

Urban programming case study: Kenya

Community-Centered Relocation Action Plan

Model of intervention: Transforming Informal Settlements

Country Overview of Urban Housing

Kenya is undergoing rapid urbanization, with projections indicating that by 2050, 50% of its population will reside in urban areas. Currently, about 50% of urban dwellers live in informal settlements, with Nairobi, the capital, home to roughly 5.54 million people—60% of whom live in slum conditions. These settlements typically lack essential infrastructure, such as water, sewage systems, and electricity, exposing residents to health risks like diseases and respiratory issues. Children in these areas bear a disproportionate burden, facing high rates of morbidity and mortality due to poor sanitation. Additionally, unclear land tenure inhibits investment, worsening infrastructure deficits. The financial strain of accessing basic services, often reliant on costly water vendors, compounds the health and economic challenges faced by residents.

Detailed Overview of Project Area/Problem

Habitat for Humanity Kenya spearheads the Home Equals global advocacy campaign aimed at reforming policies for residents of informal settlements. In this case study, we focus on the Mukuru slum, where over 700,000 residents and around 30 villages face considerable urban development challenges. Many residents, having migrated from rural areas, live in substandard housing, often on riparian land, making them vulnerable to flooding.

Economic opportunities exist primarily in the informal sector, including small businesses and casual labor, but despite its proximity to Nairobi's industrial which provides low-skilled jobs in factories and manufacturing industries, low wages and job insecurity contribute to pervasive poverty, while overcrowding exacerbates infrastructure strain. As recent heavy floods prompted a subsequent Public Security Orders by a Cabinet Directive that mandated the 'voluntary evacuation' or 'forcible relocation' of individuals occupying riparian zones. In result, over 127,000 vulnerable residents were displaced in Nairobi without a clear relocation plan or compensation.

Project Intervention

In response to forced evictions, Habitat for Humanity Kenya, in partnership with organizations such as Muungano wa Wanakijiji, Amnesty International, Slum Dwellers International (SDI), Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI), Akiba Mashinani Trust and others under the Flowing Together Coalition, co-hosted a town-hall meeting hall meeting attended by approximately 500 residents from affected settlements. This meeting facilitated community engagement and amplified voices through local media and a Twitter live chat, which trended significantly. Following this, the coalition submitted a Solidarity Statement urging the government to develop a comprehensive Relocation Action Plan (RAP), provide emergency assistance, and ensure community-centered disaster management. The initiative also involved training youth on leveraging social media for advocacy, enhancing their ability to engage effectively with broader audiences.

Effect on Target Groups/Communities

The forced evictions in Nairobi's informal settlements have severely affected residents' quality of life, leading to displacement, loss of property, and increased health risks, including the spread of cholera due to flooding. Displaced families found schools unavailable as they were repurposed as emergency shelters, causing significant disruption in

children's education and a rise in school dropout rates. The nature of these evictions has left the community feeling betrayed, demanding transparency and accountability from authorities. Families have suffered personal losses such as essential household items, while local businesses and economic opportunities have been disrupted, leaving many without livelihoods.

The destruction of infrastructure, including schools, health facilities, and community centers, has further compounded the negative impacts. Educational disruptions limit children's learning opportunities and prospects, while the loss of healthcare services jeopardizes residents' well-being. Moreover, the absence of community support structures, such as churches, has weakened social cohesion. Overall, these evictions have exacerbated existing challenges, diminishing safety and comfort, while threatening the community's economic stability and social fabric. The urgency of these issues calls for immediate and sustained action to address the needs of affected residents.

Project Innovation

The project seeks to address the challenges faced by residents of informal settlements through the development of a robust, community-centered Relocation Action Plan (RAP) based on recommendations from the Flowing Together Coalition. This innovative approach emphasizes inclusivity and transparency, aiming to integrate data on affected households into the State Department for Housing and Urban Development's Affordable Housing Programme. By prioritizing these residents in government housing initiatives, the project ensures displaced families gain access to secure and adequate housing. This initiative distinguishes itself by not merely addressing immediate housing needs but also by actively engaging community voices in decision-making processes. Unlike traditional approaches which overlook local input, this project ensures that the concerns and requirements of residents are central to the planning and implementation phases by utilizing existing data compiled by the Flowing Together Coalition. As such the design streamlines responses to housing crises, providing equitable solutions for vulnerable residents. This collaborative and comprehensive approach sets a precedent for urban development strategies in informal settlements, showcasing a commitment to community empowerment and resilience.

Global relevance of community-level impact

The interventions undertaken by Habitat for Humanity Kenya and the Flowing Together Coalition directly address the significant challenges posed by forced evictions and inadequate housing in Nairobi's informal settlements. These actions align with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), and SDG 4 (Quality Education).

SDG 11: The community-centered Relocation Action Plan (RAP) promotes inclusivity, ensuring affected residents gain access to adequate housing and essential services, thereby contributing to SDG 11's objective of making cities inclusive and resilient.

SDG 1: The verification and integration of household data into the Affordable Housing Programme supports SDG 1 by aiming for poverty reduction through secure housing solutions for low-income families.

SDG 3 & SDG 4: Advocating for the protection of public infrastructure, such as schools and health facilities, supports SDG 4 and SDG 3. By safeguarding educational institutions, the initiative ensures continuous access to learning opportunities, fostering long-term economic and social stability. Protecting health facilities enhances well-being by providing essential medical services, thereby reducing health risks and improving residents' quality of life.

Moving Forward

Expand Partnerships: Strengthen and broaden the coalition by including local and international organizations, government agencies, and private sector partners. This will enhance resource mobilization and expertise, facilitating the replication of successful strategies in other informal settlements facing similar challenges.

Increase Advocacy and Awareness: Launch campaigns to raise awareness of the need for comprehensive Relocation Action Plans (RAPs) and community-centered disaster management. Utilize various media platforms to engage a wider audience and foster stakeholder involvement.

Develop Beneficiary Identification Framework: Create a robust framework to accurately identify beneficiaries of the Government Affordable Housing Program, ensuring community engagement in decision-making processes.

Engage Policymakers: Work closely with government officials to advocate for the adoption and enforcement of policies such as the Eviction Bill. Focus on promoting policy changes that prioritize inclusive, transparent, and humane relocation processes, safeguarding the rights and needs of displaced communities.

Visual Documentation

