLT) have been piloted in some slum communities in Kenya, Ghana and Namibia (Bassett and Jacobs, 1997; SDI, 2013; Muller and Mitlin, 2007). Other countries in Africa have also tried different

methods, including starter titles, in their efforts to simplify the land tenure systems in their countries (see Gulyani and Debomy, 2002 for details).

### ***Local Specificity versus Replicability***

The needs of slum communities are not the same everywhere. They differ from one area to the other, even in the same country. Thus, upgrading should be attuned to the locally specific needs and aspirations of the community concerned. Locally based slum upgrading design has gained root recently. Today, NGOs are particularly spearheading such upgrading efforts in Africa. James Lerner developed the concept of urban acupuncture. The concept is based on the idea that precise intervention in strategic locations of a city may help generate catalytic change in a radial sphere around it (Shieh, 2006). And such intervention can cause major urban transformation. Since each slum locality has its own challenges, generally defined interventions for all slum communities might not be the solution needed. Designing a specific intervention for a problem within each community might be the answer to the slum menace. The urban acupuncture strategy was used in the Favela Bairro initiative which has contributed to more than 150 documented interventions in Favelas (Shidan and Qian, 2011).

One important component for consideration in locally-specific slum upgrading is social relations. Social relations differ from one community to the other. Embedded in social relations is an element of trust which binds together the community members. The trust makes norms and values specific to communities. NGOs like Slum Dwellers International (SDI) tap into these social relations to plan with and for the slum dwellers to improve their communities (Satterthwaite, 2001). Usually, they use daily savings as a starting point to bring the residents together. In Namibia such a savings scheme was used to get together the urban poor and this led to the beginning of the upgrading of settlements for the slum dwellers (Muller and Mitlin, 2007).

Slum upgrading projects which have been successful in one area may be replicated and scaled up. However, such replication must take into consideration the conditions prevailing at the area where replication is intended. Accordingly, replicability, while borrowing from the strengths of successful projects, must be embedded in the specificities and needs of the target community. Project replicability could be based on cost, construction materials, means of financing, or ways of securing the land. In instances where upgrading has been successfully done in some areas, it is possible for such projects to be replicated in another area with comparable conditions. In the literature, there are examples across countries where the SDI approach of slum redevelopment has been replicated in many places (Muller and Mitlin, 2007; Otiso, 2003; D’Cruz et al., 2009).

Since the needs of slum communities are not homogenous, upgrading should be locally specific. This is not to say that successful upgrading cannot be replicated. Replicability is possible, but conditions for replicating a project in another area should be weighed against the local conditions that prevail in the two communities.

### ***Partnership and Social Inclusion***

Partnerships involving the state, NGOs, the private sector, CBOs and community members in slum upgrading are greatly recommended. Such collaborations have been proven to be successful in the implementation of slum upgrading and sustainability (Gulyani and Debomy, 2002). Partnership in slum upgrading ensures that all stakeholders involved in upgrading processes are part of the planning and implementation processes (Serageldin et al., 2003). As a result, in 2008 the UN-Habitat launched the participatory slum upgrading project (PSUP) (UN-Habitat, 2008). Such projects require an understanding of the local context, involvement of urban stakeholders, institutional frameworks and financial mechanisms necessary for financing housing construction. In partnership upgrading, each stakeholder's trustworthiness is important. Each stakeholder should have a genuine reason to benefit from the project. Without such recognition, their commitment will dwindle with time.

The Favela-Bairro project in Brazil, which is generally considered a successful upgrading programme, was achieved because the state made efforts to include different stakeholders in the project (Abiko et al., 2007). The partners included the Inter-American Development Bank, city governments, NGOs, the private sector, churches and residents (Costantino, 2003). In India, the Ahmedabad slum network pilot project which was deemed successful included stakeholders such as local government agencies, private sector partners, NGOs, and local residents (Das and Takahashi, 2009).

Among residents, partnership should target the inclusion of all social groups. There are often deep-rooted social and economic divisions among residents which prevent total community participation (Werlin, 1999). If these divisions are not handled well, it could lead to social exclusion of categories of people within the communities. Social exclusion of the poor and less influential people in planning processes is common and often accounts for the failure of many slum upgrading programmes in many communities.

### **Government and Civil Society Actors**

As Otiso (2003) argues, both the state and civil society actors (NGOs and community members) have their own strengths, which can be usefully mobilized in settlement improvement initiatives. It is therefore important to nurture synergistic coproduction between these two actors to avoid wasteful

duplication of efforts and waste of scarce resources. Collaborative engagements between the state and civil society not only quicken the process but also allow each actor to concentrate its efforts where they are most likely to yield the greatest benefits. Thus, while the state is best left in charge of policy coordination, civil society actors are more efficient in building technical capacities of the community, as well as linking local residents with useful external contacts (Midheme, 2010).

The emergence of NGOs as significant actors in the provision of adequate and affordable housing in recent years is notable. NGOs mobilize local people into community based organisations that supplement the efforts of the state or entirely provide the services when none is in place (Otiso, 2003). NGOs intervene in communicating the needs of poor people to governments and other agencies that can help them by lobbying for policies which favour the poor (Hasan, 1990; see Otiso, 2003, p. 224). It is difficult to give accurate figures in tracking the number of NGOs involved in housing delivery world-wide, but the UH-habitat estimates there are several thousands of such entities. Close to 40% of them are members of global networks that collaborate with UN-habitat in implementing the Habitat Agenda of adequate and affordable housing (Un-Habitat, 2010).

The role played by NGOs in slum upgrading cannot be gainsaid. Nevertheless, the role of the state in shelter provision must never be forgotten, as it cannot be substituted by any other actor. The UN-habitat, for example, has argued that slum development must be put at the door step of the state, and that slum creation should be seen as a result of failed policies, poor governance, corruption, inappropriate regulation and a fundamental lack of political will on the part of the states involved (UN-Habitat, 2003). Outside Africa, there are strong measures employed in some countries to solve the slum problem (Das and Takahashi, 2009; Roy, 2005; Moreno and Warah, 2006), implying that the issue of slums can be dealt with more rigorously than it is in Africa. Successful slum upgrading requires commitment and determination on the part of governments to make policies, backed by willingness to implement them. More collaboration between the state, NGOs and community members with innovative approaches to slum upgrading should thus be the focus, going forward.

## **Assessing the Elements in the Context of Slum Upgrading in Ghana and Kenya**

### ***Slum Upgrading in Ghana***

Ghana is more urbanised than Kenya (Otiso and Owusu, 2008); 50.90% of Ghana's population lives in urban areas (Ghana statistical Service, 2012). Ghana had an annual urban growth rate of 3.4% in 2012 (World Bank, 2013). With the country's population of over 24 million, the Greater Accra Region alone is home to over four million people, representing about one-sixth of the country's population (Ghana

statistical Service, 2012). The Ghanaian Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development puts the number of people living in urban slum areas at two-thirds of the total urban population.

Ghana's slum problem manifests mainly in two ways. First are people living in dilapidated houses in indigenous communities. Here, the residents originate from the communities concerned, with the land and housing belonging to the ancestors and relatives of the occupants. The second involves migrants living in congested permanent or makeshift structures on largely vacant state-owned lands (Danso-Wiredu, n.d.). It is only in recent times that slum upgrading has become a widely-discussed topic in Ghana. This is because the issue of land tenure security which has characterized the recent debate was not a keenly discussed issue in Ghana in the past. The 'Zongo' communities (small, predominantly Islamic settlement areas located mostly in the outskirts of major cities and towns) have long existed in many parts of Ghana. These communities are characterized by inhumane housing conditions and deplorable community infrastructure and services. They are mostly squatter settlements, but have not exactly been topics for discussion, because the leaders that gave the land to the squatters have not contested the migrants continued occupation of the land. Similarly, there are numerous indigenous communities in many cities and towns which are characterised by poor housing, community infrastructure and services, yet they are also not included in the slum debate because the land tenure security is not in dispute.

