

GOLD VI

**Case-Based Contribution
to Chapter 4: Commoning**
*GOLD VI Report on Pathways
to urban and territorial equality*

Experiences in informal settlement

upgrading: Zimbabwe & Namibia

In partnership with:

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Experiences in informal settlement upgrading: Zimbabwe & Namibia

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CHAPTER

4: Commoning

SUMMARY

This case study will explore two experiences of community-driven informal settlement upgrading – one in Freedom Square, an informal settlement in Gobabis, Namibia, and one in Dzivarasekwa Extension, an informal settlement in Harare, Zimbabwe. In both examples, organised communities of the urban poor and their support NGOs affiliated with the global Slum Dwellers International (SDI) network partnered with their local governments to implement informal settlement upgrading programmes that were community-driven from the inception phase through to implementation. In both cases it was this partnership between the community and the local governments, and the willingness of the local governments to adopt and promote incremental, community-driven approaches to informal settlement upgrading, that enabled the projects to achieve a scale and impact that influenced approaches to upgrading and development at the city and national scale.

Dzivarasekwa Extension, Harare

The Dzivarasekwa Slum Upgrading Project is a housing and infrastructure project in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. This is part of the Harare Slum Upgrading Project, implemented by Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and Dialogue on Shelter for the Homeless Trust in partnership with the City of Harare and the central government. Construction began in 2011 and is still ongoing, with 480 families as primary beneficiaries of land for housing development leading to secure tenure and provision of adequate water and sanitation facilities among other essential services.

After Zimbabwe's independence in 1980 there was mass rural to urban migration and slow to no development of adequate housing in the urban areas in Zimbabwe. In 2005, the government carried out the infamous "Operation Murambatsvina" which was characterised by mass evictions and demolitions of houses in urban areas around Zimbabwe. People were then moved into holding camps and Dzivarasekwa was one of them. The Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation had mobilised groups from the settlement who were doing land savings. After signing a memorandum of understanding with the central government, Dzivarasekwa Holding Camp was allocated to the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation in 2007 for housing development. The settlers occupying the Holding Camp were included in the in-situ upgrading project.

In 2010, the Zimbabwe SDI Alliance in partnership with the City of Harare set out to document, profile, map, and enumerate all informal settlements in Harare in



order to develop a **Slum Upgrading Programme (HSUP)** for the city. **The project was a city-wide initiative which documented 63 slums across the city, including Dzivarasekwa Extension.** In order to embed scope for replicability, 4 cities were identified as learning partners, namely Masvingo, Kadooma, Epworth and Bulawayo.

Interventions under the HSUP included provision of basic water, sanitation and transition and permanent homes in Dzivarasekwa. Potential beneficiaries started saving in organised groups so that they could leverage resources from partners. **Social cohesion was just as important as spatial planning.** A general layout was done with input from the communities and partners, enabling the project to have clusters that made it possible to densify the development. Planning studios were conducted and attended by the communities. These led to the creation of different designs, made available to any poor community in Harare at the cost of printing the designs.

Dzivarasekwa Settlements - Before
Source: Dialogue on Shelter Trust

Dzivarasekwa Settlements - After
Source: Dialogue on Shelter Trust

Construction was divided into 3 categories: infrastructure, super-structure and social amenities. The infrastructure was constructed by the community who divided themselves into work teams. The community identified individual connections to the municipal water line as a priority, after Harare Municipality reticulated the area. The project's management committee, who oversaw the project, was composed of individuals from the community, the Zimbabwe SDI Alliance and the City of Harare. Upgrading interventions also included construction of

a solar-powered community resource centre with an information and technology centre and an Early Childhood Development facility to cater for young people and children respectively, social amenities identified as priorities by the community. The resource centre, which is managed by the community itself, also offers space for community meetings thereby helping to strengthen the collective processes needed to sustain a community-centred upgrading programme such as that of Dzivarasekwa Extension.

Freedom Square, Namibia

The community of the Freedom Square settlement comprises 4,173 inhabitants on a 60-hectare site and is situated north of Gobabis, Namibia. In July 2012 the community used the **Community Land Information Program (CLIP)**, a community-driven data collection methodology developed by the Namibia SDI Alliance, to obtain community-driven enumeration and mapping data about their communities in order to negotiate for alternatives to the proposed relocation by the municipality. Subsequently the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) and its support NGO, the Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG) engaged with all stakeholders involved and promoted **a community-led, bottom-up informal settlement upgrading approach** at Freedom Square. Thanks to the community-driven re-blocking, not a single family had to relocate from the site and a total of 1,110 households obtained land.

