
Case Study Report

Adopting Collective Frugality in Rethinking, Re- planning, Reimagining urban informal settlements

Mukuru Special Planning Area (SPA) Planning Approach; Nairobi-Kenya

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Abstract

This paper is centred on approaches adopted in the planning and designing of informal settlements and their implications. The discussions presented reckon that the conventional planning strategies adopted to control and guide urban development are often authoritative and deterrent to the sustainable, inclusive growth and well-being of the urban poor. Through a case study analysis, the paper introduces and discusses an alternative, highly auspicious informal settlement planning approach adopted in one of the largest informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya. Here, a four-fold contribution is made to the contemporary slum-upgrading and participatory planning debates. Firstly, the analysis provides a global and local overview of the status of informal settlements and reviews the strategies that have been applied in slum upgrading. It is observed that most approaches have turned counter-productive, with devastating impacts of coercive evictions, authoritarian demolitions, destruction of property, loss and disruption of livelihoods. The paper then sets the stage for the alternative approach applied in Mukuru settlement by outlining the pertinent development and situational challenges that invoked the declaration of the Mukuru Special Planning Area. Building on this, the paper expounds on the major elements that demonstrate frugality in this unconventional approach; coalition building, multidisciplinary, methodical community mobilization and engagement, strategic planning, conservative surgery, and iterative planning. The paper concludes by reflecting on the outcomes of this approach and lessons that can be drawn from it. The SPA Approach demonstrates there is an alternative to current levels of deprivation in informal settlements and conceptually reconfigures the planning process.

Keywords

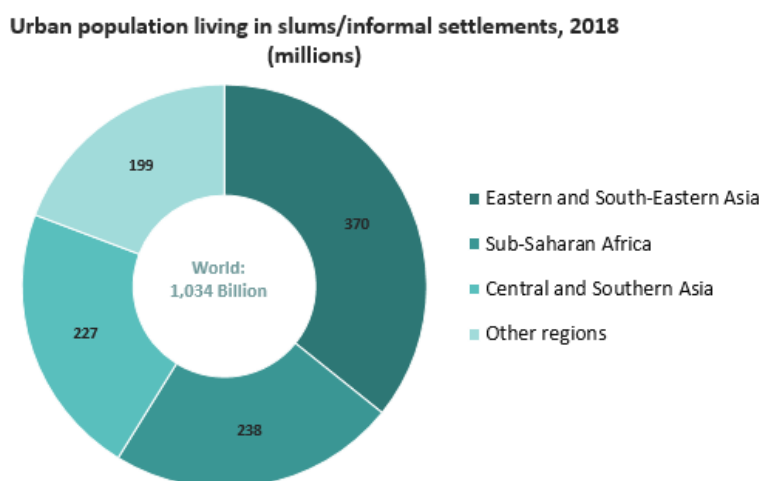
Informal settlements, Special Planning Area, Frugality, Participation, Collaborative Planning, Multidisciplinary, Conservative Surgery

1. Background and problem statement

1.1. Background

As urbanization continues to heighten at unprecedented rates, efforts of cities particularly in the developing countries to curb its grave ramifications whilst instigating sustainable urbanization have been inefficacious. Subsequently, over 1 billion of the global population have been left battling for survival in informal settlements plagued by meagre basic infrastructure, substandard housing, and sanitary conditions, deprived services, myriad human and environmental health risks. These settlements have been acknowledged as a parlous global phenomenon; formally defined in the Habitat III Quito conference as residential areas which; lack secure tenure, are cut off from basic services and infrastructure, are characterized by housing which is non-compliant to planning and building regulations, and are located in hazardous urban environments (United Nations, 2016; Zerbo et al., 2020). These multiple deprivations are pronounced in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa as shown below:

Figure 1: Urban population living in slums and informal settlements



Adapted from (United Nations, 2019)

Growth trajectories highlight a 72% increase in urban populations by 2050 which implies an incessant growth of informal settlements in decades to come. The impacts will be largely felt in Sub-Saharan Africa which apart from hosting the 2nd largest proportion of informal settlements, further manifests the world’s fastest urbanization trends (United Nations, 2012; Zerbo et al., 2020). While the settlements in this region vary tremendously in different facets i.e. size, location, morphological structure, tenure structure, population densities, building typologies, social structures; they all exhibit prevalent physical and social development problems which have exacerbated inequalities and limited the residents’ capacities to earn decent livelihoods. Owing to these and other related complexities, the international community has viewed informal settlements as a critical concern for sustainable development and further scaled up discussions on how to curb their widespread growth.