Though not many slum upgrading projects have been implemented in Ghana, there are pockets of community infrastructure upgrading projects that can be identified in the country. Most of such upgrading initiatives have been based on infrastructure provisions with little focus on individual structures within the slum communities. For instance, with the help of the World Bank, the country has undertaken some infrastructural upgrading in selected slum communities. In 1985, the World Bank supported the upgrading of access routes to new water supply points, communal ventilated pit latrines and drainage systems in East Maamobi under the Accra District Rehabilitation Project (ADRP) (Banes, Huque and Zipperer, 2000). The project improved the living conditions of over 19,000 people within the 30-hectare land area. Flood risk was reduced in the area and residents got connected to other parts of the city. Again, between 1985 and 1996, the World Bank supported two sets of upgrading schemes: The Priority Works Project and the Urban II Project. About 160,000 people benefitted from the two initiatives that covered the cities of Accra, Tema, Kumasi and Tamale. As with the case of Maamobi, the communities benefitted from infrastructure such as roads and toilet facilities (Banes, Huque and Zipperer, 2000). In Kumasi, for example, the Suame Magazine area, which is mainly occupied by motor

mechanics, was transformed as a result of the provision of access roads, drains, water supply and street lighting (Banes, Huque and Zipperer, 2000).

### ***The Amui Dzor Housing Project***

An on-site slum upgrading was completed in 2009 in Ashaiman, near Tema (SDI, 2013; UN-Habitat, 2011). It followed the UN-Habitat criteria for participatory slum upgrading. As part of this project, the Tema Ashaiman Municipal Slum Upgrading Facility (TAMSUF) was inaugurated under the auspices of the UN-Habitat's Slum Upgrading Facility (SUF). The Ashaiman community used to house low skilled labour for industries located in Tema. The industrial decline of Tema has however affected the community. There is a high level of unemployment in the area which has prevented residents from investing in better housing (SDI, 2013). The current inhabitants are mostly migrants from various parts of the country and they are predominantly petty traders. The Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor (GHAFUP) in collaboration with its members in the community, the government of Ghana, the UN-Habitat and other stakeholders planned and implemented the Amui Dzor Housing and Infrastructure Project.

The project is located in the Tulaku Electoral Area in the Amui Dzor unit of Ashaiman (SDI, 2013). GHAFUP, which is an affiliate of the SDI, mobilizes poor community members to form savings groups which it then uses as the basis to initiate discussions on issues of concern to communities and strategies for addressing them. GHAFUP members in Amui Dzor formed the Amui Dzor Housing Cooperative, which was used for the pilot project (SDI, 2013). In total, the project consists of a three-story structure with fifteen commercial units, thirty-one one- and two-bedroom apartments, and a 12-seater public toilet which is managed by the cooperative. It covers a land area of 90ft by 80ft. The land used for the project used to accommodate 10 families before the upgrading commenced (GLTN, 2013). The project has since been recognised as a model for providing affordable housing. The Ashaiman Municipal Authority and the Traditional Council want the project to be scaled up (SDI, 2013). But till date, there is no evidence that the second phase of the project has begun within Ashaiman. Neither is the project being replicated anywhere else in the country.

Photo 1 Amui Dzor, before and after upgrading



Source: Skye Dobson for SDI (2013)

### ***Slum upgrading in Kenya***

The 2009 national census showed that 32.3% of the Kenyan total population of 40 million lived in urban areas, while the annual rate of urbanization in Kenya currently stands at 4.36%. Nairobi accounts for 37.7 percent of the national urban population and it is 3.7 times the size of Mombasa, the second largest city. It is estimated that about 70% of the urban population live in slums and informal settlements (UN-Habitat, 2006; UN-Habitat, 2008).

Kenya has had a long established history of conducting slum upgrading which dates back to the colonial era when an ‘African location’ was established in Nairobi’s Pumwani area to settle African squatters in the city (Ochieng, 2007). From the mid-1970s to 1980s, the Kenyan government implemented many site-and-service schemes, as was the practice in many other developing countries at the time. These schemes, as was the case elsewhere, were greatly influenced by John Turner who advocated that states should provide basic infrastructural services and secure land tenure to enable slum dwellers build their own dwellings (Turner, 1967). In Kenya, the initiatives began in 1975 with the World Bank-supported Urban I Project, which delivered 6,000 site-and-service units between 1975 and 1978 in Dandora, Nairobi (Omenya, 2006; Macoloo, 1994). The second phase of the scheme, the Urban II Project, still supported by the World Bank, went beyond Nairobi to include site-and-service schemes in the second-tier cities of Mombasa and Kisumu (Macoloo, 1988; COHRE, 2005). Through the programme, some 14,409 serviced sites were availed to low-income households within the cities (Omenya, 2006). A further 25,000 site-and-service units were delivered in the Urban III Project, through which the state,

still with financial support from the World Bank, targeted slums and squatter settlements in the third-tier cities of Eldoret, Nakuru, Kitale, Nyeri and Thika (Omenya, 2006; COHRE, 2005).

