



CAMEROON

IMPACT STORY:



Fostering political will to create a platform for cooperation between all key stakeholders¹

Introduction

Slums are an ongoing and dominant feature of Cameroon's urban centres. More than half of Cameroonians now live in towns and cities (53% or around 13 million of Cameroon's estimated 23 million)² and an estimated 60% of those are living in informal settlements and slums³. With an urban growth rate of around 5%⁴, the challenge of managing and preventing slums is critical.

The aim of this impact story is to explore how Cameroon is using its national leadership and participation in UN-Habitat's Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP), to prepare for city-wide slum upgrading. In particular, the National Housing and Urban Development Ministry is garnering support for a re-newed focus on improving the lives of slum dwellers. The country is at the implementation phase of PSUP in three project cities (Yaoundé, Bamenda and Kribi). These initiatives provide key lessons and inspiration for others to engage in city-wide slum upgrading.

What is city-wide slum upgrading and why is it important?

City-wide approaches to slum upgrading are more holistic than traditional piecemeal responses. They are inclusive and recognize that urban issues like slums cannot be addressed in isolation. Rather, they see the urban fabric as a system with interlinked components and connections between different people and places. The main characteristics of city-wide slum upgrading are its:

- **Leadership:** understanding the city-wide approach, the value of development for all, the role of all key stakeholders, ensuring financing is available and outcomes delivered across all scales⁵.
- **Strategic nature:** focusing on strategic results for both local and city level sustainable development, taking into account what UN-Habitat considers to be the 'three levers' for sustainable urbanization: appropriate, implementable policy and legislation; inclusive economic development and financing, and integrated planning for short and long term prosperity gains.

- **Synergies and integration:** Ensuring connections across key plans, stakeholders and institutions so that basic infrastructure and transport networks for example are harmonized and an inclusive, innovative and functional urban environment is achieved.
- **Scale and scope:** targeting the strategic intervention (thematically and spatially) to solve issues for a specific place, but with the focus on the urban context as a whole including urban fringes and those developments which might fall outside of formal administrative boundaries.
- **Participatory design and implementation:** ensuring engagement and coordination are at the heart of the city-wide approach and include slum dwellers themselves.

Slum upgrading in Cameroon

Until 1972, urban development in Cameroon was managed through separate systems of law between the two split federal states - Western (French speaking) and Eastern Cameroon (English speaking) - resulting in an uneven approach to the development of towns and cities. Despite the union of the French and English speaking parts of Cameroon in 1972, a united and integrated approach to urban planning and development was not fostered. Important efforts were made to grapple with the challenges of urbanization. In the early sixties, the five-year social development plans were started and continued for two decades until the late eighties. In 1976 the first census was undertaken showing Cameroon was 28% urban. In the last ten years, national level development plans and city level master plans have been required by law. In 1986, however, a major economic crisis engulfed Cameroon resulting in the mass movement of people from rural to urban areas as the country suffered a sudden drop in credit ratings due to default on World Bank Structural Adjustment Programme loans dramatically affecting agricultural crop prices.



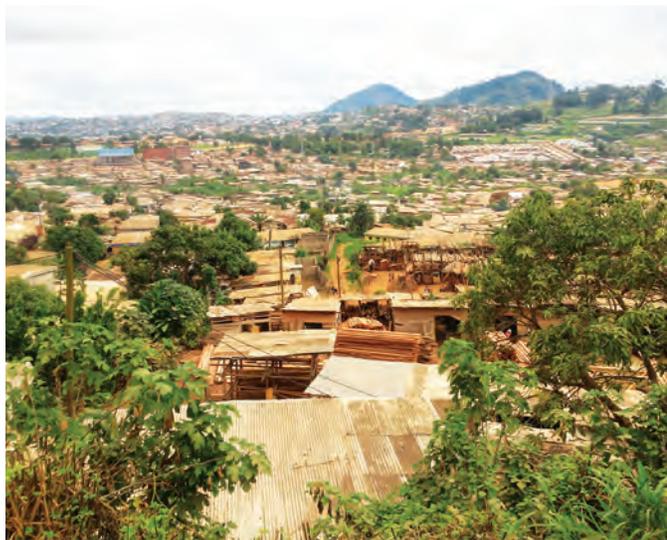
¹ This Impact Story was developed in collaboration with the Government of Cameroon.

² National Institute of Statistics (INS). General Census of Population and Housing (RGPH) of 2005.

³ This figure is not official but used by many urban practitioners in Cameroon. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Global Urban Indicators Database 2015 puts Cameroon at 38% or the urban population living in slums.

⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division - World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision

⁵ Adapted from UN-Habitat (2010). City Wide Planning – Step by step guide and UN-Habitat's (2015) Practical Guide to Designing, Planning and Executing City-Wide Slum Upgrading Programmes and incorporating UN-Habitat's New Urban Agenda (September 2014).



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The crisis had a significant impact on planning and urban development in Cameroon's urban centres. As government finance disappeared, large-scale urban development and planning processes ceased. The city-level Development Plans and slum upgrading projects in major towns such as Douala, stopped. The impact was not only in regard to physical planning activities, but also in relation to institutional 'urban' memory. Many experienced professionals were forced to seek other work or retire and so urban experience and 'know-how' was lost. The result was that for almost thirty years, no real attention was given to urban development and planning so high levels of informality became the norm in urban centres. Land also became a highly speculative resource in this development environment.

Since the early 2000's Cameroon has begun to engage with urbanization in earnest. In 2004, the first law governing urban development ('La Loi Régissant l'Urbanisme') was approved requiring city councils to develop master plans. In the same year, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHINDU) was formed and Cameroon engaged with UN-Habitat's PSUP programme.

In the years 2007-2009, a number of waste management operations were conducted by city councils but these often lead to the forced evictions and so were seen as problematic long-term approaches to improving the urban environment.

Cameroon's opportunities for integrated city-wide slum upgrading

Since 2004, Cameroon has established a number of important mechanisms that are considered 'pre-conditions' for sustainable city-wide slum upgrading. These include:

Governance:

- Recognition from key national institutions (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development) and parastatals including FEICOM (Fonds Spécial d'Équipement et d'Intervention Intercommunale), MAETUR (Mission d'Aménagement et d'Équipement des Terrains Urbains et Ruraux) and SIC (Société Immobilière du Cameroun) that slum upgrading is critical to sustainable urbanization⁶.
- Active steps to engage other levels of government on the management and prevention of slums (via interventions such as PSUP, the draft National Slum Upgrading Strategy and more recently, municipal government's participation in the National Land Consultative Board).

- Utilization of the multi-stakeholder PSUP Country Team to promote the urgency of the slum challenge and participatory approaches to their management and prevention.

Policies and laws:

- The 1997 Urban Declaration which underscores the importance of all stakeholders in urban development and recognizes the rights and roles of the state, local government and civil society (including the private sector).
- Urban Development Law of 2004 ('La Loi Régissant l'Urbanisme') obliges all towns and cities to develop master plans and make provisions for slum upgrading, requires implementers to consider all inhabitants regardless of their legal status, says all stakeholders should be engaged and provides an option for ordinary citizens to initiate a slum upgrading project (through GIFU-Groupement d'Intérêt Foncier Urbain).
- Development of a draft National Slum Upgrading Strategy to be completed by 2017.

Financing Initiatives for affordable housing and slum upgrading activities

- In collaboration with the Ministry for Housing and Urban Development, government parastatals such as SIC and MAETUR, are actively engaged in land development and in some instances affordable housing projects. Two years ago, CFC (Crédit Foncier du Cameroun), FEICOM and CVUC (Communes et Villes Unies du Cameroun which is an association of municipalities) signed an agreement to develop municipal social housing initiated by municipal governments.

Planning Activities:

- Utilization of key national parastatals (MAETUR, SIC and FEICOM) to undertake planning.
- Creation of master plans to formally identify and address informal settlements and slums.
- Development of future national level plans to prevent the expansion of slums. Under the 'Stratégie de Développement du sous Secteur Urbain', 20 additional towns country-wide have been identified to undertake slum upgrading.

⁶ MAETUR are responsible for the development of serviced land, SIC for affordable housing and FEICOM support municipal infrastructure development through financing.

Recommended next steps to strengthen slum upgrading in Cameroon

PSUP has identified some potential next steps that are likely to support Cameroon's city-wide slum upgrading efforts:

- Develop mechanisms to garner additional political will and commitment from key national ministries and institutions to address the challenge of slums and informality, particularly their impact on urban prosperity (particularly in relation to land, planning, housing, infrastructure and financing).
- Develop mechanisms, including incentives and capacity development forums, to enable municipal urban managers and technical staff to develop master plans. These are currently required by law but since its promulgation in 2004, only 55 towns and cities out of 300 have done so.
- Strengthen land management practice and the enforcement of the National Planning Code to effectively negotiate the complex and often long-standing land disputes in urban areas. This includes expanding the range of security of tenure options to promote compact, mixed use and vibrant urban centres. It also includes developing mechanisms to provide pro-poor serviced land.
- Build appreciation for and strengthen the mechanisms to enforce the National Planning Standards and associated Code. Undertake training for both urban leaders, managers and government technical staff as well as local chiefs and non-government organizations who are often on the ground where spontaneous urban development is occurring.
- Promote the profession of planning to create the pool of professionals available across all levels of government and in the private sector to effectively undertake city-wide slum upgrading.
- Acknowledge the role that culture, ethnicity and history play in approaches to city-wide slum upgrading. Different populations and cultural groups have varying responses to slum upgrading and do not fit into a 'one size fits all' approach to slum upgrading.
- Promote the short and long term value of the participatory approach to slum upgrading as a vital condition of urbanization and prosperity.

The benefits of UN-Habitat's Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme in Cameroon

Following the urban profiling in 2004, Cameroon engaged in the PSUP programme in Yaoundé, the capital of the nation with a population of over 2 million and over 1.2 million living in informal settlements and slums⁷. The learning was then transferred in 2010 to two other key regional towns as case studies for regional development (Bamenda – 400,000 inhabitants and Kribi 80,000). The collaboration between PSUP and the Government of Cameroon has reached a milestone phase – the implementation of current PSUP projects for replication and 'up-scaling' across other cities and towns. The following achievements have been realized to date:

- Fostered fundamental mind-set change among key stakeholders, especially at the government level, to the value of improving the lives of slum dwellers. Cameroon has embraced the principles and objectives of the PSUP through the active Country Team ensuring that the programme is fully owned by the key institutions and stakeholders. It has also dedicated national and county budget allocations for PSUP.
- Facilitated and encouraged institutional coordination to build a long-term learning and exchange platform via the Country Team. The multi-sector team has raised awareness of key challenges facing slum upgrading in Cameroon and has been able to make specific policy and legislative recommendations.
- Provided a platform and learning experience to embrace participatory and integrated urban development and planning. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development wants the PSUP principles to be transferred to other projects such as the World Bank's PDUE (Projet de Développement des Secteur Urbain et de l'approvisionnement en Eau).
- Led to the formulation of a draft National Slum Upgrading Strategy due to be endorsed by 2017.
- Improved awareness and the measurement of the informal economy and livelihoods in slums and informal settlements. For the first time, the informal economy was 'considered and measured' in a slum upgrading project (Nkolbikok in Yaoundé) where more than 400 economic spots or 'business activities' were identified in the 72 hectares.
- Provided a catalyst to integrate planning in slums and informal settlements more systematically across strategic planning at the national level ('Stratégie de Développement du sous-Secteur Urbain').
- Provided both a method to incorporate the sociological component of planning related to engaging people and communities in slum upgrading, as well as practical evidence of the benefits of engaging all stakeholders, particularly slum dwellers. Two of the local governments taking part in the PSUP programme have replicated this approach in other planning processes.
- Provided new skills that will enable local communities to continue building their capacities and skills beyond the life of the project via the training to manage the community funds.
- Helped the government and the stakeholders in general, to assess the challenge of financing slum upgrading programmes and convinced the government that it cannot be the sole financier and a multi-stakeholder approach must be adopted.

⁷ Figure from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Conclusion

The combination of strong ministerial leadership, knowledgeable staff, a series of planning orientated parastatals, institutional frameworks and laws, are developing the pre-requisite platform for city-wide slum upgrading in Cameroon. The PSUP Country Team is also playing a role to show a new way that institutions across thematic areas and different stakeholders, can - as a group - become a 'tour de force' to improve the lives of slum dwellers and connect them with the rest of the urban environment.

To continue this momentum, however, Cameroon must garner the support of all key national ministries, to recognize the value of city-wide slum upgrading and to address fundamental land and financing challenges.

Support and incentives must be given to those local and municipal governments who are clearly engaging with the challenge of slums or adapting the participatory approach to other key planning processes. The country must also recognize the potential of slum dwellers themselves, many of whom have demonstrated in the PSUP that they are willing to be active partners in city-wide improvement programmes. Opportunities to reflect on the many gains that Cameroon has made to date on slum upgrading, would also help build interest and capacity and cement commitment to this as an urgent urban challenge the country must wholeheartedly embrace.

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The integration of slum upgrading programmes with countrywide planned urban development is the sustainable way to make a difference in slum areas of cities (Dr Joan Clos, Executive Director, UN-Habitat (2015). *A Practical Guide to City-Wide Slum Upgrading*. p.7).

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