1.2 Problem statement

Over time, cities have adopted highly polarized strategies in informal settlements. Promising efforts have been seen through various slum upgrading programs, pro-poor financing mechanisms, affordable housing schemes, and slum upgrading and prevention policies (United Nations, 2016). However, Collier et al. (2017) observe that governments increasingly inherit broken, ex-colonial policies that do not work for inhabitants of these settlements. (Chitengi, 2018) further highlights that planning standards and approaches employed by planning authorities in informal settlements are often inclined to eradication rather than integration.

In Kenya, efforts over the past decades to address manifold challenges in slums and informal settlements have failed to realize the national obligation to uphold the human right to adequate housing; and the global commitments to eradicate poverty and enhance liveability (GoK, 2010; United Nations, 2017). Reactive post-independence strategies (1963-90s) to manage city development ignored, devalued and stigmatized informal settlements, labelling them “the city’s eyesore”. The negative discourses led to spatial and social marginalization accompanied by phases of mass evictions and slum clearance. Large informal settlements such as Muorotu and Kibarage were pulled down leaving more than 30,000 families homeless and disrupting local economies and social ties (Klopp, 2008; Weru, 2004). However, in the 1970-74 and -78 development plans, propitious slum development was initiated through site-and-service-schemes in settlements such as Dandora and Makongeni (Ivanovic and Tamura, 2015; Mwaniki et al. , 2015; Straaten van, 1977). This was succeeded by *in situ* upgrading programs such as KENSUP¹ of 2004 and KISIP² of 2011 which aimed at housing improvement, secure tenure, improved physical and social infrastructure (Muraguri, 2011). Under the latter projects, more than 600 housing units in Nairobi were developed, popularly known as the “Promised Land” whose benefits were disproportionately reaped by the city’s middle-income earners, leaving out the low-income residents (Anderson and Mwelu, 2013; Stenton, 2015).

Conventional planning strategies have manifestly turned counter-productive for the urban poor, with devastating impacts of coercive evictions, loss of livelihoods, authoritarian demolitions, destruction of property, and disruption of livelihoods. On account of this, a more progressive and participatory approach in addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities in these settlements was requisite. The Mukuru Special Planning Area (SPA) was hereby initiated to sever the long-shared physical, social and political stereotypes about informal settlements that have continually obscured their rich capacities and assets. The approach induced holistic social, economic, environmental, organizational and governance improvements in one of the largest of over 150 informal settlements in Nairobi, Kenya.

2. Understanding the Mukuru SPA context

The Mukuru SPA pioneers one of the largest collaborative informal settlement upgrading projects in the nation’s history. Triggered by a staggering number of challenges unveiled through the 2016 situation analysis (Corburn et al., 2016) and a preceding report in 2014 (Akiba Mashinani Trust, 2014), the Nairobi City County Government declared the settlement as a special planning area (SPA) in August 2017. The declaration was based on the Fourth Schedule of the Constitution of Kenya and the Physical and Land Use Planning Act (PLUPA)³. This two-year vitalizing, participatory and iterative process was inspired by the insufficiency of the conventional planning approaches to address the slum and informal settlement realities and underpinned by the SDGs⁴ goal 11 which underscores the gravity of planning cities and human settlements in a safe, resilient, sustainable way that offers equal opportunities for all.

¹ KENSUP – This is the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme funded by the UN-Habitat

² KISIP – The Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project funded by the World Bank

* Both projects were funded collaboratively with the Kenyan government and other stakeholders to improve livelihoods of people in slums and informal settlements

³ The declaration then was based on Section 23 Physical Planning Act (1996) which was repealed by the Physical and Land Use Planning Act (PLUPA) No.13 of 2019. Section 52 of PLUPA provides that a county government may declare in a Gazette Notice, an area with unique development, natural resource or environmental potential or problems, as a SPA for the purpose of specialized development.

