

Past Responses & Interventions to Slum Proliferation in Kenya

The Government of Kenya recognized the political and financial realities, and the inevitability of informal settlements as early as 1970 as is amplified in the 1970/74 National development plan. Since then, the evolution of policies and interventions dealing with informal settlements in Kenya fits in four stages, namely: provision of minimum services, extension of tenure security and physical upgrading, recognition of the legitimate role of low income settlers and other stakeholders in urban development, and formulation of a comprehensive National Slum Upgrading Programme under the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP). These periods and interventions have introduced shifts in the housing policy that have, in turn immensely contributed to the nature and extent of informal settlements today as is explained here-below.

- a) Provision of minimum services: Beginning in the 1970s, the Government realized that slum clearance and public housing could not alleviate the problem of inadequate shelter and thus recognized the political and financial realities and acknowledged the inevitability of informal settlements. The 1970/74 Development Plan of the Republic of Kenya stated that demolition would be postponed until such a time that the housing shortage is met.

The Government policy shifted from the conventional housing policy to a 'realistic' or 'pragmatic' housing provision policy, strongly associated with involvement of the World Bank and USAID in the provision of serviced sites and instituting some degree of cost recovery in the First Urban Project in Dandora, Nairobi, followed by Second Urban Projects in Mombasa, Kisumu and Nairobi.

- b) Extension of tenure security and physical upgrading: In this stage policy shifts were directed to mobilizing financial and 'sweat equity' investment by the low-income residents to improve their own settlements. Government focused on that which the people cannot provide for themselves such as legal framework, institutional mechanism, tenure security, infrastructure and income generation facilities. This can be seen in the improvement Programme launched in Kenya in 1978, which included increasing the acceptance and legalization to facilitate consequent improvement of the informal settlements in the Third Urban Projects.
- c) Recognition of the legitimate role of the low income earners in urban development: At this stage, a variety of policies governing land delivery, building and infrastructure, land use, long term financing and cost recovery, and the role of private sector were brought into harmony with the objective of fully and productively integrating the low income majority into the urban development process. This is the enabling approach in which the Government moved away from direct housing provision and concentrated more on creating incentives and facilitating measures to enable other stakeholders provide housing and basic services.

Kenya recognized the legitimate role of the low income earners in urban development in the 1980s as articulated in the revised National Housing Policy. The approach has seen the increasing involvement of the non-governmental organizations as well as international development agencies in various informal settlement improvement projects. Examples include the KFW funded Mathare 4A project, the GTZ Small Towns Development Project, the World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme in Kibera, among others.

- e) Current Initiatives: The Government acknowledges existence of slums and informal settlements, and is committed to addressing the conditions through upgrading. The country's strategic framework in the



Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the National Housing Policy, the National Plan of Action on the Habitat Agenda on Shelter and Human Settlements and the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, have all recognized slum upgrading as an integral part of shelter development.

The strategies for the realization of the commitment to “Improving the Livelihoods of Slum Dwellers” include:

- Conducive policy frameworks
- Supportive financial and regulatory frameworks
- Complementary housing development Programmes and projects
- Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment creation
- The collaborative Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme.