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# Developing risk or resilience? Effects of slum upgrading on the social contract and on social cohesion in Kibera, Nairobi

In Kibera, an informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya, three major development efforts are working to improve living conditions for the residents: the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) Kibera pilot; the Nairobi Railway Relocation Action Plan (The Railway Project); and the National Youth Service (NYS)-led Kibera Slum Upgrade Initiative. This brief describes these initiatives and assesses how each has affected the social contract and social cohesion to date. Interventions such as these can reduce conflict, crime, insecurity, flood risks, and strengthen resilience in dense and complex urban environments. But to do so, they need to include processes that build the social contract (such as meaningful consultation with residents and social accountability mechanisms). They must also build bridging social capital between ethnic groups. In addition, they should adopt multi-sectoral designs and integrate different sectoral interventions so as to address multiple risks.

## Introduction

Kibera, located in Nairobi, is one of the largest informal settlements in Africa. Its residents face many challenges, including unemployment, poverty, insufficient water, sanitation and infrastructure, poor quality housing, high rates of crime and insecurity, and flood risks. This brief seeks to assess how slum upgrading interventions can contribute to resilience for its residents. It describes three major development initiatives that have sought to improve living conditions in Kibera: the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) and the Railway Project – which have introduced multi-storey housing to the largely single-storey settlement, with temporary relocation of residents; and the National Youth Service (NYS), a multi-sectoral initiative, targeting the involvement of youth in road widening and paving, water and sewerage infrastructure,

solid waste management, and the initiation of micro-businesses. These three initiatives are compared and contrasted, and their successes in strengthening the social contract and social cohesion are outlined. First, a description of key definitions and a summary of the research is given.

## Key definitions

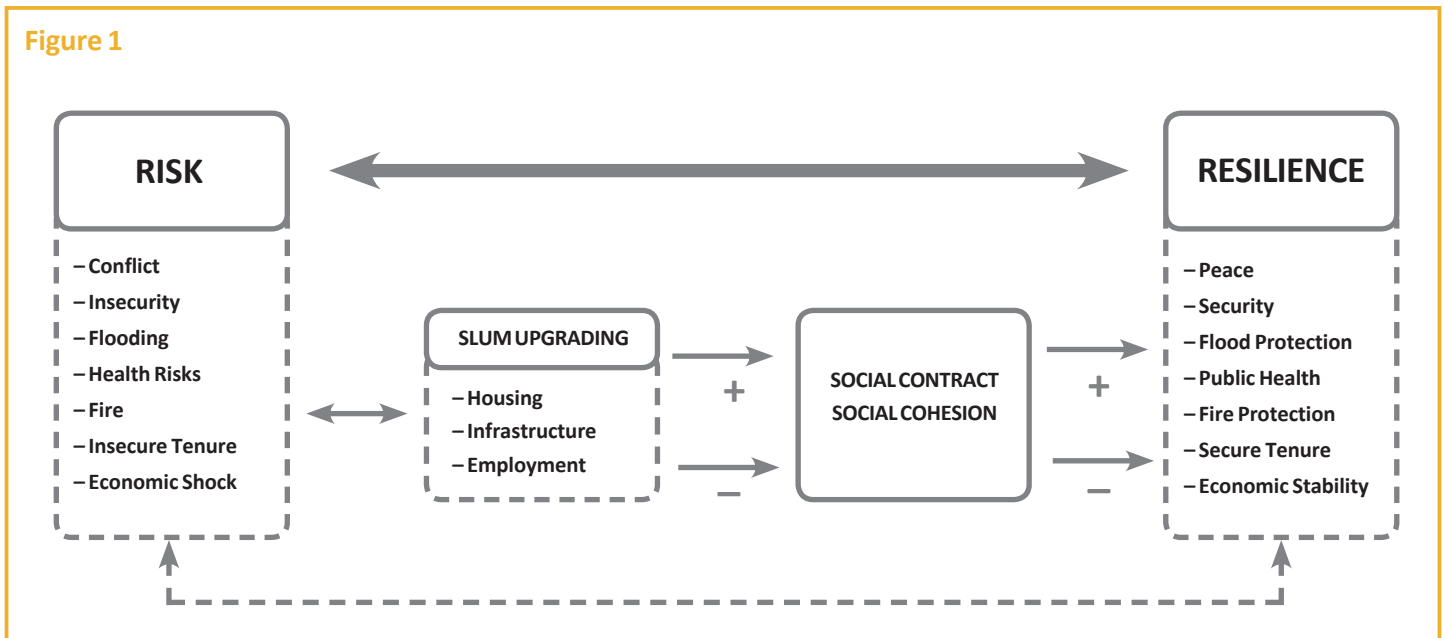
The social contract and social cohesion are conceived as mediating variables in the link between risk, slum upgrading, and resilience (see Figure 1).