### ***The Kambi Moto Settlement Upgrading***

The example of the Kambi Moto settlement upgrading discussed in this paper falls within the category of slum upgrading projects like that of the Amuir Djour discussed above, spearheaded mainly by communities working closely with NGOs but implemented through structured negotiations with the state. Kambi Moto is located within Nairobi's Huruma area, approximately 7km north-east of the city's central business district. The Huruma settlement was originally planned as a site-and-service scheme. However, informal settlements mushroomed on open spaces and public utility reserves within the scheme in the 1980s. As a result of these encroachments, dwelling clusters of Kambi Moto, Mahira, Redeemed, Ghetto, Gitathuru and Madoya sprouted in the open pockets of the Huruma scheme to become the 'six villages' of the Huruma informal settlement (Ettyang, 2011). Between them, the six villages occupy a total of 4.1 hectares of land that originally belonged to the Nairobi City Council (Ettyang, 2011; Weru, 2004). Like many other informal settlements in Nairobi, the Huruma villages suffered from inadequate basic infrastructure and services such as water, sewerage, waste collection, road access and electricity. Prior to the project, dwellings were typically 12 by 10 feet wattle and daub structures.

The Kambi Moto cluster occupies 0.4 hectares of the total area of the Huruma informal settlement and is home to 1,241 individuals accommodated in 539 households (Diang'a, 2011). The village started as a vegetable and charcoal market in 1975 (Kivutha, 2010) on space set aside for a car park within the Huruma site-and-service scheme. The residents faced numerous eviction threats from the then Nairobi City Council. However, not even a series of fires experienced in the settlement in 1997, 1999, and 2005 that earned it the name Kambi Moto- meaning 'camp of fire' (Diang'a, 2011), deterred the community from rebuilding their lives over and over again.

Against the backdrop of eviction threats, demolitions, fire outbreaks and environmental degradation, residents of Kambi Moto formed a village federation, Muungano in Kambi Moto in 1999, and affiliated themselves with Muungano wa Wanavijiji (the Kenyan federation of slum dwellers). In 2000, the community entered collaboration with Pamoja Trust (a local NGO that promotes access to land, shelter and basic services for the urban poor). The aim of this collaboration was to jointly engage the Nairobi City Council (NCC) in structured dialogue aimed at acquiring legal ownership of the land squatted-on by the community, and on subsequent development of better housing.

## *Slum upgrading in developing countries: lessons from Ghana and Kenya*

To cement community mobilization, the Kambi Moto federation initiated community daily savings among its members, a practice borrowed from the national federation of slum dwellers, Muungano. Members adopted a flexible model of savings in cognisance of each household's daily earnings, with some contributing as little as KES 5 per day (Ettyang, 2011)<sup>4</sup>. To effectively manage their daily savings, the community developed their own constitution, elected leaders and opened a bank account, into which weekly savings were deposited (Weru, 2004). They also held weekly meetings to review members' saving progress and allow verification of individual records. The current dwellings have remarkably improved structural safety and stability, compared to the original shacks. More importantly, households enjoy legal tenure to their dwellings. They have also accumulated valuable family equity through the housing consolidation process that allows them opportunities not only to access loans in the formal sector but also to generate some extra income through renting out some rooms (Ettyang, 2011).

*Photo 2 A Street in Kambo Moto showing unimproved shacks (left) and upgraded dwellings (right)*



Source: [Brandon Harrell](#), 2014

### *Situating the Discussed Projects in the Context of the Slum Upgrading Elements*

#### ***Land Tenure Security in Amui Dzor and Kambi Moto***

Ghana's land rights procedure comprises a mixture of the traditional communal, state and individual ownership systems (Baffour and Hammond, 2013). The customary system still prevails in the country, with about 80 percent of land area still under this system (UN-Habitat, 2011). Chiefs and family heads can lease stool land to migrants under the traditional system. Such people only have usufruct rights, for

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<sup>4</sup> KES: Kenyan Shillings. In early 2000, the shilling traded at an average of 75 to the Dollar. The current average exchange rate is KES 102 to the Dollar.

which the buyers pay what is termed ‘drink money’<sup>5</sup> to the ancestors who guard the community land. Agreed market prices are now used to represent drink money. The prices differ depending on the location of the land. The combination of the communal, state and individual land ownership systems makes land registration in Ghana difficult. For instance, when a person purchases land, the registration process involves multiple visits to different institutions just to obtain the appropriate papers. This includes; land valuation, tax paid on property transfer, and a check to authenticate the absence of rival claims to the land concerned by another agency (Toulmin, 2009).

