

KENYA WORKSHOP 2011

PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Like many developing countries, Kenya faces a considerable challenge of slums, a challenge that is growing by the day. In Nairobi, the capital, millions of people live in small, unhealthy, relatively expensive, tin and iron shacks with little or no tenure security which exacerbates their poverty and socio-political marginality. While slum upgrading programmes which aim to improve the social, economic, and environmental conditions exist in Kenya, they currently provide little to no opportunity for slum dweller participation. How can slum dwellers be meaningfully involved in slum upgrading as active agents of change, rather than beneficiaries of top-down 'improvement' projects? How can we build urban environments that are not only more responsive to slum dwellers' tangible built environment needs and aspirations but also reduce their socio-economic vulnerability and empower them to claim their right to the city?



GOAL ACHIEVED

The workshop aimed to explore slum upgrading from an 'integrated perspective' - that is, by investigating the macro institutional setting, the meso community and neighbourhood level, and the micro dwelling-household scale. The workshop was undertaken in Mashimoni, one settlement in the Mathare Valley located to the north of the Nairobi CBD. The goal was to uncover the opportunities and limitations of using participatory design to mobilise the community; bring to light their needs, wants, and aspirations; develop options for settlement upgrading; and strengthen their ability to negotiate with professionals and officials to acquire the political and financial support for implementation.

Date:

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Location:

Nairobi, Kenya

ASF Team:

N. Shinkins (UK only), A. Frediani, I. Nunez & M. French

Partners:

Pamoja Trust, UN-HABITAT

Donors:

Course Fees & time donated by ASF team

Project type:

International Workshop

METHODOLOGY OF WORK

The workshop started with a one-day 'city visit' which gave an insight into the challenging existing slum conditions and contemporary slum upgrading approaches such as government-led upgrading in Kibera and incremental self-build upgrading in Mathare. Following this, a well-attended Symposium was held at UN-HABITAT that provided the more 'academic' setting for workshop participants to understand the local setting in Kenya and to network with a wide range of local stakeholders. ASF worked closely with our local partners, the Pamoja Trust, a local NGO; and UN-HABITAT. In addition to the 25 international ASF participants there were 35 local participants (mostly students) and 15 'key' residents of Mashimoni who participated every day throughout the workshop.

Participants were divided into three groups: Institutional, Community, and Dwelling. While each group had different specific methods, they followed the same approach in the first week where the current situation was diagnosed and then residents were encouraged to dream about how they wanted their settlement upgraded. After the first week the groups were joined and all the rich information and findings were united. A Portfolio of Options 'game' was developed which provided a range of upgrading options (different housing types, tenure modalities, community spaces, etc) which, through focus groups, residents considered, negotiated, debated, and reflected on to reach a potential upgrading plan and highlight the complexity and intricacies of upgrading Mashimoni.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVE

Local stakeholders (such as the Pamoja Trust, local NGOs, government officials, and Mashimoni residents) commented that the workshop methodology was extremely positive and that they want to adopt it in their current practice. The use of cardboard models, the consideration of the community/neighbourhood scale, and the responsiveness to diversity (gender, youth, disabled persons, etc) were all able to be explored through this approach, something which other approaches often ignore in searching for consensus, only involving 'dominant voices', and only focusing on housing. Therefore, as slum upgrading programmes continue to be implemented in Kenya in line with the new constitution there are high hopes that the tools and methodologies utilised and refined in this workshop will be mainstreamed to make a wider positive impact on upgrading in Kenya.