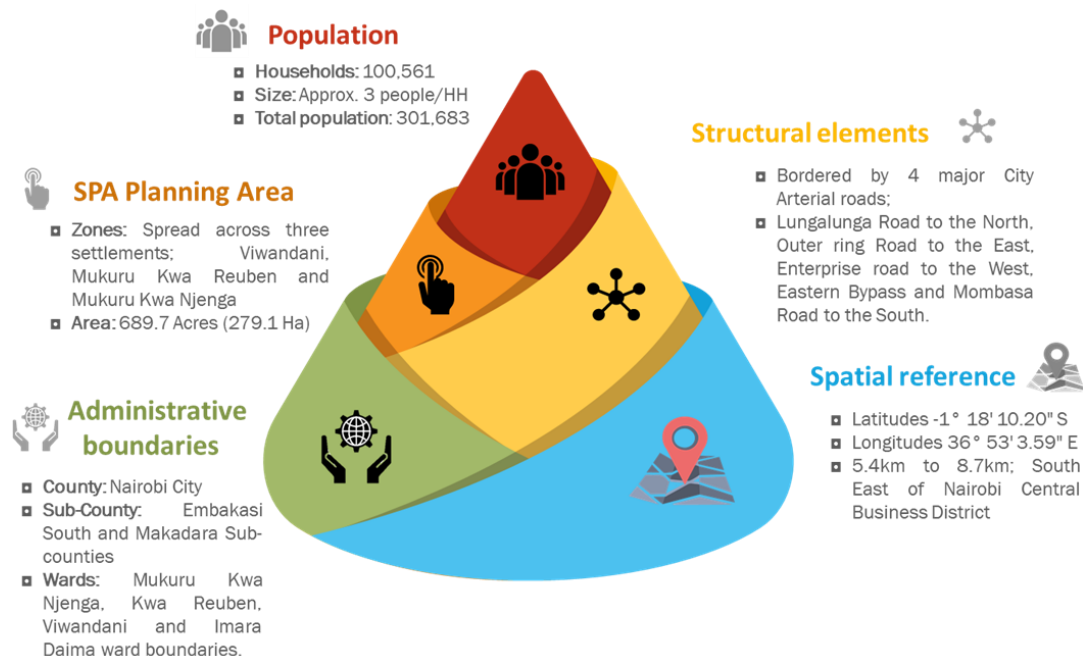
⁴ SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals which are a blueprint to attaining better and sustainable future for all. Reference is made to goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.



2.1. Context and prevailing complexities in Mukuru

The area delineated as the SPA extends across 3 zones; Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Mukuru Kwa Reuben and Viwandani and is defined by the following major elements:

Figure 2: Mukuru SPA at a glance



Mukuru is an epitome of complexity in urban informality embedded in tenure, governance, demand and supply of services, social and political ties, crime and violence, spatial constriction and multiple vulnerabilities. One of the cardinal conditions that warranted the adoption of a highly frugal planning approach is the Byzantine land tenure situation whose intricacy is attributed to the historical origins of the settlement in 1958 and governmental processes that took over in the 1980s. The settlement sits on land which was issued out on 99-year leasehold grants to private developers with a condition to develop light industries within 2 years. While a few of the grantees complied with the set conditions, a majority kept hold of undeveloped land past the conditioned period. Industrial workers and migrant families occupied the idle land and rapidly densified to 466 persons per acre. In response, the grantees started charging their plots as collateral to obtain loans while others sold their land to 3rd, 4th parties (Corburn et al., 2016; Horn et al., 2020). These informal tenure arrangements, power struggles among plot owners, de facto landlords and tenants, and multi-layered claims of ownership have intensified threats of eviction, “hot demolitions”⁵ and made it increasingly difficult for local governments to provide basic services and infrastructure.

For decades now since the establishment of the settlement in the 20th century, population has increased rapidly, with little or no efforts made to improve the shelter conditions and deliver basic infrastructure. Residents live in 10*10 feet semi-permanent structures which lack connection to water supply, drainage systems, accessibility routes, decent sanitation facilities, safe electric connection and social amenities. Water is supplied to the settlement by NCWSC⁶ but distributed via standing taps and water kiosks which are operated by informal unregulated private water vendors. Sewer connection is considerably low;

⁵ Hot demolitions are acts of arson committed by structure owners or other persons with an ulterior motive of forcibly and unlawfully evicting tenants from the property occupied.