Kenya has had a long history of tenure individualisation. Historically, the process began when the colonial administration introduced individual title registration in 1908 within the ten-mile coastal strip (Syagga, 2011). Later, the adoption of the Swynnerton Plan of 1955 hastened the process of individualization of property rights ostensibly as a desirable step in social evolution (Syagga, 2011; Abdulai, 2006). With the Plan came an intensified land registration programme meant to convert customary land relations into modern statutory tenure. Although individualisation of tenure was justified on economic grounds, its implementation had a decidedly political motive. The reform however aggravated landlessness as the abrogation of customary tenure spawned a wave of dispossession in the African reserves (Abdulai, 2006).

So how did the land tenure issue get resolved in the Ghanaian and Kenyan upgrading projects described above? The Amui Dzor land was initially in the hands of the traditional council whilst the residents were initially squatters on the land. After discussions and negotiations, the land was given to the residents by the traditional council on a communal ownership basis to avoid future sale by individual beneficiaries. Ashaiman Traditional Council first agreed to lease the land to the cooperation that consists of the structure occupants and GHAFUP. This makes the occupants certain that the flats belong to them and they can therefore renovate, sell, and more importantly, use the dwellings as collateral for financial credit from banks.

In the Kambi Moto case, the joint ownership model through the communal title awarded to residents inhibits individual land sales and ensures long-term community development. Additionally, the Kambi Moto ownership model was inspired by the limited space and occasioned by the high number of claimants and the need to accommodate all of them on site. Public areas are jointly owned and managed by the entire community as it is in the Amui Dzor case.

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<sup>5</sup> Drink money is the customary tribute paid to the ancestors of the land-holding community when land is leased to strangers (Odame Larbi, 2006 see UN-Habitat, 201:30)

## **Partnership and Social Inclusion in the two Projects**

The Amui Dzor project involved all relevant stakeholders in all stages of the project: the local organization (GHAFUP), the state (Ashaiman Municipality), the private sector (Almal Bank, Tekton Consultants and HFC Bank), the UN-Habitat and the local traditional authorities (Tweneboah, 2011). The community comprises mainly migrants usually clustered on ethnic relations. Social relations among residents are therefore not different from other migrant communities found in the country, which Agyei-Mensah and Owusu (2010) described in their work. GHAFUP therefore capitalises on these relations to mobilize community members into saving groups. GHAFUP members formed the Amui Dzor Housing Cooperative and set up a plan for the project (SDI, 2013). They facilitated the formation of a partnership with UN-Habitat SUF. UN-Habitat helped negotiate a long-term mortgage for the cooperative from the HFC at an interest rate of 12%. SDI also gave loans from the Urban Poor Fund at an interest rate of less than 5%. This credit enabled the GHAFUP members to commence construction (SDI, 2013). The involvement of the community members ensured social inclusion and their physical contribution as casual workers in carrying building materials, utilizing local knowledge and generating skills required for project maintenance, helped save cost (SDI, 2013).

In Kenya, the Kambi Moto initiative employed the collaborative planning model, also with local residents at the centre of project planning and implementation (Midheme, 2010). The project was spearheaded by the local federation of slum dwellers (Muungano wa Kambi Moto). Key external partners include the Nairobi County government, Pamoja Trust, Akiba Mashinani Trust, University of Nairobi, Practical Action (formerly ITDG-East Africa), SDI, Shelter Forum, Tecta Architects, and the Italian development agency, Cooperazione Internazionale Fondazione (COOPI).