NHAG and SDFN with the Gobabis Municipality successfully approached the national government to support the Freedom Square Upgrading Project as a pilot project. Freedom Square became one of the

three pilots for the Flexible Land Tenure Project for the Directorate of Lands and the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development agreed to contribute financially to the materials needed by the community to install water and sewer. **The project facilitates learning for the scaling up of informal settlement upgrading.** This was demonstrated through the partnering of a further 16 town councils with local informal settlement communities and other stakeholders, resulting in preparations for the upgrading of 22,000 households across various municipalities. This pilot will contribute toward the stipulation of the 2009 National Housing Policy: "The Government, in partnership with other role players, is committed to upgrade 75% of the informal settlements to formal townships by the year 2030. The attainment of this goal requires the mobilisation of public, private and community resources and energy within the context of public, private and people partnership."

The current challenge is how to reach a common understanding with national and local politicians and management of how higher density and mixed land use could lead to more affordable and sustainable land solutions for the urban poor.

A meeting between Gobabis Municipality, SDFN, NHAG and community representatives took place in March 2020 to review the upgrading process and to determine the way forward and where improvements are needed. All stakeholders were pleased to have the chance to take stock of achievements and challenges, to draw lessons learned and to discuss the best way forward.

A positive example of urban and territorial equality, ensuring the participation and ownership of the local community, is that a team of students from Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and the Katutura College of the Arts approached the Gobabis Municipality with assistance from NHAG and international cooperation to develop and improve the settlement's public open spaces. The project was participatory in its design and construction, with the municipality providing technical and logistical assistance.

Gobabis Municipality so far handed over certificates of landhold titles to 988 households through Flexible Land Tenures. Thanks to the work of the Namibia SDI Alliance, more than 212 households now have prepaid water meters, while prior to upgrading there were only 3 communal water taps for the entire settlement. In the end of June 2020 the sewers were tested by Gobabis municipality and NHAG technical team, to make sure that the sewerage is working properly before handing it over to the Gobabis Municipality. In addition to this, the Council approved housing construction in Freedom Square and, in June 2020, building work was initiated, with the aim of having the first houses complete by October 2020.

Gobabis Municipality is so pleased with the pilot project at Freedom Square that officials are planning the continuation of this upgrading at other informal settlements across the municipality.

Conclusion

The Freedom Square Upgrading project gave insights into reaching scale by engaging the community on all levels of implementation, while including key stakeholders to add value to their initiatives. It started with community driven data-collection as a negotiation and strategy formulation tool, followed by planning studios (site analysis and layout planning) in the settlement with students and professionals enabling broad participation amongst the community, and facilitating service installation for a large number of households.

The same can be said for the Dzivaresekwa Extension project, which has used collective practices and community-driven development methodologies from the outset to increase access to land, housing and basic services for residents and influence informal settlement upgrading in other settlements and municipalities of Zimbabwe.

Indeed, in both cases perhaps the most powerful tool for change was the collective voice of the organised communities of the urban poor who were given space to act as the driving force of planning and development – together with the political will of city governments willing to learn from and replicate these methods.

This paper has been produced as a Case-Based Contribution to the sixth Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD VI): the flagship publication of the organized constituency of local and regional governments represented in United Cities and Local Governments. The GOLD VI report has been produced in partnership with the Development Planning Unit (University College London), through the programme Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW). GOLD VI focuses on how local and regional governments can address the local manifestations of growing inequalities and contribute to create “Pathways to urban and territorial equality”. The GOLD VI report has been produced through a large-scale international co-production process, bringing together over a hundred representatives of local and regional governments, academics and civil society organizations. This paper is an outcome of this process and is part of the *Pathways to Equality Cases Repository*, which collects the over 60 Case-Based Contributions produced as part of the GOLD VI report.

In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 4 on “Commoning”, which focuses on the trends and pathways in relation to the governance, planning and provision of access to housing, land and basic services. The chapter explores how local and regional governments can promote approaches focused on collective action that contribute to urban equality.

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