⁶ NCWSC - Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company Ltd.

residents rely on pit latrines, ablution blocks emptying into septic tanks or cesspits and “4am service” which involves the collection of fecal waste accumulated overnight in plastic bags. Electricity is distributed informally by power vendors who tap electricity from formal lines and transformers installed by KPLC⁷ (Akiba Mashinani Trust, 2014). This “sambaza” method is however lethal and has resulted in electrical fires, electrocution, and widespread power outages over the years. Lastly, inadequate storm drainage facilities have exposed the settlement to severe flooding events which have caused major building and infrastructure damage, displacements, health risks, deaths, halted social and economic activities.

Informal providers assert dominance in service delivery and often supply low-quality services at exorbitant prices. This is substantiated by an evidential “poverty penalty” in Mukuru, which implies a 10.7% - 25.8% rent premium, twice the electricity cost and 4 times more water costs than the abutting middle and upper-class neighborhoods (Corburn et al., 2016). These and other thematic issues were documented in a settlement profile (2016) which was presented to the local government who, in an affirmative and vitalizing response, declared the settlement as an SPA and thus catalysed an evidence-based planning process.

3. Components of the Mukuru SPA planning approach

Cognizant of the complexities surrounding the pertinent development challenges, a highly innovative approach committed to Rethinking, Re-planning, Reimagining informal settlements was adopted. The approach was heavily invested in not just the final plan and its implementation but also the plan formulation process. The defining aspects of this new paradigm were:

3.1. Coalition building and Multidisciplinarity

The SPA’s stance was that cities are capable of being healthy and liveable; only if and when they are created by everyone. The distinctive footing of this project called for novel partnerships from different actors within and beyond the city to unpack the informality challenge through informed co-creation and co-production. Under the superintendence of the local government, the SPA approach brought together hundreds of Mukuru residents and tenfold of organizations. The local government formed a coalition with more than 46 organizations including academia, community-based organizations, civil society, private sector, and other stakeholders who were mobilized in to 7 consortia built based on the thematic sectors of planning and 1 ‘community mobilization and consortia co-ordination’ consortium as shown on figure 3 below:

Figure 3: SPA partners and the consortia composition



Source: (SDI Kenya, 2018)

⁷ KPLC - Kenya Power and Lighting Company

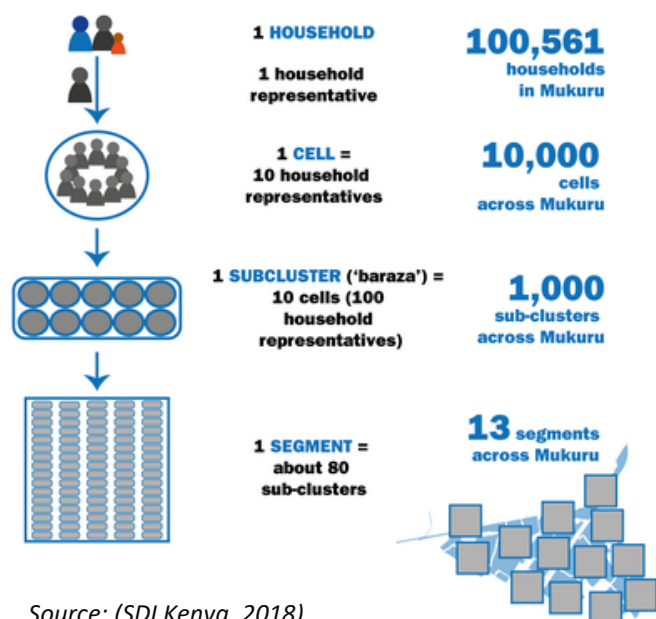
Each consortium comprised of a county department responsible for the pertinent sector of planning and professional organizations who were engaged voluntarily based on expertise and capacities. Thematic collaboration with multiple partners was a highly frugal partnership approach that introduced innovation in multi-sectoral action-research and planning.

