Case Study Report

Does Participatory Slum upgrading really work?

Piloting local area planning in Lusaka Zambia

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Abstract

Participatory Slum upgrading (PSUP) has been vigorously promoted by UN-Habitat as a bottom-up strategy for inclusive planning. It is envisioned that by involving residents of unplanned settlements in the planning processes the results will be more sustainable. Zambia is highly urbanised and has large numbers of residents living in unplanned settlements. Along with other nations, Zambia has entered PHASE 3 of the PSUP which focusses on improved infrastructure and service provision. This case study report outlines the process of community led local area planning in 5 wards in Lusaka the capital of Zambia. The process which is outlined from its inception to the end was led by a technical working group from the local authority. Community member underwent training in various skills so that they could lead the process. An analysis of the planning process reveals that communities feel a greater sense of empowerment when they are involved from the beginning of projects. It was also found that due to long term collaboration between the main stakeholders, community members trusted the process and were willing to participate in the co-production of information required for the area plans. Participatory processes are able to empower communities and encourage stakeholder involvement.

Keywords

Community based, planning, collaboration, stakeholders, local area

1. Introduction

1.1. Planning the unplanned

Unplanned settlements are an integral part of African cities and over time they have been recognised as places of value. The history of informality in the city of Lusaka goes back to the precolonial times when the colonial settlers and administrators did not have adequate control over the urban settlements (Simons et al., 1976). Zambia is one of the highly urbanised countries cities in Sub-Saharan Africa and Lusaka is one of the fastest growing cities (UN-Habitat, 2009, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), 2016). This presents numerous problems for planning as service provision continues to lag behind the immediate needs of the current population. The city also has a long history of informal or unplanned settlements which find their origins in the colonial era. It is currently estimated that the unplanned settlements host 62% of the cities population (International Growth Centre (IGC), 2021). There is an

urgent need to plan the unplanned areas and the old paradigms will not do the job. There is definitely a need for a change in the planning practices and paradigms (Silva, 2012)

The City of Lusaka has been changing the legal status of unplanned settlements over the years and most if not all of them have been regularised. This means that Lusaka has 35 unplanned settlements which have now been legalized. This change has allowed these previously excluded parts of the city to fully participate in the development of the city and to demand services previously not allocated to them. Upgrading processes have been incremental over the years there have been various projects aimed at improving the quality of life for people in these areas. The legalization process starts with changes in tenure for the residents who now receive 30 year occupancy licences giving residents the confidence to improve their homes and demand for improved service delivery from the local authority.

The city of Lusaka has continued to face planning challenges as the city expands and becomes more dispersed. The Urban Regional Planning (URP) Act (No. 3 of 2015) which requires regions to develop Integrated Development Plans and the smaller areas within regions develop Local Area Plans (LAPs). One of the aims of the Act is to “establish procedures for integrated urban and regional planning in a developed system of governance so as to ensure multi-sector co-operation, coordination.” The city of Lusaka received funding from GIZ to pilot the LAP process in five Wards. The process was guided by laid down procedures so this paper outlines these processes.

2. Integrating informal areas into the city

2.1. The context of the LAP

The context of the LAP project is embedded in the larger planning framework of cities and regions which are the Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). Unplanned settlements can play both positive and negative in urban development. Ulack (1978) relates the role a settlement is able to play to its age and location. It is believed that older settlements are usually located in the best locations and they tend to be more productive with closer links to the city. Ngau (2013) advocates for integrated approaches to planning, highlighting the fact that sustainable and equitable growth mostly depends on participatory and appropriate approaches to planning. Other refer to ‘self sustaining urban planning’ (Magnagi 2005, cited in Albrechts et al, 2020). Acioly’s (2019) ‘street upgrading’ is based on the concept of participatory upgrading. There is a realisations that local communities are able through continuous learning develop and increased appreciation of their environments. The slum upgrading processes that have taken place in Lusaka have thus far created a realisation of the critical importance of community participation in the consideration of options for upgrading unplanned settlements (MLGH, 2011, Lusaka City Council, (LCC) 2016).