**The social contract** is understood as a process by which everyone in a political community consents to state authority, thereby limiting some freedoms, in exchange for the state's protection of their universal human rights and security, and for the adequate provision of public goods and services.

## Policy Pointers

- Slum upgrading projects can strengthen resilience to risks such as flooding, conflict and security through trust building – both horizontally, between communities and vertically, between communities and governance providers.
- Programmes that involve temporary or permanent relocation have to find sites that do not disrupt the livelihoods and social networks of those relocated.
- Development interventions that adopt an integrated, multi-sector and consultative approach have a stronger potential to increase resilience in multi-risk environments compared to single sector projects.
- There was strong support from the residents of Kibera for the National Youth Service initiative despite limitations in the effectiveness of some of its components; there are lessons to be learnt here about the value of its holistic approach integrating employment and improved service provision.
- Enumerations of informal settlements can provide the needed underpinning for slum upgrading, as long as these involve close engagement with the inhabitants and other local stakeholders.

Figure 1



**Social cohesion** is ‘the willingness of members of a society to cooperate with each other to survive and prosper’.<sup>1</sup> Social capital, a core component of social cohesion, refers to the networks and relationships among people that enable a community to function effectively. This contributes to community resilience by providing an informal buffer to those affected by disaster. ‘Bonding social capital’ refers to social capital within an identity group, and is based on kinship, geography, religion, or ethnicity.<sup>2</sup> ‘Bridging social capital’ pertains to the building of cohesion between groups. It is based on external ties across distinct groups and can link these groups to outside assets and socio-economic identities.

**The research**

The research was carried out in the Kibera villages of Andolo (sub-area of Lindi), Gatwekera, Lindi, Makina, Silanga, Soweto East, and the ‘decanting sites’ of Langata and Magade, located at the southwest and northeast fringes of Kibera. Decanting sites are temporary housing sites where residents of Kibera deemed entitled to new housing can move to and stay until their new housing units are completed. The research areas were chosen to reflect the different types and levels of risk (such as floods, security, and conflict) experienced in different areas, as well as to overlap with the slum upgrading efforts.

Between November 2015 and February 2016, we interviewed 339 respondents in 36 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 55 individual interviews, including with representatives of the Kenyan government (chiefs, members of parliament, county commissioners), development organisations (such as UN-HABITAT), community organisations (such as *Muungano wa Wanavijiji* – the Kenyan Slum Dwellers Federation), district peace committee and security providers (the police). The FGDs were organized by Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI), a non-profit design and community development organisation working in Kibera in close cooperation

with community representatives (youth leaders, elders, community organisations leaders, etc.) in each location. FGDs were conducted in men-only groups, women-only groups, youth and mixed groups of 5 to 12 participants. Respondents were asked to identify positive and negative changes they had experienced over the past years in Kibera and then to take part in a ranking exercise of the issues identified. This then led to a discussion of conflict and flood risks, the slum upgrading projects, and implications for building resilience.