Within the scope of the SPA, each of the 7 consortia was tasked with the preparation of 1 Sector Plan (total 7 sector plans) which subsequently would be integrated into the Mukuru Integrated Strategic Urban Development plan (ISUDP). The consensus among the stakeholders was that the SPA is strengthened by pooling different types of resources towards a common goal. Their participation was hereby largely self-financed (Makau and Weru, 2018). Through this large-scale collaboration, the SPA profited from specialized expertise drawn from different disciplines which ensured that all development issues were given due consideration and ascertained high-grade planning outputs.

3.2. Participatory approach

Individual participation and representativeness of communities in decisions that affect their lives was a vital ingredient of the Mukuru SPA planning approach. The project underscored the potency of community engagement to; generate trust, credibility and commitment; ensure ownership of the plan; resolve conflicts during the planning process rather than delaying the implementation phase, and to achieve a more sustainable outcome (Empel, 2008). Communities were hereby engaged in evidence-gathering, building project awareness, iterative plan preparation, and plan validation through intensive sequential consultative forums. Cognizant of technicalities and complexities surrounding community participation, a distinctive approach of community mobilization and organization was defined as shown below:

Figure 4: The Mukuru SPA community mobilization and organization structure



Source: (SDI Kenya, 2018)

The approach adopted was grounded on Muungano wa Wanavijiji's⁸ long-term expertise in participatory processes which acknowledges the existing local leadership structures as bottom-up tools to instigate organizational capacities among residents (Horn et al. , 2020).

In contrast to conventional approaches where community consultation is done at settlement level, the SPA approach aimed at involving people from the lowest level possible; in this case the household level. Therefore each household in the planning area elected 1 representative who joined other 9 representatives to form a cell (representatives from 10 households). The cells were cumulated in tens (100 households) to form a sub-cluster/Baraza Ndogo.

The Baraza Ndogo hosted neighborhood forums to reflect on the SPA process and progress, discuss community planning priorities and potential solutions. The planning consultative meetings rolled out by 5 thematic consortia (excluding finance and land consortia)

⁸ Muungano wa Wanavijiji, Kenya is a nationwide federation of the urban poor that seeks to improve the quality of life of its members through an extensive process of policy advocacy and dialogue with governments, civil societies and private sector organizations.

were held at the segment level which was comprised of about 80 Baraza Ndogo. Each Baraza Ndogo selected 1-2 members to represent them at the segment level community planning sessions.

This strategic and intentional community organization structure scaled-up local representation from household to sub-cluster to segment level. Consequently, the “leave no one behind” principle was upheld as all residents had a chance to contribute to the planning process either at the sub-cluster or segment level. (Horn et al. , 2020) observe that the process also controlled the influence of absentee-slumlords⁹ who are politicians and private investors who illegally own land and manage large-scale substandard housing in the settlement.

3.3. Strategic visioning and planning

With multiple disciplines and diverse stakeholders, crafting a lucid common vision was of utmost importance to ensure that plan prioritizes the dire needs of the local community whilst contributing to the local government targets as stipulated in the City’s Master plan (NIUPLAN 2014-2030¹⁰). The visioning process was participatory and remained cognizant of the needs of the most vulnerable. Notably, the process had due regard for the children and youths who were actively engaged through film making and essay writing competitions on “The Mukuru we want” (Dodman, 2017). The adopted vision was: to improve the livelihoods of Mukuru inhabitants by addressing the cross-cutting development challenges of poverty, gender inequalities, infrastructure and basic services, sustainability and economic development; and enhancing the opportunities that exist within the settlement. To achieve this ambitious vision, the project adopted a novel strategic planning framework characterized by a “progressive improvement model”. Here, proposals would be implemented gradually; immediate (0-2 years), Short-term (2-5 years), Mid-term (5-10 years), and Long-term (10- 20 years). The entry point was infrastructure upgrading and service delivery, followed later by housing improvements. This aimed at enhancing health, safety, convenience, and quality of life with zero or minimal displacement and in the process lobby buy-in from structure-owners and solicit diverse funding sources for the subsequent housing upgrades.

