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ADAPTATION



LOCALLY LED PLANNING

A Guide for Building Climate Resilience in Urban Informal Settlements

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Foreword



More than half the world's population today lives in cities and, of this burgeoning urban population, one in four citizens lives in informal settlements. Successive generations are condemned to pass their lives on the margins, enduring a hand-to-mouth existence where basic services are out of reach and fear of eviction prevents them from taking a stand against the injustice they suffer.

Climate change is making this hard-scrabble existence even tougher for the world's billion urban poor. They increasingly face and endure flooding, heatwaves, landslides, and drought – with the consequent effects on their already meagre assets, their health, and livelihoods.

In this bleak scenario, Mukuru is leading the way in developing a new approach. Working collaboratively with residents, the Nairobi County government has declared Mukuru a “Special Planning Area”, with needs that could not be met through the traditional urban master plan approach.

This has brought together the Mukuru community to seek solutions and face challenges together. The “lightbulb moment” could not have been more revelatory: it was as simple as asking residents to offer their own solutions, guided by their personal experiences. Listening, consulting and acting on local needs are the basic ingredients of a paradigm shift.

The Mukuru plan is a breakthrough for all of us who seek basic infrastructure and services as a critical safety net for the residents of informal settlements. But a word of caution: there is no “one size fits all” solution to this global phenomenon. Mukuru stands as a model to emulate, not as a blueprint.

Financing resilience-building in informal urban settlements is still in its infancy. Of the funds spent to date on adaptation, only an estimated three to five percent is spent in urban spaces. New funding models are clearly needed.

Many of the lessons on resilience-building from Mukuru are deeply relevant even beyond the boundaries of informal settlements.

While space does not permit me to name all of them here, I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Nairobi City County Government, Nairobi Metropolitan Services, and the 44 organizations drawn from civil society, academia and the private sector who have contributed to making Mukuru a model for others to follow by ensuring that its residents are at the heart of planning a brighter, more resilient future.

Finally and above all, my gratitude to the residents of Mukuru for pushing and advocating for change. They are trailblazers who have created a path for other informal settlements both in Kenya and across Africa.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Verkooijen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Prof. Dr. Patrick Verkooijen
Chief Executive Officer
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Preface

The invisible residents of informal settlements who service our cities – but whose basic needs are not met by the city – have historically inhabited the margins. They are pushed further to the margins as cities expand, often into more dangerous environments, because city governments and urban planners fail to recognize them as legitimate citizens and continue to ignore their needs. Paying far more for basic services like rent, water, sanitation, and electricity than “formal” citizens, the residents of informal settlements hesitate to stand up and be counted, afraid that a registered address will result in eviction and the loss of even the precarious spaces they inhabit.

Informal settlements in cities are growing, in many cases driven by climatic stresses in rural areas. At the same time, the rise in climate risks is making their harsh environments even less hospitable. These settlements are regularly battered by flooding, heat stress, extreme precipitation, landslides, drought, and water scarcity, with extreme impacts on the assets, health, and livelihoods of residents. Representing over half the urban population in many developing countries, they can no longer remain ignored and unseen. Urban resilience is impossible to achieve without building resilience in informal settlements.

Traditional urban planning tools, education and master plans have little relevance for promoting resilience in confined, resource-scarce informal settlements (at least without mass displacement), where little is known about the needs and vulnerabilities of residents. This is where Mukuru has led the way.

Working collaboratively with residents, the Nairobi County government declared Mukuru a “Special Planning Area” with special planning need that could not be met through the conventional master plan approach. Residents were engaged in a two-year process to profile and “enumerate” their own needs and vulnerabilities and develop their own solutions through a participatory and multisectoral planning process. This created critical local ownership and leadership, reduced the need for displacement, and resulted in integrated solutions for intersecting problems. Most of all, the process brought together the Mukuru community to seek common solutions to address collective vulnerabilities and face challenges together. Civil society partners followed, forming consortia to put their weight behind something larger than the sum of the parts of their previous piecemeal efforts in individual sectors.

The Mukuru upgrading plan will be merged into the citywide Nairobi Integrated Development Plan, providing an important model and precedent. A plan provides government a starting point – government does not invest where there is no plan, no official document to coordinate bureaucratic action and draw local, national and even international development partners and resources.

The Mukuru plan is a breakthrough for all of us who seek basic infrastructure and services as a critical safety net for the residents of informal settlements. While it is already a very important milestone, we need to acknowledge that many improvements and changes will be needed to follow a similar process elsewhere. No two places will have the same histories or capacities (within the community or the professionals who support the process). There are important aspects that readers should keep in mind when seeking to learn from Mukuru:

- Ideally, all external and internal stakeholders should agree on the process and its outcomes. In reality, this may not always be possible. Implementors should invest in dialogue, negotiations, and trust-building throughout the entire process.
- Ensuring the participation of the residents is an uphill task that must not be taken for granted. The protocol followed to ensure democratic governance is vital.
- There are many who will constantly seek ways to disrupt the process in order to maintain a status quo that works in their favor. These risks will have to be carefully managed.
- Evidence must produce the foundations for making decisions in each step of the process to ensure that the plan serves all and that those who lose out are adequately compensated.
- Aspirations will have to be pragmatically balanced with available (or potentially available) financing. There is no point having a great plan that cannot be executed because of lack of funding.

Financing resilience-building efforts in urban informal settlements is not without challenges. In stark contrast to urbanization trends and the rapid growth of informal settlements, most climate action funding goes towards mitigation instead of adaptation. Of the funds spent to date on adaptation, only an estimated three to five percent is spent on urban adaptation.

