ESID Briefing No. 26

Promoting urban poverty reduction in Uganda: Lessons for Slum-Dweller Federations

KEY FINDINGS:

- The co-production of basic services between slum-dweller organisations and municipal governments is most likely to generate quality, affordable, and sustainable services if: sufficient financial resources are invested; there is a recognition that the partnership itself must be sustained overtime; services are managed transparently; and if significant time is devoted to involving, consulting, and sharing information with the wider user community over time

- Relationships of trust between political, technical, and community partners have to be sustained over time at municipal level to make inclusive urban governance processes meaningful

- Vertical coalitions of actors are important as well as these municipal level partnerships. This means coalitions which join together key actors across transnational, national, municipal and settlement levels such as donor agencies, international social movements, national ministries, city, municipal and divisional local governments, and the organised urban poor.

INTRODUCTION

In 2002, Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) began working with the Government of Uganda to mobilise slum-dwellers in Kampala City and Jinja municipality around sanitation and housing leading to the formation of the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU). In 2010, SDI and the NSDFU developed a new partnership, this time with the newly formed Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, and Cities Alliance, called *Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda: A Secondary Cities Support Programme* (TSUPU).

This briefing reports findings from research into these two partnership initiatives. The research sought to understand how and why these partnerships have come about, and have contributed to urban poverty reduction; and to draw out lessons for future practice.

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FINDINGS

The Kisenyi Sanitation Unit

Impressed by SDI's work in India, the Ministry of Works, Housing and Communications, Kampala City Council (KCC), and Jinja Municipal Council signed a memorandum of understanding with SDI in 2002. The partners committed to mobilising slum-dwellers into savings-based federations and the piloting of slum-upgrading through partnerships between the organised urban poor and national, city and municipal local governments. In Kisenyi III, Kampala Central Division, sanitation was a serious priority with 4,000 residents, no sanitation facilities, and regular outbreaks of diseases. It was also perceived to be a no-go area by city officials because of high levels of crime. This became the focus of the first pilot initiative. Together, Ministry officials and Kampala Central Division councillors participated in SDI training and international learning exchanges, working hand in hand with communities under SDI's guidance to carry out enumerations and profiling. Needs identification was highly inclusive with over 100 attendees at prioritising meetings. The partners agreed to construct a water and sanitation unit which would also include a community hall and offices, providing the new Federation with headquarters. Local residents were involved in construction and stepped in to co-finance later stages of construction. Selection of the Project Management Committee ensured representation from each relevant parish, and ministry and city council stakeholders continued to support the process until the unit was up and running.

The sanitation unit has proved to be highly sustainable and is still serving the community today, including through a monthly contribution of 150,000UGX to the urban poor fund[1]. Disease outbreaks are rare even when cholera hits neighbouring parishes, and city officials describe the area as 'a transformed slum'. The Town Agent's[2] office is located in the building which increases their own awareness of local priorities, and the community's knowledge about opportunities for support. One challenge has been that governance processes at the sanitation unit have become less inclusive of the wider community over time and therefore less transparent. Levels of use, income and expenditure were not being recorded. This makes it difficult to know whether or not the unit is 'pro-poor' as well as being sustainable.

Lessons from Kisenyi did not trigger similar partnership projects in other parts of the city until much later[3] and these have mainly been SDI and Federation-funded rather than driven by collaboration with the city authorities. There are many reasons for this. In the 2006 elections, the key political champions of the initiative were voted out, while key technical and administrative officials at city and divisional levels were transferred to other areas of the city. The new national slum-dwellers federation - consisting of the Jinja and Kampala branches – were also attempting to consolidate their organisation and set up a support NGO. The increasingly high value of land and the playing out of national politics on the city's streets have also made uptake of slum-upgrading approaches challenging, including through the constant threat of evictions.

Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda: A Secondary Cities Support Programme

The 2011-2014 TSUPU programme was implemented in partnership by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, SDI, Cities Alliance, the NSDFU, ACTogether and five participating municipalities. The programme aimed to align urban development efforts at the national, municipal, and community scales, and include organisations of the urban poor in municipal development governance with the intention of rolling out such approaches nationally. Each municipality was awarded Community Upgrading Funds (CUF) for the co-production of basic services with the urban poor; and supported to establish Municipal Development Forums (MDFs) through which multiple urban development stakeholders, including the organised poor, could engage council. The MDFs were also tasked with producing Municipal Development Strategies (MDS) which was ambitious within the three year time frame. Instead, MDS development is being supported through the World Bank's 'Uganda Support for Municipal Infrastructure Development' (USMID) initiative which is focused on capacity-building municipal local governments and developing urban infrastructure, especially roads. USMID is also supporting new MDFs, and MDS development, in a further 9 municipalities. TSUPU has generated the following key outcomes for urban poverty reduction:

- The formation of 13 new regional slum dwellers federations, and the strengthening of federations in Jinja and Kampala.