2.1.1. Participatory Slum Upgrading

Participatory slum upgrading (PSU) has been promoted as the silver bullet for slum upgrading (SU) but is it really the solution to the slums? There are several barriers to successful slum upgrading that need to be assessed before one can categorically state what we know or do not know about slum upgrading. Bonan (2015) identifies pro-poor policies, planning schemes which are decentralization enabled and the emergence of civil society as the external influence of SU. He goes on to identify the external factors which are individual household and community characteristics, micro-politics, human and socio-capital led collective actions. The first group provide a framework, direction and limitation to a project's limitations while others are the elements which drive the upgrading process at the grassroots and will eventually contribute to various levels of success or failure. Njamwea (2003) provided a outline of two approaches to planning, the Public Administration Approach and the Euclidean (Engineering) Approach (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Theoretical Approaches to Upgrading

Source: Njamwea, 2003:4

For unplanned settlements both approaches are required if sustainable improvements are to be made in these neglected parts of the city. The situation in Zambia presents an example of 'upgrading in situ', structures are only demolished to pave way for roads and other critical infrastructure. Some countries like South Africa prefer to demolish the unplanned settlements and relocate residents (Huchzermeyr, 2011).

3. Process approach

3.1. Multi-stakeholder involvement

The project took a multi-disciplinary approach and engaged several stakeholders. The process of developing the Local Area Plan started with the formulation of the Technical Working Group (TWG) which comprised members of Staff from all the 7 Departments at Lusaka City Council. The process acknowledges the importance of physical, spatial and territorial development. The project was holistic and therefore considered all the aspects involved in the creation of a sustainable city. The involvement of different stakeholders ensured that developmental aspects were included. The stakeholders varied from the funders who were GIZ an international agency, local authority (Lusaka City Council), academia (University of Zambia), NGOs (Peoples Process for Housing and Poverty in Zambia), Civil Society (ZAMSOF), private professionals (hydrologist), Community based organisations (CBOs) and Community leaders (Ward Councillors and Ward development Committee members) and members of the community comprising the youth, women, men and people living with disabilities (where available). This is in line with the Un-Habitat guidelines for participatory slum upgrading (UN-Habitat, 2010). Citizen participation was paramount and ensured at all the stages of the process. The aim was to maximise the role of local areas as engines of development and economic growth which if made viable are able to contribute to the productivity of the whole city.

The URP provides that development of the LAP must follow a participatory approach including various stakeholders as well as community members. The process should also be socially inclusive including all ages, gender and representatives of all marginalized groups like the aged and the differently abled person. According to the URP a LAP must first include the planning survey which is a description of the social and economic characteristic of the area, spatial data and all other infrastructure and community assets. Then the development framework and finally the implementation plan and monitoring and evaluation should be done.

In view of the above, the first step that was undertaken in development of this LAP was establishment of the technical working group (TWG) as earlier stated. A team of external consultants was engaged to improve capacity within the Technical Working Group. The TWG conducted meetings to identify the Five wards to be piloted and to map relevant stakeholders. This was done by assessment of the various issues affecting these communities. A capacity building 'Training of Trainers' (ToT) was conducted for the Technical Working Group. This was followed by a community sensitization in the wards, where the 'Community Empowerment and Engagement Project' under Lusaka Water Security Initiative (LuWSI) to introduce the project to the community (LuWSI is a stakeholder collaborative platform for all stakeholders in the water sector in the city). The content included the objective of the project, the various approaches to be used and the road map for the LAP. The next process that followed was the

community profiling which involved collection of baseline social economic data, spatial data and data on basic services. Selection of Community Facilitators as champions for the project was carried out through a democratic voting process from all the zones in each ward. The community facilitators were then trained on Local Area Planning and urban resilience. The Community Facilitators selected were later adopted as WDC members during the validation meetings of the WDC formulation process. A questionnaire was then developed for collection of more data and a consensus building workshop was conducted in each ward, the workshops included; problem identification through the transect walks and mapping, problem analysis, prioritization and visioning. A 'City RAP Tool' was also used to assess the ward on urban resilience.