3.4. Conservative surgery and Iterative planning

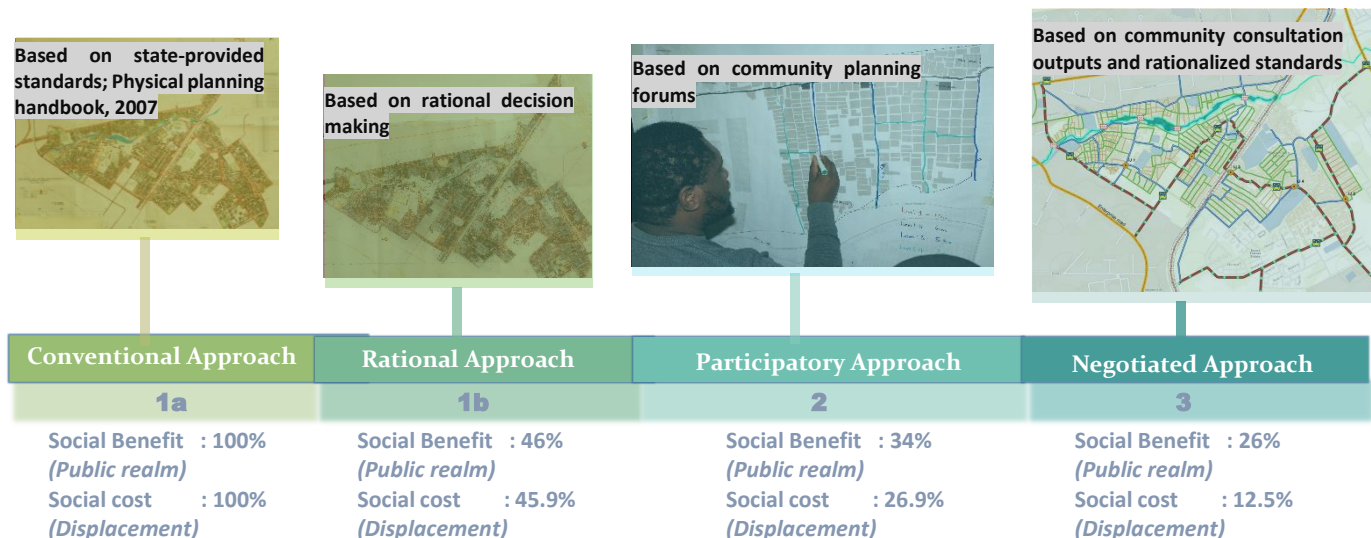
Conservative surgery was a key guiding concept of the SPA approach which aimed at inducing favourable future development of Mukuru with minimal destruction and displacement. Contrary to the radical development approaches, conservative surgery perceived the settlement as a continuously evolving organism and sought to trigger effective development without drastically changing the settlement structure. Iterative planning¹¹ was hereby applied to test the viability of different planning standards on the future development of Mukuru and evaluate the magnitude of pertinent social costs and benefits.

⁹ Absentee landlords are individuals who own and manage property (structures) in an informal settlement but do not live within it.

¹⁰ NIUPLAN is the Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan which provides an integrated framework for City growth based on a comprehensive and holistic view of urban development. It aims at ensuring spatial and social equity through inclusive, secure, resilient and sustainable urban development.

¹¹ Iterative planning is a sequential process of prototyping, testing, assessing, and refining a plan with the ultimate intention of improving its quality and functionality.

Figure 5: Mukuru SPA iterative planning



The iteration process was not only technical but also participatory and strived for a significant increase in the public realm with minimal social costs. The process was characterized by 4 iterations; the conventional approach (1a) applied the physical and social infrastructure standards as provided in the Physical Planning Handbook 2007. Strikingly, based on these standards, infrastructure would occupy 100% of the area, thus causing total displacement. This undesired effect prompted initiation of the rational approach (1b) which involved adapting the conventional standards to the people’s needs based on the rational professional decision making. Here, social infrastructure provision maintained the conventional spatial requirements but took into consideration the existing number of social amenities and only provided the deficit. By contrast, physical infrastructure modelling applied rational cross-section design and adoptive planning toolkits used in previous slum upgrading projects. This approach downscaled displacement to 45.93%.