Although these three projects are not framed as enhancing resilience or addressing flood or conflict risks, they can and do have an impact on resilience, since they aim to reduce poverty and youth unemployment, reduce environmental hazards, deliver improved quality housing (in the case of KENSUP and the Railway Project), and ensure better water and sanitation service provision.

**The KENSUP pilot**, a project run by the Kenyan government and UN-HABITAT, was initiated in Soweto East in Kibera pilot for three reasons; good road access, a ‘cosmopolitan’ village with high ethnic diversity and economic stability, and development efforts underway that the new project could connect to. Soweto East was divided into four zones (A to D). The plan was to start in Zone A and then expand the project to the remaining zones. The inhabitants were to get temporary housing while their site was cleared and housing built. Through household questionnaires, the residents in Zone A were incorporated onto a master register, but they did not play a significant role in planning and implementation. There were also problems getting all residents registered and those registered were not further consulted before they received notice to relocate to 632 housing units in the temporary decanting site in Langata on the other side of the settlement.

Table 1 highlights several challenges: the delays as structure owners opposed the project because they

Table 1: Impacts of slum upgrading on social contract and social cohesion

		Social contract	Social cohesion
KENSUP	Positive (+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No conclusive findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No conclusive findings</li> </ul>
	Negative (-)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delays in project and lack of clarity on enumeration led to mistrust between residents and government</li> <li>• Structure owners opposed the project via lawsuits that delayed project implementation</li> <li>• Lack of affordability has been a significant cause for grievance</li> <li>• Residents living in the future Zone B expressed a lack of support for government initiatives, suggesting concerns over the Zone A consultation process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents relocated to Langata experienced disruption to their networks in Kibera, negatively affecting their livelihoods</li> <li>• Low social cohesion in Langata among Kibera residents and the middle class residents</li> </ul>
The Railway Project	Positive (+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerted efforts to mediate the different interests (including those of tenants) which has been largely accepted</li> <li>• Stringent criteria for eligibility, awareness campaigns, dialogue, consultation and community meetings helped reduce the risks of obstruction and conflict from local residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residents relocated to Magade felt able to connect to social and business networks, as they continued to access different areas of Kibera more easily</li> </ul>
	Negative (-)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior to the interventions of AMT and the Kenya Slum Dwellers Federation, the Railway Corporation in 2004 sent out notices of eviction to railway dwellers in Kibera without prior consent or consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future phases of housing will be further away from Magade, which might reduce ability to access/maintain social and business networks</li> <li>• Local organisations have expressed concerns about the long-term strategy for access across the railway tracks between villages and for security within the reserve once the housing is complete</li> </ul>
NYS	Positive (+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating youth employment opportunities and reduction in crime and insecurity built trust in the project and supported take-up (especially in parts of Kibera initially resistant to the project)</li> <li>• Road widening facilitated improved services without large-scale displacement and largely with support from affected people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bonding capital strengthened through youth participation in SACCOs that served as a support network.</li> <li>• NYS graduates/ recruits from different communities trained and led community youth volunteer teams throughout Kibera, contributing towards strengthening bridging capital</li> </ul>
	Negative (-)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial resistance in political opposition stronghold of Gatwekera, partly due to the perception that it was a government vote-procurement strategy</li> <li>• Corruption allegations brought NYS to an unexpected halt. This undermined the positive outcomes and caused a spike in insecurity in marginalised areas such as Andolo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant findings</li> </ul>

would lose their source of income (the rent from tenants); the relocatees' difficulties in affording rent and saving for the down-payment on the new housing; and the disruption to social and business networks and access to income-generating opportunities. The number of people enumerated also far exceeds the capacity of the new housing units. While no one had moved into the new houses at the time of the research (14 years after the launch of the project), residents started being rehoused into completed homes in Zone A in July 2016.