Three (3) main planning approaches were employed during the development of the LAPs. These included the Human Rights Based Approach, The Bottom-up Approach and Community Engagement and Empowerment. Under planning process, the technical working group carried out the Community engagement process to elected the zonal facilitators (WDC) using WDC guidelines'. Training involved the training of Ward Councilors on the Human Rights Based Approach (UN-Habitat, 2018).

3.2 Participatory activities

The intention was to involve the community as much as possible but community participation is not an exact science. The dynamics involved in organizing communities create bias in themselves and it is up to the organizers to do everything possible to give an equal chance for all residents of a particular settlement to participate.

3.2.1 Ranking

The pertinent issues from Class 1 which was the first set of issues were further ranked according to the most urgent among them. The participants were asked if they were given limited resources (as is usually the case in reality) which issue do they think would need to be tackled first. The most urgent was ranked as 1st and the rest should follow from 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, etc according to agreed order. The output for this exercise was a list of issues according to rank. The communities were able to articulate and rank the problems they faced.

Figure 2 Problem identification and ranking in Mpulungu Ward, Lusaka, Zambia (2019)

32.2 Mapping- Transect walk

Facilitators were required to identify a suitable route for the transect. Depending on the number of participants there was more than one route selected. Community members were requested to lead the teams out to the starting point. Participants were then told to map and take note of outstanding points along the route and identify nodes which are problematic and need transforming, have potential and can be improved or can be turned into precinct developments.

Facilitators used a base 'map' (GIS image) which was given to each group. The activity involved 'layering' of the ward in different thematic areas which hinge on the eventual development of the ward under the guidance of consultants assigned to the wards. The areas to be layered in the spatial analysis are

- Built environment- **Energy, telecommunication, solid waste, sewerage, water supply, housing, transport, settlement**
- Socio-economic- Land tenure, **investments, economic activity**, poverty and incomes, crime, **health, employment, education**, demography, heritage.
- Physical environment- **mining/quarrying, vegetation**, topography, hydrology, climate, geology and soils.

The location of activities linked to these thematic areas were later highlighted on the base map.

Figure 3 Community facilitator leading discussion, Lusaka (2019)

3.0 Action planning

The ranked issues were then presented to the participants and for each issue participants were asked

'If resources were available what would you want to start working on next year or by the end of the year?'

The responses were then recorded and developed into an action plan. Participants were reminded to consider the activities within the wider city and how their projects would impact or be impacted by ongoing other city projects.

4. Project Outcomes

The process created a platform for the community to interact with various stakeholders. This serves to further strengthen the working relationship between the community and professionals. The most important outcome was the five local area plans which can be used to help develop LAPs for all the wards in the city.

The main project outcomes were as follows

- i. Communities now have a clear idea of what the main problems/issues within their Wards are. Consensus was reached on the final list of ranked issues.
- ii. Communities are able to physically identify points which are problematic or which have potential in a given section of the settlement.
- iii. This is the beginning of visioning where the residents are able to suggest transformations to their environment.
- iv. Communities can map their wards highlighting the environmental spaces, economic spaces, open spaces, nodes and connectors, location of services and amenities (water, electricity).

- v. The local now has a documented and replicable process which can be used as a tool for development.
- vi. Co-production of a data base that can be used for future developmental projects in the local areas.

5. Broader project impact

The process was very popular with the communities and ward leaders. Councillors made numerous pleas to have their wards included among the first five. This points to the premium value community level leaders placed on the interactions with the various stakeholders. The political mileage the LAP process gave was not overlooked considering that the process took place mid-way through their political terms. The project was also an indication to funders that the process was viable and the needs identified could be met. Service delivery is eased as those who want to assist know which areas needed what type of assistance. The LAPs ranked the needs after a process of assessment and the needs were prioritised. The LAPs ranked the needs after a process of assessment and the needs were prioritised. The project intends to improve the quality of life in unplanned settlements by planning increasing social cohesion and reducing poverty.

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