The two iterations signified that superimposing the state-provided standards on informal settlements is significantly destructive and may only be practical for formal areas. A participatory approach (2) characterized by a series of community planning forums was thus initiated. Residents deliberated on space required for physical and social infrastructure and together with professionals, developed practical, considerate standards that would be responsive to people’s needs. The consultations yielded proposals from 10 segment level meetings and more than 55 cluster level meetings held due to the emotive issue of space allocation. The participatory approach augmented the public realm with 26.95% displacement. Finally, the negotiated approach (3) was initiated to standardize the consultation outputs into coherent alternative proposals. Displacement here was at 12.53% which was a remarkable decline from iteration 1a. This process led to formulation of alternative guidelines that were technically assessed and affirmed to be practical for informal settlements.

4. The results of the project

4.1 Synced short-term benefits with long-term targets

As per, *Gazette notice no.7654*, 7 sector plans (to be integrated into Mukuru ISUDP) were produced through intensive processes of inter-consortia coordination and knowledge exchange. To surmount the complex systems and highly contentious challenges of the informal settlement, each sector plan defined immediate action plans whose implementation began even before the end of the plan preparation process. Short-term initiatives such as revitalizing the community’s saving schemes, community clean-up strategies, “youths for safe and inclusive cities” initiative were co-produced as a progressive development of financial,

human, and social capital assets (Makau et al., 2020). Presently, more than 438 savings groups have been activated to enable the realisation of livelihood projects; more than 600 youths aged 15-25 years have undergone training on safety, security, and leadership; and earnest community champions have come forth to heighten the grassroot momentum for medium- and long-term change.

Physical capital assets have also been developed with support from both the local and national governments. Convenient access to sanitation services and emergency access which often receive step-motherly treatment have been arrayed as top priorities in the immediate – short term. Recent developments have seen the national government invest 1.5 billion Kenya shillings for infrastructure development in Mukuru i.e. road network and drainage, water and sanitation, electrification as shown in figure 6 below. Excavations have commenced with structure owners voluntarily opening up corridors to accommodate roads and basic services.

Figure 6: Ongoing initiatives in the SPA



Additionally, the government has repossessed 56-acre land in Mukuru’s neighbourhood from non-compliant private developers. This land has been set aside as a decanting site where the government intends to build 10,000 social housing units to benefit the residents of Mukuru. These actions and initiatives have accrued tangible benefits for Mukuru residents and are critical steps in incremental development which will be scaled-up to attain the overall project goals.

4.2. Redefined “communities-at-the-centre-of-planning”

The Mukuru SPA has developed, refined, and demonstrated what the notion of communities-at-the-centre-of-planning actually looks like. Through the methodical community mobilization and engagement approach, a massive engagement of approximately 5,370 residents in community planning forums was observed while the other residents played an active role in neighbourhood-level discussions. Subsequently, communities have been empowered to understand and keep tabs on the SPA process through neighbourhood discussions, trainings, data collection, local and international community exchange activities, and collaborations with the local government. The engagement structure has also yielded sustainable outputs that are consistent with the desires of the local community. This has multiplied the rate of successful implementation and realization of the project targets.

Notably, knowledge exchange between communities and professionals in the development of alternative standards for informal settlements has built local expertise and provoked a “can-do” attitude among residents. Additionally, developing settlement profiles by mapping out spatial details and living conditions with communities has accentuated the indispensable role of accurate data in instigating partnerships and

driving evidence-based planning. This has motivated the rise of teams of local-change makers who seek to confront their challenges through the data-based approach. The influence has gone beyond Mukuru into settlements like Kibera evidenced by the Community Mappers initiative¹².

Another key innovation in participatory planning has been working with informal service providers (*locally termed as “cartels”*) as opposed to eliminating them. The “delegated-delivery” model was proposed in the provision of services such as water and electricity. This requires informal service distributors to register with the state and local government service utilities as formal regulated groups (Horn et al. , 2020). The utilities would then supply services to these groups who would ensure last-mile distribution to the households. The aim of this was to maintain the local social ties and simultaneously reduce sabotage of the formal service reticulation systems.