**The Railway Project** originated from Kenya Railways' need to recover the railway reserve and establish an extended safety corridor along the railway line. The railway reserve land in Kibera has historically been encroached upon by a large number of residents, businesses, and schools. The railway track itself doubles as an informal market and path for pedestrians in many areas. The Railway Project consists of building housing, business units, and social institutions for those who will have to move from the railway reserve.

The Railway Project identified eligibility through community enumerations in 2005 and 2010. The core enumeration team in 2010 were representatives from all the affected villages and this helped ensure that those affected had confidence in the process of resettlement. The Kenyan Slum Dwellers' Federation and Akiba Mashinani Trust (AMT) ensured that the Railway Project made concerted efforts to mediate the different interests, whether between structure owners and tenants, or between residential, business, and institutional uses. Each project-affected person received one new unit per household – either house or shop. Structure owners received one unit, but also received compensation based on the number of structures they previously owned.

In June 2014, the resettlement took place to a decanting site in Magade (to the east of the clearance areas). No rent was charged, although payment was required for water and electricity. No down payments for the new housing units were needed, as people rented these rather than owned them. Magade is close to Soweto East, so livelihoods and school attendance



were not disrupted. The quality of houses and sanitation were generally perceived positively.

**The NYS Initiative** focused on generating youth employment from road construction, household rubbish collection, drainage cleaning, construction of sewerage and ablution blocks, and micro-enterprise development. Youth receive 1,650 Kshs a week through mobile banking for work done through the NYS. They are also a part of Savings and Credit Co-operatives (locally called SACCOs), through which they save around 350 Kshs per week. The SACCOs provide loans to members to start businesses.

Most respondents reported on the many benefits of NYS for communities, including reduced levels of crime and insecurity during periods of youth employment. NYS also brokered the agreements needed to widen a key link road that has transformed access to Kibera, encouraged many new enterprises, and improved security (with new lighting and security posts along the road).

Initially, the programme faced resistance in Gatwekera – an opposition stronghold. There were concerns that NYS was a smokescreen for the government to buy votes by employing youth. According to one respondent, ‘we only embraced it [NYS] after seeing its impact in other places’. In 2015, allegations of corruption in NYS stalled the work in Kibera. In addition to financial irregularities, technical challenges have plagued the initiative, including the sewer line, which has ceased to function since the first stages were completed in 2015. The failure of ablution blocks as viable businesses has also removed many of the new employment and income sources for youth.

### Impacts of slum upgrading on resilience via the local social contract and social cohesion

For slum upgrading efforts to be effective in building resilience to risks such as flooding and conflict in complex political environments such as Kibera, this study proposes certain pre-conditions.

#### 1. Projects need to involve affected communities in consultation and secure community buy-in.

This will ensure a robust understanding of the local context, including its risk dynamics, and enable transparency and accountability. Securing community buy-in through strong trust building components will help strengthen the

#### References/endnotes

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social contract between those implementing the intervention and the beneficiaries.

**2. Where the social contract is already weak, projects need to be particularly sensitive to the political context.** In the dense, heterogeneous, complex political environment of Kibera, technical interventions which lack consultation have less likelihood of take-up.

**3. Projects that actively build social capital and social cohesion between groups have positive outcomes for resilience** as is evident in the Railway Project and in the NYS support for savings groups (SACCOs). But this also means avoiding projects that disrupt livelihoods and social networks.

#### 4. Projects that are multi-sectoral and integrated have a stronger potential to address multiple risks compared to single sector interventions.

Thus, slum upgrading projects in particular, and by extension, development projects in general, can become a tool for strengthening resilience to risks such as flooding, conflict, and security through building trust – both horizontal, between communities, and vertical, between communities and governance providers. Development interventions adopting an integrated, multi-sector, consultative approach have a stronger potential to increase resilience in multi-risk environments compared to single sector projects. Alongside this, robust technical design and sustainable financing are major factors in long-term project viability.

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