Historically, upgrading costs are paid by the public agency supporting the initiative along with, in some cases, a small household or community contribution (usually in the form of labor for building infrastructure). Partnering with local governments is essential as household – and neighborhood – level investments do not have the scale needed to adequately address climate-related hazards. Residents cannot act outside their locality or provide trunk infrastructure for water, sanitation and storm drains.

Local funds have proven a highly effective approach to addressing climate vulnerability and building resilience in informal settlements. Financing can come from community savings schemes as well as grants, subsidies and loans from government and international agencies. However, despite the great need, to date little to no international funds have effectively worked with local funds to support grassroots organizations and city governments to upgrade informal settlements. While international and national commitments to climate action, including under the Sustainable Development Goals, recognize the need for upgrading, they remain vague about “how, by whom and with what resources”.¹ New funding models are clearly needed.

In Mukuru to date, government has funded the necessary trunk and other arterial infrastructure while last mile infrastructure has been paid for by civil society partners as well as residents themselves (for instance, through sewer connection fees and in-kind labor).

Many of the lessons on resilience building from Mukuru on local leadership, government and non-government partnerships, and integrated approaches are deeply relevant even beyond the boundaries of informal settlements. The commitment to share those lessons through this Guide reflects the generosity of spirit of those who created the Mukuru plan and to whom we are grateful.

Sources

1. Satterthwaite, D (2018). In Garschagen et al. (eds). [Will the New Urban Agenda Have Any Positive Influence on Governments and International Agencies?](#) *The New Urban Agenda: From Vision to Policy and Action/Will the New Urban Agenda Have Any Positive Influence on Governments and International Agencies? Informality in the New Urban Agenda: From the Aspirational Policies of Integration to a Politics of Constructive Engagement/ Growing Up or Growing Despair? Prospects for Multi-Sector Progression City Sustainability Under the NUA/ Approaching Risk and Hazards in the New Urban Agenda: A Commentary/Follow Up and Review of the New Urban Agenda*, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 19:1, 117-137.

About This Guide

This Guide provides resources for locally led, inclusive, multisectoral upgrading for climate resilience in urban informal settlements. Designed as a guide not a toolkit, it pays particular attention to context and its variation across cities and countries – the principles, guides and methods in this document must be translated to each unique context. It can help replicate the approaches and roles taken by institutions and people for comprehensive, transformative upgrading – based largely on the experience from the Mukuru Special Planning Area (SPA) in Nairobi, Kenya – but not the specific plans themselves. While the focus is on Africa, the lessons can be applied elsewhere as well.

Building on the scale of ambition provided by the groundbreaking Mukuru approach to upgrading and resilience, this Guide aims to support national and local champions and local governments; communities; civil society and academia; and funders in undertaking inclusive, multisectoral and inclusive upgrading to both build climate resilience in informal settlements and link locally led action with broader processes of urban and climate governance. The Mukuru SPA is the most exciting, innovative process happening in urban development in Africa today, providing a pragmatic vision towards action that addresses fundamental problems in African cities.

The Guide purposefully excludes an analysis of where this approach might be replicated – it is not a blueprint but should instead serve to convene discussions, provide questions and fuel your imagination to innovate the right approach for your context. Many countries likely have legal provisions that can be leveraged to support locally led upgrading to build public infrastructure.

Several tools and methodologies for measuring or profiling urban resilience exist and have proven useful for filling data gaps and providing the basis for consultations with local governments and other stakeholders. However, they do not acknowledge the crucial role of locally led (i.e. community- and local-government-led) upgrading to reduce climate risks in informal settlements. They offer limited support for generating the data needed for upgrading and limited influence to informal settlement residents. In contrast, the approaches, strategies and methods in this Guide put communities at the center of every step of the upgrading process by highlighting their essential roles in advocacy, local politics, research, coalition building, partnerships, planning, decision-making, implementation of locally-appropriate and enduring public investments, and operations and maintenance for upgrading processes.

Research for this Guide was carried out between March and October 2022 and included interviews and focus groups with residents of Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Kwa Reuben and

Viwandani, members of the Kenyan urban poor federation Muungano wa Wanavijiji, local government staff, and civil society and academic partners; a survey for Mukuru residents with 183 responses; ongoing conversations with the staff of the Akiba Mashinani Trust (AMT) and Slum Dwellers International-Kenya (SDI-K) as well as their Indian affiliates; and reviews of existing documentation, reports and articles.

The Guide is designed as a living repository to evolve in tandem with the work of the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and their joint initiative, the Africa Infrastructure Resilience Accelerator of the Africa Adaptation Acceleration Program (AAP). It will both inform and be informed by practice on the ground. Future versions will incorporate lessons learned during ongoing efforts across Africa and beyond.

Main Sections

Overview

Summaries of key case studies in locally led, inclusive and multisectoral upgrading of urban informal settlements (such as the Mukuru SPA) and brief discussions of key concepts for the urgently needed local-to-international action to upgrade informal settlements for climate resilience.

Guides and Methods

In-depth discussions of key practices and methodologies as well as practical considerations for translating concepts to your context.

Guides and Methods are organized by theme (e.g. Roles; Community Co-planning; etc) and modularized by topic so that you can more easily pick and choose what is most relevant for your work. Additionally, each Guide and Method has target audiences to help you navigate to the ones that are most relevant to you. For more, see [How to Navigate Guides and Methods](#).

Guides

Guides discuss key practices in-depth. These concepts are highly sensitive to local context – each guide, therefore, includes practical considerations for translating concepts to your context as well as relevant case studies (Mukuru being the primary one).

Methods

Methods are detailed methodologies that can be more directly replicated across cities and countries and aid the undertaking of concepts discussed in Guides. They also include examples of relevant data collection tools.

Videos

Short videos highlighting key lessons from the Mukuru approach and strategies for undertaking locally-led upgrading for climate resilience.