4.3. Institutional inertia cramped through collective action

Informal settlement planning and implementation is often a slow-footed process due to scarcity of resources, contextual challenges, poor monitoring, and feedback within and between organizations and lack of oversight. Notwithstanding this, the needs of the local communities are dire and demand rapid response. Cognizant of this, the large-scale collaboration effort of the SPA not only applied innovative tactics in the plan preparation process but also in the implementation strategy. As a result, the achievement of seemingly unattainable targets has been fast-tracked through the complementary collective action of local communities, local and national governments, and multiple organizations.

Through explicit visioning, robust local community backing, the involvement of local service providers, zealous stakeholders, well-articulated and co-created plans, the project has been able to: Secure political commitment and solicit sufficient impetus from the local authorities; manage competing interests and priorities; recognize and coordinate various actors and their roles. Additionally, the partnering organizations have individually explored diverse sources of finance to kick start and prop up the planning process which otherwise would have fallen apart since no financial resources had been allocated to the project. The local community also formed “do or die” groups who have ensured perpetual commitment towards the SPA process by exercising bottom-up pressure on the project coordinators, administrators, and local authorities.

4.4. Alternative planning standards

The iterative planning strategy facilitated a review of the conventional planning standards whose adoption would have resulted in 100% displacement as stipulated in section 3.2. Drawing from local and international expertise, the physical and social infrastructure standards were reassessed based on the conservative surgery approach. To mention but a few, the width of the Right of Way of different road categories was determined through a sequential needs-assessment procedure. Communities underscored emergency services access, sanitary services conveyance, walkability, inter- and intra-settlement connectivity as the key elements the road infrastructure needed to consider. The minimum spatial requirements for each service were discussed which led to the development of a 4-tier road hierarchy; arterial road (12m), sub-arterial road (9m), collectors streets (6m), and local access streets (3m). This hierarchy adjusted the conventional transportation standards which are 30-36m for arterials and sub-arterials, 25-18m for collectors, and 15-12m for local distributors. Social infrastructure on the other hand provided spaces for basic requirements and combined some activities while excluding the secondary ones such as cricket fields, swimming pools, and gymnasium in education amenities to minimize the spatial requirements. The prioritization, combination, or exclusion of activities was based on the community

¹² Commuty Mappers initiative <https://www.communitymappers.com/>

proposals. The technical process was spearheaded by SDI Kenya and Indian partners at the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) and CEPT University.

For sanitation infrastructure; simplified sewer systems with narrower widths, shallower depths, lower-costs, and higher flexibility than the conventional conveyance systems were proposed (Makau et al., 2020). This was based on international knowledge exchange from Tanzania where similar systems have been implemented. Practical alternative standards were produced for all forms of infrastructure and social amenities. The unconventional standards provided alternatives for quality infrastructure which was less destructive (conservative surgery), promoted public health, human dignity, safety and convenience, and mitigated environmental risks and vulnerabilities.

5. Conclusion

The Mukuru SPA has pioneered highly frugal approaches to slum upgrading in African Informal settlements. The SPA planning approach upholds that slum upgrading ought to “leave as many structures as possible in their original position, provide formal rights to the occupants of the land, introduce infrastructure and services with minimal disruption, and provide support for the gradual transformation of ‘shacks’ into more durable housing” (Stenton, 2015 p.6). Its holistic, strategic, and participatory approaches coupled with large-scale collaboration (consortia), multi-disciplinarity, and sensitivity to contextual differences, limitations, and opportunities make it an instructive epitome of how slum inventions can be designed and implemented not only nationally but globally. Its approach has drawn interest from both local and national governments and has triggered the declaration of more settlements as Special Planning Areas (Kibera SPA- *Gazette notice no.7654*), which will adopt the alternative all-inclusive planning approach.

This collaborative approach has also proved to be highly rewarding and effective in building consensus among different professionals and communities. It reveals how power-sharing relationships between local communities and professionals help to invigorate self-help efforts of locals and simultaneously co-produce top-notch outputs that drive agile state action. It is hereby apparent that attaining global targets i.e. sustainable development goals, and building inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities require urban planning practitioners to rethink and understand the complexity and organic nature of cities. Although conventional standards are instrumental, not all urban contexts can be simply programmed using the conventional tool kit: One size never fits all!

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