### ***Local Specificity and Replicability***

Attempts at replicating successful upgrading projects from one context to another must first recognise the variability in social relations, opportunities and constraints. For instance, the SDI method of small savings by the poor aims to horizontally bring the poor from many countries together. The method has been adopted in many cultures. In both the Amui Dzor and Kambi Moto projects, community members became members of their respective local federations and saved daily, mobilizing not only financial resources but collective capacity as members meet regularly, manage their funds, and discuss issues of concern to their communities and strategies for addressing them. It was through this kind of mobilisation that both projects were conceived and implemented eventually. To make sure they got it right, some federation members in both Ghana and Kenya were taken to India on exchange programmes to study the housing projects of the Indian federation which bore lessons for their African counterparts

(SDI, 2013). In both the Amui Dzor and Kambi Moto cases, the projects took the local area into consideration by recognizing the residents as informal sector workers. To ensure that the money loaned out to individual households was paid back by the beneficiaries, the local federations instituted a culture of savings, which was crucial in securing members' trust before the onset of the upgrading programmes.

The communal land tenure model adopted in both cases is an innovative system of land administration that carries a lot of promises in the provision of low-income housing in urban areas. The CLT is particularly attractive since it could be adopted in both slum upgrading and in the development of new low-income housing on greenfield sites. Communal land tenure models are particularly attractive in high-density slum environments where the issuance of individual titles is not only likely to drive up the per capita costs of settlement upgrading, but also to leave the beneficiaries susceptible to the pressures of the post-upgrading land markets (Payne et al., 2009).

### **Collaboration between Government and Civil Society**

The involvement of the state is crucial in any country's upgrading project. Since slum upgrading begun in Africa in the 1970s, it has largely been a centralised undertaking where decisions concerning upgrading are taken by the state with little involvement from the community members (Otiso, 2003).

The Amui Dzor project from its inception involved GHAFUP, which collaborated with the state throughout the processes. They negotiated with the traditional council to secure the land for the project and were involved in bringing the other stakeholders together. GHAFUP also played an important role in a relocation strategy for temporarily housing those displaced by the construction. In addition, GHAFUP partnered with an architecture firm, Tekton Consultants to design the structures, sourced construction materials, dug trenches, and assisted with grading. Members selected beneficiaries for the project themselves, and negotiated with local authorities for support (SDI, 2013).

The Kenyan case similarly demonstrates a strong partnership between the state and civil society institutions in carrying out settlement upgrading. Unlike past settlement improvement initiatives, in which either the state or NGOs sought to work independently with the affected communities, often with little involvement of each other, the Kambi Moto case presents a clear shift towards closer collaboration (Midheme, 2010) between community members and the local government.

## **Conclusion**

It is possible to undertake successful slum upgrading in Africa, as is evident from the two projects discussed above. However, given the complexity of the matters involved, stakeholders spearheading such initiatives should contemplate on the elements discussed ahead of planning and implementation processes. Each of the elements identified above plays an important role in the upgrading process. Land tenure on squatter land can be regulated successfully if community leaders are involved in the regulation processes. Different kinds of slum upgrading suit different communities. Housing upgrading for rental or buying purposes depends on the community in question and the involvement of the local leaders, and members will sustain the final decision taken. In each community, the makeup of the civil society is different. In indigenous communities for instance, traditional community leaders play important roles, but in most migrant communities, leadership roles are in the hands of leaders of community based organizations. The involvement of the state from the beginning in finding solutions to housing the urban poor is crucial. It remains the responsibility of planners and other stakeholders to weigh each element and its contribution in any slum upgrading process.

The initiative in both upgrading cases thus brought together multiple stakeholders drawn from the state, the market and the civil society in a joint effort aimed at responding to the real need for low-income urban housing. In this initiative, conscious attempts were made to shore up the disadvantaged urban poor. Moreover, the community savings scheme bred a tight social bond that brought together both tenants and structure owners. Thus, when the final housing plan was prepared, all residents qualified for a site to develop new housing.

Current efforts by international and local NGOs towards improving the housing situation on the continent can appreciably contribute towards reducing the housing problem. However, with the involvement of the state, upgrading projects can be implemented on a larger scale. There is adequate evidence from our case studies that low-income people can make significant investments in housing when supported to do so. Again, the projects discussed prove that informal sector workers can pay their rent. Usually, for fear of unreliable sources of income for informal sector workers, they are excluded from state and private sector housing provisions. This idea is skewed in countries where more than half of the working population is concentrated in the informal sector. Policy wise, the state should learn from what the NGOs are doing and replicate it on a larger scale.

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*Slum upgrading in developing countries: lessons from Ghana and Kenya*

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*Slum upgrading in developing countries: lessons from Ghana and Kenya*

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