- The transformation of relationships between the urban poor and municipal officials through partnerships which have legitimised the role of slum-dwellers in development

- Municipal officials and savings group members have increased understanding about how to develop inclusive and sustainable basic services in informal settlements.

- There are new municipal development forums in the 14 municipalities participating in USMID. Active forums have produced municipal development strategies to guide future development investments. The Kampala Capital City Authority has adopted the approach, setting up its own City and Divisional Development Forums. Municipal and City Development Forums are to be institutionalised in an amendment to the Local Government Act.

> " The sanitation unit has proved to be highly sustainable and is still serving the community today "

Lessons learned about inclusive urban development and poverty reduction

Making services pro-poor and sustainable

Research into projects in Kampala, Kabale, and Mbale generated cross-cutting lessons about what makes the co-production of basic services pro-poor, sustainable, and supportive of positive relationships between urban poor communities and government.

> " Transparent record-keeping about income, expenditure and fees is critical to avoid politicisation, conflicts, and to maintain community ownership over the service "

Inclusive project processes are key. Government and community actors should both engage in mobilisation and needs identification. Information-sharing with the surrounding community should be seen as an ongoing process. Transparent record-keeping about income, expenditure and fees is critical to avoid politicisation, conflicts, and to maintain community ownership over the service. Municipal officials need to maintain relationships with the project management committees (PMCs) over time. Problems arise that cannot always be resolved by the people living in the settlement alone. For example, the PMC of a water project in Mbale is subject to increasing demands for payment from a landowner where one of the taps is located. Officials need to help mediate conflicts and assist communities to develop strategies for maintenance – including with municipal financing in some cases.

The land on which a service is developed can be the source of many challenges for sustainability as the above example suggests. The most sustainable solution is for the partnership to purchase the land and for the community organisation to remain in possession of the land title. Municipalities need more exposure to innovative approaches to securing land for basic service developments.

> " Having Town Agents based within the Federation headquarters has been enabling of strong local community-government relations "

Strong relationships with technical officials and political leaders are important for quality and sustainability. In Kisenyi in 2003, the new federation had government support at multiple scales including at ministry, city council, division and parish levels. Having Town Agents based within the Federation headquarters has been enabling of strong local community-government relations. Politicians are regularly voted out however, and technical staff are sometimes transferred (or frequently, at senior levels). Partners need regular exposure to successes to sustain their support – as a support worker explained: "For all the gains that we make there is a counter tendency for people to go back to what they know and what they've done. And it's partly because so much of what we do is working with the informal and

therefore the illegal." How can existing relationships be used to secure positive relationships with new people coming in to position? In the case of transfers – how can the federation follow officials to their new locations and ensure local federations benefit from good historical relations?

In low-income settlements it can be a challenge to encourage local residents to contribute money for maintaining a water or sanitation project, take responsibility for protecting it from vandalism, and promote uptake of affordability mechanisms like monthly subscriptions. There was poor ownership and regular vandalism of water sources in one parish in Kabale municipality. The area has high levels of poverty, youth unemployment, and alcoholism. In Mbale, projects were vandalised because they were associated with politicians from particular political parties. Municipal officials, political leaders, and community representatives need to meet and discuss how to minimise these community dynamics. Kisenyi was seen as too dangerous to even set foot in by city officials before the mobilisations in 2002/3. High levels of inclusion and transparency about the process, and committed partnership from all stakeholders – political, technical, and community – helped to overcome these challenges. Sustained savings mobilisation and community agency around neighbourhood clean ups, livelihoods projects, and attendance at meetings has also maintained positive relations with local level officials as the organised groups are seen as capable partners and productive recipients of funding.

Box 1. Balancing inclusion and sustainability

Federation-run sanitation units like Kisenyi III (Kampala) and Mission Cell (Mbale) have increased access to quality water and sanitation services and created new spaces for community meetings and interactions with government. Identifying needs through profiling and enumeration; and inclusive planning and implementation processes like community meetings and participation in construction and management, create community ownership, while charging fees supports maintenance. However, over time, these units can come to be seen as private enterprises. There are low levels of community awareness about how decisions are made and what happens to money from fees. Suspicions arise while ownership reduces to a small number of individuals. The quality of record-keeping makes it difficult to assess levels of use and few households access affordability mechanisms like lower-cost monthly subscriptions. The original objective of these initiatives is to create good quality and sustainable projects that are affordable to as many people as possible (i.e. pro-poor). To achieve this, there is a need for accurate records about use, income and expenditure; this information should be shared openly through community meetings which should also include users in discussions about the management of the unit including how to balance financial sustainability with quality, access and affordability.

Developing inclusive urban governance processes

Even with Ministry support, the process of generating municipal commitment for inclusive governance and service delivery in municipalities with no existing federation or partnership has been challenging. A combination of factors made the difference. These included: transnational finance which motivated officials by enabling them to put their skills into practice; training and guidance from the Ministry, SDI, and affiliates like the Kenyan federation; learning exchanges and demonstration projects which legitimised the capabilities of the urban poor (such as the Mission Cell Sanitation Unit in Mbale); and, importantly, mobilisation and demands for accountability from federations themselves such as the Kabale Federation's occupation of the municipal council offices in 2012.

The introduction of settlement, divisional, and municipal/city development forums has created new opportunities for slum-dwellers to express their needs and interests; increase their understanding about development resources; and monitor how resources are used. Settlement and divisional forums have not become as active as the MDFs and in some municipalities there are regular meetings of the MDF Executive committee but not of the full municipal development forum. Federations hold the potential to make these spaces effective at different scales. In Mbale and Kabale, settlement forums were active where the area councillor was a Federation member, or where a member of the Federation's regional executive was resident in the area. Technical officials in both municipalities emphasised that there are resources available for local influence – however small scale – including for maintenance work on partnership projects developed under TSUPU. However, the findings suggest that without community outcry, and regular and well-recorded reporting of particular problems and gaps, such issues are unlikely to be addressed amidst many competing demands. Inclusion is also a tricky idea. What does it really mean? If a small number of leaders from the regional federation are representing the urban poor within a municipal development forum but none of the member savings groups in that federation know anything about the MDF, or what it is for – are the urban poor being included within urban governance processes? Who decides which priorities will be raised with the council through the MDF? There are diverse interests in seeing the MDF structure work effectively. The World Bank adopted the idea of the MDFs as a means of ensuring transparency within USMID implementation processes. The Directorate of Urban Development within the Ministry of Lands wants to see the development forums working well as a structure it co-designed. Key municipal officials thought it had the potential to improve relationships between the municipal council and local residents by increasing understanding about the constraints the council is acting under, and enabling them to better disseminate important information at settlement level. There is political buy-in to seeing the forums work – at least in the secondary cities – in Kampala this is less clear cut. The effectiveness of these spaces is therefore significantly dependent on the capacity of municipal slum-dweller federations to organise in ways which keep savings groups at settlement level informed and represented. The new national meetings for MDF Presidents funded under USMID are a good opportunity to share strategies for effective inclusion and representation.

Organising capacity of municipal federations

The cross-cutting factor in all these findings is the importance of the internal character of municipal federations (and the impressive achievements they have already secured). If savings groups are closely linked to the regional executive and information flow is working well from the bottom up, from the top down, and outwards to the wider community in terms of communicating what the federation is, and does, and especially what it has achieved, this drives forward the processes of making services transformative and advancing inclusion of the poor in decision-making. At the same time, federation membership expands, voice is strengthened, and risk is reduced for internal mismanagement, local conflicts and suspicions, or for party politics to undermine progress.

ABOUT THIS BRIEFING

This briefing reports on findings from an ESID project exploring what shapes state vision, commitment and capacity for the promotion of urban poverty reduction in Uganda which was carried out in partnership with the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda and ACTogether Uganda in 2016. Accompanying briefings which provide more detail about national and municipal findings can be found at: www.effective-states.org/publications. This briefing was drafted by Sophie King (University of Salford), Peter Kasaija (Makerere University) and Diana Mitlin (The University of Manchester).

[1] The NSDFU Urban Poor Fund is a revolving fund that savings groups can apply for loans from to develop income generation or other kinds of projects in their area.

[2] Town Agents are the most local level technical official in what was Kampala City Council and is now Kampala City Council Authority.

[3] Such as the Federation's sanitation unit in Bwaise III parish, Kawempe Division.

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